



World Pathfinder Day Sermon

HE CAMPS AMONG US

INTRODUCTION

I like camping, do you? The main reason why camping fascinates me is because I feel that I find a beautiful experience of relationship with God, also because I find opportunities to reflect on the love of God, I recharge my energy and then return to daily activities and because I come into contact with the second book of God, “nature”. And I don't care if it's hot, muddy, rainy or dusty, I really enjoy it.

Camping is a unique experience, especially at night. If you have a starry night while camping, you are lucky, because you can see the stars and constellations in the sky, the bonfire gives you a kind of security and also gives you a spirit of joy, from time to time you hear some animal noises and a tireless cricket singing. When it is late at night and you go into the sleeping bag, turn off the lamp and the tent welcomes you as a refuge for the night.



The next morning when you leave the tent and you step on the wet grass, you breathe the pure air, you listen to the birds chirping which is a unique concert and the first rays of the sun motivate you to live the activities during the day to the fullest. Camping is one of the most beautiful and meaningful activities.

DEVELOPMENT

The Bible offers several passages that talk about camps. I want to highlight three moments in which it is mentioned that God camps among us.

1. When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is the camp of God!” So he named that place Mahanaim. (Gen. 32:2).

Jacob had deceived his father and was now in danger of being killed by his brother, whom he had also deceived (Gen. 27:41). While returning back to Canaan after more than twenty years away from home, and knowing that there was an unresolved situation with his brother Esau, Jacob lived one of the most beautiful moments of his life and that would transform his way of perceiving God.

First, angels surrounded his camp: “Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him” (Gen. 32:1). This meeting could have occurred on positive terms for Jacob, with the intention of protecting him and bringing him back to his land as he had been promised. Can you imagine being in the company of angels? It must have been incredible!



We live within the great cosmic conflict between God and his holy angels against Satan and his evil angels, which means that many of the incidents in our lives are not yet fully understandable. But in Heaven we will be able to understand the work of angels in our lives.

What will it feel like to talk to the angel who was your guardian since your birth, the one who watched over your steps and delivered you from danger, the one who was with you in the valley of the shadow of death, and who will even be with you until the day of death, but who will be the first to greet you on the morning of the resurrection, where you will meet him face to face?

Let's go back to Jacob's story. Mahanaim was not only a special gathering, it was also an allusion to the promise made at Bethel, and which was later confirmed at Peniel. Mahanaim is part of the fulfillment of the promise that God gave to Jacob at Bethel. The Lord had walked with him, keeping him and bringing him back to that land (his home). On the other hand, we can also consider it as part of the closing of a stage in the history of Jacob and his life in Haran.

The message in this passage is clear: God was protecting his son. We could make a connection with Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Gen. 28:13-15).



In Mahanaim God confirmed this promise and fulfilled what He had promised him, and also provided him with a guarantee that He was taking care of him and protecting him.

There is no doubt that God never forgets his promises, even when they take some time to be fulfilled. Jacob had to wait 20 years, but one day, in His time, the Lord fulfilled and it was Himself who guided and protected him despite his imperfections. This reflection can serve to inspire you to have complete trust in the Lord who never forgets his promises and always takes care of his children.

2. “By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night” (Ex.13:31).

Can you imagine how God took care of the multitude of Israelites, half a million children, young people and adults walking in the middle of the desert, plus the animals they brought with them? Upon leaving Egypt everything seemed calm, the last plagues had left Pharaoh and the Egyptian people very bad. Among joy and happiness, a journey through the desert awaited them.

It was not easy to walk in high temperatures, with the scorching sun and, of course, very thirsty. In those days there were no sunscreens or sunglasses. To protect from the sun there were only a few bushes with small branches and thorns.

At night the temperature dropped drastically and the children needed blankets to keep warm. We must also think about the dangerous scorpions, spiders and poisonous vipers typical of the desert.



But I want to tell you that they already had the problem solved: Jehovah was going with them and, with two supernatural elements, he would protect his children: a cloud and a column of fire. The cloud served to protect them from the sun during the day with the shadow it cast towards them. The fire, apart from giving heat at night, scared away dangerous animals and thus they could advance both day and night.

What an extraordinary phenomenon! Don't you think so? God is for you, dear pathfinder, like that cloud and the fire that accompanies you while you camp. God's protection is for you like fire and cloud, therefore do not be afraid, he camps among us!

Now come with me and read verse 22: "Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people".

3. "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8).

I have always asked myself some things and I don't know when I will finish receiving all the answers. What makes God feel the need to live among us? Why does God want to dwell among us?

Imagine that you set up your tent, prepare everything for the campfire, you have clean water, utensils to cook, but suddenly it starts to get dark and rain starts to fall in the camp. What a disappointment! Right?



Well, that's exactly what happened to me several years ago while camping on a plain, near a crystal-clear stream. On the other side, the units made up of the girls settled in with their counselors and all of us men stayed in the other area that divided the stream.

At night the rain subsided, we had the worship meeting and a nice reflection on God's intelligent design. In the sky some stars were visible and our club director began to talk to us about the constellation of Orion and everything seemed to be going better.

When suddenly, the stars disappeared hidden by the clouds and the rain returned to the camp. We all went to sleep that night. But suddenly, the surveillance team began to blow the alarm whistle and give a call for help: "the stream is overflowing on the girls' side!"

I remember that we got up alert and went to quickly inspect. Sure enough, the girls' camp area was beginning to flood. Our managers took ropes and threw them across the river where they tied them to a tree. With their help, the girls were able to cross the swollen stream and reach the other side of the camp safely.

When everything had happened, during the early morning, we gathered by the bonfire to warm ourselves and try to dry our clothes, while some farmers who lived in the area came to see us and brought us hot drinks. They told us that in the high mountains a torrential rain had fallen that night and that the rain that ran down the slopes had filled the stream.



The concept of whether God camps among us is much more than theory or symbolism. The only real alternative is to believe by faith in that God and enjoy His presence, feeling lucky that he camps among us. Yes, he camps among us!

CONCLUSION

Dear Pathfinder, I want to invite you to surrender to God today, because as you seek the presence of God outside of you, you will come to realize that he was already with you holding your hand.

Remember that His presence is with you wherever you walk, you are His son and He will fulfill His promise to you as He did to Jacob. And even if you consider that you have a very bad past or that you are not worthy of his presence, God wants to bring you back to him.

He will demonstrate to you, as with the children of Israel, through miraculous natural phenomena, His presence day and night. You know why? Because He camps among us!



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Pr. Víctor is distinguished by his passion for camping, advising and motivating young people in fulfilling their mission with God. He really enjoys being in touch with nature, he likes hiking, swimming, listening and praising with good music. He considers himself a friend to everyone. He believes that leadership is relational, which implies more outreach to young people and personal openness to understanding teenagers and young people in their different needs. He is married to Beatriz Adriana Cruz de la Cruz and has two children; Kenneth Emmanuel and Kelvin Jair who are pathfinder in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico