

Bible Study #5

A Place Apart:

Changing Lives through Outdoor Ministry

"We all are called for service, to witness in God's name.

Our ministries are different; our purpose is the same:

To touch the lives of others with God's surprising grace,

So every folk and nation may feel God's warm embrace."

"We All Are One in Mission"

Evangelical Lutheran Worship; Hymn #576

Opening Prayer

We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give us new birth, cleanse us from sin, and raise us to eternal life. Stir up in your people the gift of your Holy Spirit; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. Amen.

Affirmation of Baptism

Evangelical Lutheran Worship; page 237

Begin Thinking

Today we are considering how outdoor ministry in the Rocky Mountain Synod ignites faith, changes lives and kindles leadership in church vocations.

- *As we introduce ourselves, please share your name and a story of how an outdoor ministry experience through the church has touched you, or someone you know.*

Show Video

"A Place Apart: Changing Lives through Outdoor Ministry"

Outdoor Ministry Ignites Faith

Read St. John 9: 35 - 41

In John 9, Jesus comes upon a man who was blind from birth. Common wisdom understood his blindness as a result of sin (his or his parents' sin). Jesus saw it, instead, as an opportunity for God's work to be done. Jesus opened his eyes, physically and spiritually, in contrast to the Pharisees who couldn't see truth.

- *In what ways did this man receive the gift of sight from Jesus?*
- *How must his faith have changed, after experiencing Jesus' healing touch?*

The Rocky Mountain Synod is blessed with two strong outdoor ministries that are Christ-centered and faith-centered. Campers and staff leave their time at camp with new insights into what it means to be a Christian, and with a deeper commitment to follow Christ.



In the video, Mari Peterson (a camp counselor) says: *"Campers learn how to trust in God, and discover that they can do things. They can apply that to their real life in going back home."*

John Erickson (a camper's grandfather) said of his granddaughter: *"She came back totally refreshed, wanting to do daily devotions."*

- *What distinguishes the church's outdoor ministry from other "camp" experiences.*
- *What aspects of outdoor ministry seem most apt to ignite faith?*
- *How might a close connection to the synod's outdoor ministry energize our congregation's ministry of faith formation?*

Outdoor Ministry Changes Lives

Read St. Luke 19: 1 - 10

Tax Collectors were despised in the first century: not because people opposed taxes, but because the collectors were dishonest, growing rich by collecting more than was due. We assume that Zacchaeus was no exception, yet after meeting Jesus he pledges to give to the poor, and make restitution (and then some!) to anyone he had cheated.

- *What was it about this meeting with Jesus that changed Zacchaeus so?*
- *How do you think the change Jesus caused in Zacchaeus' life affected his relationships with his neighbors?*

A week at camp can touch a camper's life in profound ways. Young people find themselves inspired to dig deeper and become more involved with their faith and their church. Adults find their spirit strengthened and their commitment to ministry renewed.

In the video, Dave Jarvis (Executive Director at Rainbow Trail)

says, "I watch kids blossom... by the end of the week they go home with a whole new understanding of who they are, and that's why we exist... I have watched what happens here transform people."

Ashley McConnell (Program Director at Rainbow Trail) says, "I really developed my faith here, and it became a huge part of me, and a bigger part of me than I ever thought it would be. I truly believe in all that we do here, and I want to continually work with all of that, and continue to be part of something that is so influential in people's lives."

- What is it about "camp" that accomplishes change in a way that is less likely "back home."
- Share stories of those in your congregation who have been transformed by time spent in outdoor ministry?
- How can we communicate to others about the rich opportunities that await them at Rainbow Trail and Sky Ranch?

Outdoor Ministry Kindles Leadership

Read Ephesians 4: 11 – 16

Paul teaches that we are who we are, because God has created us to be that way. And what's more: our gifts are to be used to "equip the saints for ministry" and build up the body of Christ. In other words, each person has gifts that are useful for ministry, and God calls some to equip us to use those gifts to the best of our ability.

- Share a story of someone you know who is putting unique gifts to work in our congregation's ministry?
- What gifts do I have, that God might use to strengthen the church?

In the video, Brad Abbott (Executive Director at Sky Ranch) says, "Sky Ranch and Rainbow Trail; both have raised up many, many leaders for the church; have produced many pastors throughout the country."

Jenn Collins (a camp counselor) says, "I am in seminary because of my time at camp. People called out the gifts that I have to do ministry. That led to seminary, and I have one year left before I am a pastor."

- What is it about an outdoor ministry experience that causes people to consider a vocation in the church?
- In what areas of the church are leaders most urgently needed today?
- Which young people in our community should we encourage to consider a vocation in the church?

Luther's Small Catechism

"Give us today our daily bread."

"What is this?"

In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

"What then does 'daily bread' mean?"

Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

– Martin Luther, *The Fourth Petition of The Lord's Prayer*,
Small Catechism

Our Daily Bread

In the Small Catechism, Luther asserts that God provides everything that is necessary for life. As he expands "daily bread" far beyond what we find on our dinner plates, he makes room for us to consider how we are fed by ministry that takes place through organizations like Sky Ranch and Rainbow Trail.

- For those who have had the opportunity to participate, how has God fed you through outdoor ministry experiences?
- In what ways are the ministries of Rainbow Trail and Sky Ranch an extension of the ministry of your own congregation?
- How might you participate in, and support, the work that they do?

Closing Prayer

Join in prayer together:

Gracious God, as you have called workers to various tasks in the world and in your church, so you have called your servants to ministry. Grant them joy and a spirit of bold trust, that their work may stir up each of us to a life of fruitful service; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Prayer for Lay Professional Workers)
Evangelical Lutheran Worship; page 74

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To learn more about and support outdoor ministries in the Rocky Mountain Synod:
www.rmselca.org/outdoor

Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp is located 55 miles west of Fort Collins, Colorado. Its **mission** is to facilitate an encounter of Christ on the mountaintops.
www.skyranchcolorado.org

Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp is located in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of southern Colorado. Its **mission**: Through the ministries of Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp, God **Claims** us, Christ **Transforms** us, and the Holy Spirit **Sends** us for faithful service.
www.rainbowtrail.org