Who Are We?

I Peter 2:2-6 and 9-10 Kimby Young

1 Timothy 4:9-15 June 25, 2017

Reflections on the week of Traveling Day Camp - Overall Theme: I AM

Daily Themes: I Am Created for a Reason; I Am Loved By God; I Am in Need of a Savior;

We Are Gifted with a Purpose; We Are on a Mission.

As I mentioned, it has been a wonderful week of Traveling Day Camp.

The theme for the week was “I AM” based on the last two verses of our reading from Peter.

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.”

It’s a great verse and it was a great week. It reminds us that God has chosen us. That God has a purpose for us. That because of that there is a way we should live and act and care in the world.

All week, the children were encouraged to think about who they are as children of God.

They belong to God – all of us do, we belong to God. We are God’s own people.

The daily themes and scripture are listed in the bulletin. Each day had stories and songs and scripture and challenges that God is calling our young people, and really all of us, to do.

Day one, Monday, the theme was – I Am Created for a Reason;

And who has the verse for the day? - Ephesians 2:10

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus

to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

They talked about realizing who you are – getting to know yourself as you get to know others – and about knowing that God created you and has something in mind for your life.

Tuesday: the theme was - I Am Loved By God;

The memory verse of the day is the familiar John 3:16 – You all know that so let’s say it all together

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son,

that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but should have eternal life.

And maybe for me this is the most important message. God loves you. God loves each of us.

And because of that love everything else falls into place.

Wednesday: the theme was - I Am in Need of a Savior; Who has the verse? - Romans 3:23-24

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

We talked about forgiveness – personal forgiveness, God’s forgiveness,

how to forgive, how to ask for forgiveness, how to offer forgiveness.

The campers talked about the healing that comes through forgiveness and about God’s promise

that God will bring that healing and wholeness to anyone who asks, to anyone who comes to Jesus.

Thursday: the theme was - We Are Gifted with a Purpose; And the scripture was I Peter 4:8

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

The stories on Thursday were about the work of the early church – Peter and Paul, and Mary.

They talked about the way people shared their gifts to build up the church and to help others.

And of course, they brought it forward to talk about how we in the church today are called

To share our gifts and to help other people in the world – to tell other people about God.

And finally on Friday: the theme was - We Are on a Mission; And the verse was Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed,

do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

And the second scripture for that day was the scripture from Timothy for this morning.

Of course I can’t capture the experience of the campers this week in one sermon, but the overall theme of “I Am” and all of the daily themes this week started me thinking about – Who am I?

Who are we collectively? Who are we called to be individually, and as a church together?

Who are you? Who am I? You were created by God and created for a reason. You have gifts to share and jobs for God that only you can do. You are loved by God – loved beyond measure – adored more than words can express. You are blessed and baptized. You belong to God.

So if all of that is true – because all of that is true – what does that mean for us as a church

– Who are we? Who are we called to be?

I am convinced – our main purpose in life is to love God and to love others as God has loved us.

Our mission is to tell other people about God and to introduce other people to God.

That is exactly what our number one goal for this church is – to bring other people to Christ.

So according to today’s scripture who are we?

We are a chosen beloved community of Christ, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own special people pulled out of darkness into marvelous light, that we might praise God and call other people into the presence of this glorious God.

Are we doing that? Do we realize who we are and what we have to offer the world?

Or do we apologize for … I don’t know… not being perfect? The church is not perfect – and it is not expected to be. God is the one who is perfect. God is the one who loves perfectly. But God has chosen us to work in the world to share God’s message of peace and wholeness. That’s what that phrase – royal priesthood means. It means we are the ones who act like priests – who act as emissaries in the world – mediators between God and others – bringing other people to God, sharing God’s word with others. We are God’s priests – all of us. Do we do that? or do we stand on the sidelines and wait for someone else? Do we say – you wouldn’t want to go to church with me? like some insecure kid who doesn’t think we deserve to be noticed. God says you are wonderful, we are wonderful, and we are called to be even more wonderful! We are called to work to be better and better every day – more of who God created us to be. You are God’s chosen people. You are called to be holy – set apart and dedicated to God’s service. We are called to share the light and beauty, hope and promise that we have received thru Jesus. And we are called to share it with enthusiasm and joy – as our book of order says – with energy intelligence imagination and love. We have so much to offer to the world – a world that so desperately needs to receive God’s gifts. We can not hold back any longer. We can not sell ourselves short. We can not neglect the gift of God that is in us. Together we must be the gift to the world that God has created us to be. Together we must reach out in love and mercy, justice and joy. I am a child of God. You are a child of God. We are – who God has created us to be. We belong to God. Children of God, live in God’s light and let that light shine. Let us start right here in Gardner – sharing the good news of God’s love, and let us go wherever that love takes us.

I’ve been thinking a lot about who we are at First Presbyterian Church of Gardner Kansas. I’ve been thinking and praying about programs and possibilities and ministries and missions. But at the core of it all, at the heart of who we are… God says… we are …you are chosen by God, beloved of God, set apart for God, gifted with the Spirit of God, and called by Jesus Christ through the grace of God … to bring God’s love, Christ’s light, the presence of the Spirit … into every life you touch, every soul you meet, every heart you bless, every where you go, every single day. You belong to God. You are God’s beloved child. Live in God’s love and serve God. By God’s grace and to God’s glory. Amen.