

A Servant's Weekend

I may not always serve the Lord as I would wish too. In fact I quite often find myself serving yours truly. But the last weekend had me at my church for drama, singing, and leading. It started Wednesday night with choir rehearsal when the director announced they were looking for a few people to be a part of a drama for Good Friday. I thought about it and sent an email back saying I could, but for only three of the four services as I had to work for at least part of the day.

The Good Friday service was made up of a few parts, starting with singing and followed by a short announcement. For a half hour then everyone could walk around the worship center (95% of the chairs had been removed) visiting different areas. One area had the text of the last days before the Crucifixion projected on walls for people to read. Another had a giant cross people could sign. There was a section with artwork portraying these days and an area with a looping video about a medical perspective on the Crucifixion. There was also an area with replicas of a Roman flagrum, a spear such as used to pierce the sides of the victims to test for death as they did with Jesus, a crown of thorns, and others. So following this time was another brief message followed by more songs. The drama was during the half-hour tour time. Like everyone who heeded our pastor's wishes, we were dressed in black. We would walk around and at various points break into one of two skits. There were two main characters in one, the scene where Peter denied being a follower of Jesus three times, and one main character in the other, the scene in front of Pilate. The rest of us were people in the crowd whispering or shouting out on cue- "crucify him!" or "yes, he **is** one of them" or similar. The interesting part of the drama was it just happening right in the middle of everyone, and then we would be done, fading back into the wave of people- and boy, were

there a lot of people, especially during the final service. One could barely move at times.

So Friday I was there from about 3:30 to about 8:00. Then Saturday, I had to be back again at 1:00 for choir rehearsal, dressed and ready to sing. We warmed up on our own then joined the worship band in the worship center, put back together from the day before. I tell you, we sang for what had to be two straight hours on the entire worship package including our three songs and the five that the congregation sang together. Since the majority of the guys sang tenor, I decided to sing bass. Okay, let me not kid myself. Some of that music, if it could talk would say, "first tenors only-second tenors need not apply." Following rehearsal we had a short break before lining up for the real deal. I took this time to visit the 4th and 5th grade room. I talked to some of the other leaders and kids before I had to go. I would miss their worship time and craft time where they made crosses out of nails, but would be back during teaching time. The singing went well, and so did the 4th and 5th grade small group time. The teaching went well too, but it wasn't me teaching. In fact, due to choir I relinquished my own Sunday teaching time to someone else. Following two choir times, who knew how my voice would be?

Sunday we had to be back at 7AM, when we tried to watch a video from the night before. It was either a bad disc or a bad player, but most of the video was a rapid, silent fast-forward. Oh, well- that's technology for you. We had a short warmup and practiced a few of the songs, but not the entire set this time. We performed, then breakfast was waiting for us. Ahh... There's the real reason I serve. Kidding aside (we did have to donate for the food if we were able!) both Sunday services went great as well. I was back in the 4th and 5th

grade room after the second service where we ended up merging 4th grade small groups which was fine.

I went right to lunch from there, meeting my brother, nephew, mother, grandmother, and uncle for an Easter lunch (not brunch). We ate, we chatted and bantered, and afterward we went to my house for some pie and chatted and bantered some more. I'm tired of typing so I'll skip the detail here. As a bonus though, here are links to videos of most of the songs we did including the video shown at the start of our service with us singing. I couldn't include one song because it is an original from the musicians at my church and no one has made a youtube video with it. Most of these are not us, just videos pulled from youtube. Most. Oh, and let me wrap up with this- in case you did not return to the comments of my last post, I mentioned that I updated some of the pictures by adding larger versions, so check them out- it may be easier to ID me now. ☐

So anyway, the videos:

[vimeo]<https://vimeo.com/10678741> [/vimeo]

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What a week

The Thursday before last, I shot all of one car at two dealers- highly unusual, so on Monday that was more than made up for by having 18 cars to do between the same two dealers. Normally this would make me quite happy, but not so much on a Monday following a snowfall. For starters, I knew I couldn't leave as early as normal because the dealers needed time to clean up their lots. The first one was still doing it when I arrived. Monday nights I have small group at my church, so it is the only night I need to finish on time so starting late and then finding I had so many cars to do, some of which would have to be brushed off, was less than thrilling. I finished the second dealer a little before 7PM, then headed back. It was dark and I was traveling 50MPH, so I can probably be excused for not seeing the massive pothole in the right lane. I kept moving, but I feared it would cause my tire to go flat on the way home. It didn't and I was able to drive the car for the rest of the week, but when I brought the car into the shop Saturday because I needed a brake job, surprise! A \$500 repair bill. Actually, it was higher but he gave me a break (on top of the four brakes ☐) because my mother and I were good customers. \$210 was for the brakes, \$30 was for the oil change- that meant the rest was for the new axle and bearings on the potholed wheel. Incidentally, I was an hour late for small group, partly because I stopped to eat on the way.

Tuesday I found myself in supersized district to sub- a rare

occurrence these days as I can find few jobs available there even the mornings of. And sub I dd- in bilingual kindergarten. Fortunately there was an assistant with me for both classes- a different one for each class. The morning had Spanish-speakers who knew very little English. The assistant ended up running most of the morning. It was a struggle. Oddly enough there was a boy who I'm told actually knows English and very little Spanish, yet he was required to do everything in Spanish like the rest of the class! The afternoon was supposedly Polish-speakers (hence the different assistant) but all of them knew English so I was actually able to take charge of this group. I felt I accomplished much more with this group.

Wednesday I had only a half-day in, what do I call it again- next-door district? It was for middle-school math. The website said 7th grade, but when I got there I found out it was 8th grade. Oh well, the system has been wrong before. It was actually quite easy- most of the classes had tests, though I also went over homework answers. This teacher actually teaches five different classes out of her six teaching periods- unusual for middle school. Usually there are no more than three different classes, repeating the same lesson for more than one. Her one repeated class was in the morning so I only had two different lessons, though I did start the 5th-period class which would have been my third different plan. She arrived less than ten minutes in and took over.

Totally forgetting Wednesday when I had that entire afternoon free that there was a dealer in Barrington with two cars, I could kick myself when I realized I had forgotten and would have to fit them in Thursday instead. This is a small dealer that only has a couple of cars every few weeks. At least I did remember. Eventually. So I started off the morning by

going there. Of course, there had been some more snow Wednesday night so I didn't get there *too* early. I did the cars and was on my way to the next dealer when- 25-min in I realized I still had a set of keys from the first place. Oops. I turned around, angry with myself once all over again. The better part of an hour wasted. So I finally arrived at the next place, their lot cleared of snow, and found I had another bunch of cars like Monday. Two of them were too loaded with salt to do (hey, I just used three forms of a homophone/nym!), so I breathed a sigh of relief and headed to the final dealer with a good three hours of light to go, though it would be less by the time I got there. I finished with some light to spare. You are probably wondering about Monday right now. Yes, I did run out of light Monday, but when there is pressure to get things done at the end of the day like that I get all the photos out of the way first before I do the options and print the stickers, which tends to be the bulk of my time spent.

Friday I had only one dealer in the afternoon so I took a morning job in next-door district (still not sure if that's the name I gave it). It was for 3rd/4th grade. When I arrived, I said who I was there for and was handed a folder for a classroom that turned out to be 1st and 2nd grade. I looked at the name and it sounded right when I said it to myself, but while I didn't quite remember the spelling of the name I knew it didn't look right. I asked another teacher if this teacher taught 3rd/4th grade last year as sometimes that info doesn't get updated on the sub system (remember Wednesday). She thought for a few seconds and then informed me there was **another** teacher upstairs with almost the same name! I went back to the office to verify I was in the right class and found out that I was indeed given the wrong folder. Both teachers were out this morning, probably both for the same meeting I knew at least the one was at. I went upstairs

to let the other sub know we had been duped. She had almost the same story as me, knowing something wasn't quite right with the room she was in. We traded folders and I finally got a chance to look at the right plans. The morning actually went quite well. For the afternoon, instead of the usual two or three cars I had nine because for some reason the other photographer either didn't go there the day before like he usually does, or they didn't have any ready when he did which would have been strange considering nine were ready this time. Well, more commission for me I guess- something I will need because of the car repair bill. Sigh.

Saturday I was supposed to go cross-country skiing with a few guys from church, but when I called around Friday I couldn't find anyone who rented skis close by, and the one store that was recommended to me closed at 6PM Friday night, too early for me to go there. Well, I hope the others had a good time. Instead, I stayed home to receive that repair-bill shock...

Well, that was my week. How was yours?

Part II

Okay, long commercial break over. We are on Saturday now I believe:

7AM: Lights turned on outside in the hallway, I wake up for the last time with a little headache but much less exhausted since going to bed. I was exhausted because for three out of

the four days prior I was up before 6AM looking for subbing jobs. I found them, but the toll it took was severe. So another sub-8 hour night, but I figured I would survive. So everyone got up and I let some kids head to the bathroom to change out of their night clothes (they were too modest to change in front of others even if we were all guys- just wait until middle school boys, when you'll be changing in the locker room in front of even more people). Myself, I just wore my day clothes to bed- I had showered and put on some fresh clothes just before coming to the retreat so I would be able to do this. 20 minutes later, we were in line for breakfast. The end of the line. Oh, well. Eggs, sausage, french toast sticks, fruit, and OJ. Well, I *think* they were sausages- didn't taste much like breakfast sausage.

8AM: Eyes are really bugging me. The clothes weren't the only things I left on overnight. The contacts I have are extended wear, so I figured at least once I could wear them overnight. I had successfully worn them during naps before so I figured I could get away with overnight just once. My eyes disagreed. I put drops in when I woke up and several times since, but no go. Eventually I just gave up and went back to my room to take them out and put on my glasses. Unfortunately the damage had been done and my eyes would be bugging me for most of the day. So, time for session 2 now. Each session started with a video that was just pure entertainment. I came back at the end of this video to sit with my guys (the high school leader in my room was keeping watch while I changed into my glasses). Up front game again- this time it involved two from each team, a boy and a girl, one from my own cabin (you can figure out which one...). The boys had to wear shaving cream on their faces and the girls threw cheese puffs on them. Hilarious. At the end of the time the one with the most cheese puffs stuck to them would win. In the end I think one other team had more than us, but their boy made the mistake of

moving before they could be counted, losing half a dozen puffs. We won. Come to think about it, I think we won Friday night too. Worship followed with another four songs like last night.

9AM: Worship continued, and then Dr. Brian came on the scene and taught from Jonah 3, when the story started over with a better response from Jonah and this time and the Ninevites took the warning God gave them through Jonah seriously. According to the Bible, they all repented of their wicked ways and came to God, and He spared them. This has a fairly obvious (I hope) correlation to coming to Christ. We even ended the time with a prayer giving the kids an opportunity to repent themselves and accept Jesus. One of my guys raised his hand. Unfortunately for me I had to let my high school leader- did I mention he was my high school leader at camp just two summers ago?- take the pleasure in talking to him about it during small group time since we decided to split the group for today's small group times so we would each take five, and the boy who just accepted Christ was one of his five. Since my cabin was being used for piano lessons, we had to use the room across from us. We could have had both groups in there, but Eric decided to take his group elsewhere. We talked about listening to God and accepting Christ for the next half hour. My church being what it is, by fourth grade it seems that 90% say they have already accepted Jesus at some point, so I decided to lead the discussion in who Jesus is to them to let them see if they truly understand what it means to accept Him.

10AM: At this time we were supposed to start cleaning up the cabin. Of course with piano lessons we had to wait so I let them exchange phone numbers with each other instead before we finally had to sneak in and grab our coats for game time

downstairs. The game time was split in two this time with two teams playing each other in a game outside and in the gym. We were outside first. Has anyone ever played a game where a balloon is tied to your ankle and you have to try to pop everyone else's balloon before someone pops yours? This game was similar. A popsicle (still in its plastic!) was taped to the kids' arms and they had to try to rip them off of the other team. Once a child's popsicle was lost, he or she was out. Last one standing won. Well, at the end of the time the team with the most standing won, which was the other team. Oh well, can't win 'em all. No, the kids couldn't eat the popsicles during the game but they could at the end.

