

A common theme in the camping stories you have written about in response to my invitation is the peace and joy that happens around the campfire. There is a whole community building attraction about the warmth of the fire, and for some reason, watching the flames dance has a relaxing, almost hypnotic effect on the participants. But, let's face it, our culture likes food. Food makes even a campfire experience better.

One of our readers tells the story of camping on a frequent basis with many "Hollanders", which I take to mean people out of my Dutch heritage. The Dutch are known for many things, one being a rather tight grip on money, but that's another story. Another is their love of food, especially bread (just look at me). So, for these campers, the campfire would have the usual effect of inviting others to join them for some good talk and just being together. But, as people would arrive at someone's campfire each participant would bring a snack to share. And the hosts always had to be sure to keep a supply of snacks on hand just in case a passer-by happened upon the fire without a snack in hand.

What I wonder about as I hear this story is, what if everyone brought the same snack? And what if no one brought the Cheetos? Would I get up and go back to my tent if I didn't like the bag of Fritos being passed around? Would I hold onto my bag of Cheetos and keep them to myself?

Sometimes I think we approach worship this same way. Paul tells us that when we come together to worship God someone should bring a song,, another a lesson to teach, another a prophesy to tell, and so forth. When they gathered for the food of of the Table they were to do so in an orderly way, sharing their respective gifts. What if we all wanted to come with just a song? What if we all wanted to be the teacher or the preacher? What makes worship "work" is that it uses a variety of gifts offered to God for the benefit of the community gathered around the campfire. It is our nature to want to worship in ways which each of us individually finds most pleasing, e.g. all I really want are the Cheetos. But not everyone likes Cheetos. Some people really prefer potato chips.

So, as you prepare to worship this weekend, as you let the Spirit stir in your heart the desire to join your community of believers around the campfire, think of what gift you can bring to the gathering. Be willing to share it with everyone. Be ready to experience the variety of ways that your neighbors worship God. The campfire experience works because people stay around the fire even if they don't like the snack someone else is passing. They just wait for their bag of goodies to get back to them. Try approaching worship the same way. Bring your gift to share; try to enjoy what someone else brings; and remember that God is the focus of the gathering...he is the Light and Warmth we came to see.

And don't forget the Cheetos!

Shalom

**Rev. Bill Te Winkle**