

True North VBS Celebration Sunday
“We Can Trust Jesus”
Jeremiah 17:5-8
Rev. Joy Laughridge

We had an awesome week of VBS, and this morning you’ve been getting a little taste of what we did and what the week was like. For the next few minutes, I want to bring our focus in on the message and the good news that we spent the week teaching and proclaiming to the children because it is God’s good news for all of us.

The setting for our VBS was the wilderness of Alaska which can be a pretty wild place just like life in this world can be pretty wild. It can be awesome and beautiful like the scenery in Alaska, but sometimes things happen that make us feel like we might feel if we were on our own in the Alaskan wilderness. It can feel scary, and lonely, confusing. When those times come, our first instinct is often to try to rely on ourselves or maybe to grasp at the people and things around us that we hope can help or make us feel better. A phone call to Madam Cleo for guidance. Giving our allegiance to the strong and powerful in hopes that they will protect us. Overindulging in things that can help us feel better temporarily. Jeremiah told God’s people that when we look to the wrong things and people for guidance or help in difficult times, it can end up making things worse, and he said there is something better than relying on ourselves and mortal resources alone. Jeremiah told God’s people to trust in the Lord saying blessed are they that do so.

To be able to do this, first, we need to know that there *is* a trustworthy Lord, and we proclaimed this week to our children that there is, and his name is Jesus. This is the most important thing we get to share with kids during VBS. While they’re still young, they are being equipped with the knowledge that Jesus is real, and that he is

someone who is always there for them. We all need to know that, and then, we need to learn *when* we can trust Jesus so that we can begin doing it. We talked about that this week, too.

Every day we thought about and talked about a different time when we can practice trusting Jesus. I'd like to do a little recap because it's important for all of us to remember when we can trust Jesus, and to help me with the recap, I'd like to invite a friend to come on up. Making new friends is a big part of VBS, and this week we all made a new friend when this guy wandered into our wilderness clearing.

Joy: Everyone, I'd like you to meet Scout Rivers! Scout, this is everyone!

(Scout says hello, recognizes any kids as familiar faces in the crowd,)

Joy: Scout, I was just telling everyone about the awesome week we just had here in Alaska, and I was hoping that you could help me tell everyone about what we learned- especially the grown-ups. I have a feeling that some of the things that you felt last week are things that they feel sometimes, too.

Scout: Really? You think *those* people feel the same things I do? Even the grown-ups? I don't know about that. They all look pretty smart. I'm sure the adults have everything all figured out.

Joy: Oh, you mean like *you* had everything all figured out on your first day up here in Alaska? You thought you knew everything. I'll never forget how you introduced yourself as...

Scout: Scout Rivers, hiker extraordinaire, north-knower renown!

Joy: Exactly. Turned out you didn't really have all the answers though, did you?

Scout: Yeah, I had to admit that I needed help from my guidebook. But *you* admitted you need help sometimes, too.

Joy: That's right, I do. We all do, and we all have questions and wonder about things.

Scout: I felt a lot better about having questions when I found out you do, too, but I felt even better when you told me that **when we wonder, we can trust Jesus!**

Joy: We sure can. Jesus doesn't expect us to have all the answers. He loves us whether we know a lot or a little, and he does give answers to at least some of our questions in the Bible. I bet you'll keep your Bible close by from now on, won't you?

Scout: I sure will. Right here in my backpack with my flashlight!

Joy: You better guard your Bible more closely than you guarded your flashlight last week or it might come up missing.

Scout: Just because a cute little chipmunk stole my flashlight once doesn't mean I'm going to lose my Bible, too. Besides, I was really scared and all alone out there that night. Remember, the bear and the wolf that tried to EAT me?!

Joy: I didn't think they tried to eat you. I thought you just heard some scary sounds.

Scout: Oh no, they were definitely going to eat me, and after that, I was so relieved that the next noise I heard was just a cute little

chipmunk I let my guard down. That's when the little rascal took advantage of me and stole my flashlight.

Joy: That was a pretty scary night for you. When you saw me the next morning, you acted as if you had been all alone for weeks!

Scout: I was so glad to see you, and you taught me something important that day. I thought that I was alone out there because I couldn't see Jesus, but you told me that he is always with me even when I can't see him. You told me that **when we feel alone, we can trust Jesus.**

Joy: That's exactly right. So now, next time you build a campfire thinking that Jesus is going to come around and eat s'mores with you, you'll know he's with you even if you can't see him.

Scout: That's true. And I'll know it's ok if I go ahead and eat his s'more, too! More chocolate for me. Thanks, Jesus! You really are a good friend.