11AM: The teams switched. The second game was ice block relay. Only, one of the ice blocks broke so it became scooter relay instead, at least for the boys. I think next year they need to create extra blocks, several extras. Yes, this was the indoor game. One camper sitting on the block of ice, another camper had to push the other to the other end of the gym where they would switch places and come back. With one block broken, the boys were on scooters (the square variety that you sit on, not the sort that is long with a handlebar) the entire time while the girls got to play the game with the ice blocks. At this time I felt like I was coming down with something. I sat down most of the time against they gym wall. At the end of this time we had won three games out of four, but since they had won the popsicle game it looked like they won overall. We went back to our cabins to take off our coats and head down for lunch. We weren't last this time. ☐

12 noon: I have to say I was very disappointed in this lunch. It was chicken nuggets and mac & cheese. Only, there was nothing to dip the nuggets in and the other dish was more macaroni than cheese. In fact, I couldn't taste any cheese at

all. The economy is affecting everyone, and it certainly took a toll on the food here. One leader commented that he had eaten more junk over the last three meals than he had over the last six months. Hmm. Dessert was- not for me. I am one who doesn't like yogurt unless it's the frozen variety and this is what they served. Well, the lemonade was good. At the end of this meal I finally had to pull the pastor aside and inform him that I was running a fever and my eyes were **still** bugging me. Since I wasn't feeling nauseous he suggested I just stay and rest during the next session which followed lunch and see if I improved. After a short lunch, session 3 began. The game this time had something to do with singing familiar tunes, but I don't know exactly, nor who won. I was in the back of the room with my eyes shut trying to rest. The game leader I mentioned from Friday who stayed in our room because it was the one his boy was in kind of took over for me.

1PM: Session 3 continued. Worship, then the message by Dr. Steve on Jonah chapter 4 which I didn't hear, and then small groups. We had our small group time in our cabin (piano lessons were over) while Eric took his group back where they were earlier. Again, I didn't lead but sat while my stand-in took over. In the end he had everyone take turns praying, which I was willing to do at least, but he chimed in immediately after the last boy. No big deal. We got ready for the final game.

2PM: Outside first again, the game this time was shooting popsicle sticks onto the church roof with really big slingshots. You read that right. They would have to pass a popsicle stick from camper to camper with their arms only and then the last one would run with the popsicle to the slingshot, set it in place, pull it back, and hope the popsicle made it to the upper roof for the greater point

bonus. Then (s)he would run to the end of the line and start passing a popsicle all over again. Once all had the opportunity to shoot the popsicles, the game was over. Our team finished first if I recall correctly for both the boys and the girls (who were in separate lines), but I don't know who won for sure, only suspect from what place we finally came in for the entire day. The second game was inside the gym again, where we played human foosball. If you don't remember this game from the other times I've written about it, it's a game where the students are in four lines, hands held together, trying to kick really big balls into the other team's goal. The number of balls, and even the goals, changed over the course of the game. The other team toasted us, but that was only because of one leader they had at the end of the offensive line who kicked in a good 60+% of their goals. We had a leader at the end of our offensive line too, but he was smaller (a high-school freshman vs a leader in his 20s) and didn't score nearly as much. About this time I was on the upswing, feeling better overall.

3PM: Time for the group picture. Donning our coats once again, we headed back outside for the final time. The children's pastor, Steve, stood on the roof with someone else whose name escapes me and took a few pictures with his, I believe, video camera. Meaning in the retreat video there may be more than just a couple of still pictures of this event. Afterward, they both grabbed all the popsicles from the slingshot game and tossed them onto the ground. A few of the more competitive kids grabbed the and... threw them back up! It was wild out there for a bit. After the popsicles were gone from the roof, they started throwing snowballs down at us. This was more acceptable to be thrown back as snow doesn't make as good a tasty treat as popsicles, so more joined in returning fire. Eventually this all ended and we headed back in to clean our cabin and bring everything down to the gym.

After all, they would need the classrooms for church at 5:00. I made sure everything was picked up, and even had to look for the owner of a pair of socks. I found out when I got home that of course I left my own pair of socks from the night before (one article of clothing I *did* change). Hopefully whoever found them wasn't too disgusted as I had worn them for only a few hours.

4PM: All packs brought down and the room cleaned up, we started free time. This time wasn't really very free, but the kids were free to be in one of four places for the next hour and a half. In the gym they could play nuke 'em, another game returning from summer camp played on a volleyball court. They could watch a movie in another room- they showed Up!, a movie I recently watched in Blu-ray. In a third room they could play board games or, eventually, watch some of Wall-E. In the last room they could do crafts or play other games. I floated around this entire time, keeping track as best I could of my cabin. Most of my kids spent their time in the gym, so I did as well.

5PM: Free time continued until 5:30, afterwhich we had dinner. Dinner was better than lunch and consisted primarily of spaghetti. Not much to say here really.

6PM: Dinner wrapped up and we moved into the worship/lesson area and watched videos until church ended and the parents started coming in. Once everyone was there, the final up front game commenced. A father-son team was called up from the leaders who were there the entire time with their sons and they played the frozen t-shirt game, where wet t-shirts were folded up and frozen. The dads had to try to get them apart and on their sons. Our team won again, giving us at least

three of the four up front games. After this, we sang one worship song, Steve talked about the retreat to the parents, and jokingly as an afterthought the winner was announced. Since we came in third place, I suspect we won none of the big games. Remember, while I was able to see who won some of the games, I did not know who won Friday night nor who won the popsicle slingshot game.

7PM: Parents were permitted to take their kids home and the gym rapidly emptied of parents, kids and their packs. I got to go home and enjoy my fever which, while I was feeling better Saturday afternoon, still persisted through the weekend and made a return Tuesday, keeping me home from work.

Well, that's it. I hope you enjoyed the read. I just spent the last hour and a half writing this second part, so please excuse me for not going back and proofreading it. ☐

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Best winter retreat ever! I had so much fun that nothing could possibly compare. I wish I could say that was this weekend but that wouldn't be honest of me. For sure, many can say that and completely mean it as it really was a good retreat. The reason will become clear, and you may even find it foreshadowed before I come out with it. From the beginning:

Friday

6PM: Arrived shortly before this time, late for the 5:45 call time. I thought I was ready, but of course remembered a few more things before I left. At least I did remember everything. In the past I have been left with no pillow, no deodorant, or similar mishaps. Was given a gift bag at the meeting containing essentials- sugar, water, t-shirt, hand-warmers... The latter was most likely due to last year's bitter cold retreat- something that was blessedly not repeated this year, at least for this group (high school suffered just a couple of weekends ago). Oh, anyone for some gum? I got a box, but I don't chew it. Just send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope and I will ship it off. ☐ Meeting ended, we took our posts for check-in which began at 6:15. I was a greeter by the boy's area. For awhile I was a little nervous as I only had two arrivals for my "cabin" (room) while others had four or five, but I needn't have worried- in the end every camper (retreater?) of mine showed up- others weren't so lucky. I think about ten boys failed to show up- the fairer section fared about the same.

7PM: Check-in starts to die down. Did I mention all of my campers showed up? Actually, I did lose one. There are two mentally disabled 4th-graders at my church and their dads (who stayed with them) wanted to be in the same cabin. While changing cabin assignments was generally not allowed, we made an exception for them. In fact, neither of them wound up in their original cabin as ours were pretty full, but in one that had lost two boys who didn't make it. Anyway, throughout this time, after letting them drop off their things, we sent them down to watch [Jonah](#) until the arrivals trickled down. Jonah would be the theme of the retreat. At about 7:25, the last of us headed to the movie area where the intro was made and we were sent off to start the first big game of the weekend.

8PM: My assignment- auditor. I stood by an opposing team's drop-off bin, where the kids would drop off all their treasures. Oh? I never mentioned the teams? Well, there are four teams, following the theme from summer camp which was a medical theme this year. I was a Mr. Yuk over the summer but this time was a Red Cross. The cabins were actually given names. Do you remember when [Sly](#) mouthed "You're the disease- I'm the cure" (paraphrased) in a movie 20ish years ago? Well, the boys were the diseases with cabin names like H1N1, TB, and Mad Cow Disease and the girls were the cures (Neosporin, Aspirin, etc.). My cabin was SARS. So back to the game, auditors made sure the kids were following the rules. This may be church, but you know some kids- suddenly forgetful of the rules when it could gain an advantage if you know what I mean. Here's what the game was- in pairs, the kids would link up (hold hands or arms) and search for little plastic ducks and reflectors strewn all over the church. When they found one, they had to get to their team bin. Throughout this, there were over a dozen leaders going after the kids with dodge-balls in hand trying to "infect" them. That may sound like a lot of leaders, but we're talking about 150 kids! If infected, they had to drop whatever they might have been holding and hightail it to the medic to be "cured." There were a few hundred of these things strewn about so the game lasted for awhile.

9PM: Pizza! Well, maybe I should have left that exclamation point off- we're talking Papa John's here. If you're not familiar with them, think mass pizza chains in the style of Pizza Hut or Domino's and you will know what I'm talking about. We chugged down pizza and pop and got ready for the first session, which started shortly after 9:45 with an upfront game followed by worship. What is an upfront game? Well, one camper (sometimes two) from each team was called up

to play a silly or disgusting game- pure fun, though not always for the contestants... Tonight was licking names off of a tray. The catch? Part of what was used in the writing was sardines- eww. That's apparently what the contestants thought too as none of them accomplished much in the allotted time. Then worship began with singing.

10PM: The session continued. Four worship songs later, Dr. John came out to teach (medical theme remember). You know how busy doctors get, so Drs. Brian and Steve would round out the retreat the next day. Starting in Jonah, we traversed chapters one and two alongside Jonah, teaching the kids about consequences of trying to ignore God and how God always pursues His children. After the lesson we broke off into our cabins. We were running late, so we kept the large group of ten kids and two leaders together and discussed the lesson, including a reading from Psalm 139:

*7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
9 If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.*

11PM: Set up beds, get ready, and lights out. Another leader, the game leader of the week joined us- his son was in

our cabin. He and I, the “old guys,” naturally brought air mattresses to go with our sleeping bags... A little chaotic as expected, but by 20 minutes after lights-out time we finally got the boys laying in bed if not asleep yet. Someone came in with a ladder to unscrew the emergency light bulbs- you know, one of those lights that stays on 24/7 even if the room switches are turned off. This still left a flashing blue light from the router mounted in the ceiling unfortunately. I hope it didn't keep anyone awake. I got this bright idea that I would just leave my contacts in all night since they are extended wear after all. Up to this point I had done naps safely, so I figured why not? I had drops to put in my eyes in the morning.

Midnight: Finally asleep, or at least sometime before the next hour.

Saturday

Midnight-7AM: Z-z-z-z-wake up-z-z-z-z-wake up-z-z-z-z-you get the picture-z-z-z-z

(to be continued)

Football & Dreamcoats

Last weekend had some more involvement with kids than the usual weekend. In addition to the two services where I serve with 4th and 5th grades, there was an earlier event for single moms, a Christmas party. No, I am not a single mom, but I (along with another from my Monday small group) helped out by leading games in the gym for some of the boys who came with their moms. The age range was about 3rd grade through 7th grade, with a couple data outliers (I think that's the statistical term) in the form of one about six years old and another in 9th grade. What does football have to do with this? Well, Mike, the other one from my small group, brought along a football. We started with just one 7th grade boy, one I knew very well by the way since he was in my cabin at summer camp a couple years ago, while the younger ones were listening to a Christmas story in the other room. The three of us tossed around the ball for a bit before the rest came in, including more older ones (5th-9th grade) who joined us in a game of touch football played in half the gym- the volleyball ministry had the other half. While Mike led his team as QB, as a non-sports guy I let the 9th-grader take that position considering he plays at his high school. While we played, the younger ones played with various other balls, tricycles, and whatnot as Mike and I kept order. Eventually some left for awhile to do crafts or something in another room, but the football game kept going. It was a pretty fun afternoon.

The lesson for the weekend was part two of Joseph. Of course, most knew the story, but with these intermediate grades the focus is on application. In this case, obedience and perseverance in our relationship with God even when things in our lives aren't going so well. On Saturday there are three leaders who rotate teaching from week to week so I never teach this service, but there are only two of us for Sunday, though

somehow I still only teach every other month- huh. The other one does two Sundays a month while one of the staff rotates in the months I am not on. Well anyway this was my week so naturally I wore my bright yellow overalls I wore when I was in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat several years ago. I also sang from some of the songs from the show as we talked about Joseph before Pharaoh (where we left off last time), Joseph finally getting his reward after 13 years of obedience during hardship, and later Joseph before his brothers who were trying to get food during the seven years of famine. It was a fun lesson though I think I went a little long.