Joy: Speaking of campfires, remember how you tried to start a fire with the lenses of your sunglasses this week? For someone who was claiming to be an expert in wilderness adventuring, that was kind of a rookie move, wasn't it?

Scout: Aw, come on! You *can* use lenses and sunlight to start a fire. I was just using the wrong kind of lenses.... as you were so quick to point out!

Joy: I was just trying to help because I could see that you were not going to be able to get a fire started on your own. I kind of felt sorry for you, really.

Scout: I felt sorry for myself, to be honest, but you taught me something on that day, too. I was powerless to start that fire because I didn't have the right tools, and there are a lot of times in life when we feel powerless, but I learned that day that **when we feel powerless, we can trust Jesus.**

Joy: That's true. Remember the Bible story we learned that day? About the Roman centurion? He had a lot of power over people. He could tell people what to do and they would do it, but when his servant got sick, he was powerless to heal him. He needed help.

Scout: I do remember that story! He needed help, and Jesus was the one who helped him. Jesus healed his servant without even going to his house.

Joy: That was a pretty cool... ah...ah...ah-CHOO!

Scout: Woa! God bless you! Wait...wait, I think I have something you can wipe your nose with (*pull out the towel*).

Joy: Uh, is this the same towel I loaned you last week?

Scout: Yep!

Joy: And has it been washed yet?

Scout: Nah. I haven't had a chance to do any laundry yet, but you can still use it.

Joy: Scout, this is the towel that I gave you after you fell into the river and lost all of your stuff, and I saw you blowing your nose on it.

Scout: Well, it was the only thing I had to blow my nose on. I lost *everything*, remember? My tent, my towel, my food. That was one of the worst days of my life. I was completely hopeless.

Joy: I remember you were feeling pretty bad that day. I can understand why. You thought you were going to have a great hike, but then you fell in the river and lost all your gear. That's the way life is sometimes. Bad things happen, and it feels like things will stay bad forever.

Scout: I don't think I could have recovered from that experience if you hadn't told me **when we need hope, we can trust Jesus**. That was such a relief! And the cool part was, when I trusted Jesus, he used *you* to help me. You were a real friend to me that day when you gave me that extra gear you had. Things really turned around after that.

Joy: Jesus can always make a way through and beyond even the worst situations. It's not always easy to trust him in those times, but he helps us when we have to do hard things.

Scout: That's another thing you helped me learn this week.

Joy: What's that?

Scout: **When we need help, we can trust Jesus**. You taught me that after I found all my stuff that had floated down the river. I was trying to carry the gear you gave me AND all of my stuff that came back to me.

Joy: I do remember that. It seems like you were having some trouble staying upright that day, weren't you?

Scout: I only ended up on my back flailing like a turtle *once*.

Joy: Can you remind me what that looked like?

(Scout lays down like a turtle on his back and waves his arms and legs in the air)

Joy: That's right. *Now* I remember.

(Scout flails around a little more)

Scout: Hey, do you think you can help me up?

Joy: I don't know. This is kind of entertaining.

Scout: Alright, if you won't help me, I'll call someone who will. Holy Spirit!! Heeelp meeee!

Joy: Here, I'll help you *(helps Scout up)*. I was just giving you a hard time, but I can see that you did learn something this week about how Jesus helps us. You remembered that he has given us a special helper called the Holy Spirit who helps us get to know Jesus better and helps us do the things he wants us to do- especially the hard things. We really can call out and ask the Holy Spirit for help.

Scout: Yeah, I know. And sometimes the way the Holy Spirit helps us *is by telling our friend to stop laughing at us and lend a hand!*

Joy: You're right. I shouldn't have laughed at you. Sorry about that, Scout. I should have been quicker to help you – especially after all the help you've given me today. Thank you so much for coming today and helping me share with everyone all the cool stuff we learned. I know everyone out there looks really smart, and you

might think that the adults already know everything, but even adults need to know the things you learned this week. We all need to know that can trust Jesus in *all* the times of our lives.

Scout: I had a lot of fun last week and I'm glad I could come today. I do have to get going, but before I go, do you think everyone would practice repeating the daily points with us? Life is pretty wild and this week they might wonder about things, or feel alone. They might find themselves in a situation that they are powerless to change. When they're watching the news, they might start to feel hopeless, or they might run into a problem that they can't solve on their own. I want to be sure everyone remembers that they can trust Jesus in all of those times.

Joy: Scout, I think that's a great idea. I'll say the first part, and you lead everyone in saying together, "we can trust Jesus."

When we wonder, **we can trust Jesus.**

When we feel alone, **we can trust Jesus.**

When we feel powerless, **we can trust Jesus.**

When we need hope, **we can trust Jesus.**

When we need help, **we can trust Jesus.**