So that was my weekend in a nutshell. I'll have to think about if there is anything to write about my two days of subbing this week- one in early childhood, one in 7th grade science. Until then.

More of last week's news...

When mentioning costumes for the 5th grade class I subbed for last week, I forgot to mention one other costume. Or two, rather, though only one of them was in my class. It is strange it slipped my mind because this boy was wearing a video-game-related costume which was very good. He came as Mario, complete in the right colors with hat, large white cartoon gloves, and of course, mustache (though this piece kept falling off). I mentioned to him that with his build he might have made a good Luigi too, but his costume did have the extra padding to make him pudgy ala Mario. During the costume show, who walked across the stage with (I think) a third-grade

class but Luigi, which from a distance also looked pretty good. When our Mario waved to him I figured they were brothers, but when I asked him about it the only fraternal relationship was in the characters, so this just made for a cool coincidence.

I said I would mention Friday night, so I am finally getting around to it. Friday night was our second annual movie night for 4th and 5th grade. Last year we saw the excellent [Meet the Robinsons](#). This year was [Bolt](#). Having never seen this movie before I was looking forward to it even if I wouldn't really get to see if I had to keep too much of a watchful eye on the kids (as it happily turns out, my fears here were unfounded and I was able to watch the whole thing). Before the movie, however, there was game and pizza time. This year they separated the boys and the girls so one group was playing games while the other ate. We started out in the gym. There was a fun game set up called "the gauntlet" but before we did that we warmed up with another game, link tag. No, this has nothing to do with:

[collegehumor]<https://www.collegehumor.com/video:1923420>[/collegehumor]

though that's a hilarious Family Guy-esque video (click to see it in a larger size). It is a game with one (or a few) runner(s) and one (or a few) tagger(s) with the rest spread out, standing linked in pairs. At any time the runner can link up with one pair and the person on the opposite side would become a new runner so the pair doesn't become a trio. If the tagger tags the runner, the runner becomes the tagger and the former tagger links up with a pair and a new person becomes the runner. I think we had played this before a couple of years ago, calling it squirrel tag. After this game came- The Gauntlet. This is just as insidious as it sounds. The kids have to run through a course, going over or under as the course dictates, while trying to avoid getting hit by balls thrown by us leaders (heh, heh...). If hit, they would

have to go back to the beginning. For those of you crying "aww, no fair for the kids," don't worry- they got their turn getting back at us. I didn't make it very far...

So for food time, we had pizza. I was expecting the variety made in our church's kitchen, but it turned out they ordered from Little Caesars. The parents had to pay for this event, so why not? This was the time where we leaders got to hang out with a few boys sitting together, thereby selecting our small groups for the end of the night. After the boys grabbed their dinner, I waited a minute or so before grabbing my own and sitting down with four boys. There were almost a dozen guy leaders, so the small groups were quite small. There were more girls and fewer girl leaders present, so their groups I understand were a bit larger. Did I mention this was an outreach event? The kids were encouraged to invite friends who didn't normally come to our church, so it turned out that two of these boys were such invitees. In fact, both were invited by one of the other boys, but all four actually knew each other from school. After a brief time in conversation with them, it was time for the movie. We cleaned up and headed to the learning center where the movie was shown on two screens. We were supposed to sit with our groups, but the boys kind of crowded together, so I sat in the row right in front of them instead. Don't worry, the seating was tiered and the screens high up besides so I didn't block their view.

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As I wrote, we were able to enjoy the whole movie with no more distraction than some kids going to the bathroom now and again. They even provided popcorn for the whole movie experience. Now, I typically say I don't like popcorn all that much, but it is strange that I typically find myself eating it anyway, and this night was no exception. While not in the same class as Meet the Robinsons IMHO, I still enjoyed this movie about a dog raised thinking his "human" was a spy constantly threatened by the evil Dr. Calico (with his evil

cats of course) and that he was a superhero- managing to escape from his trailer, he heads out on a mission to save his human whom he thought was captured (they ended the day's shooting on this cliffhanger) but in fact headed home as this was after all just a TV show no matter what Bolt was raised to believe.

Finally, Pastor Steve came out and talked a little, focusing on superheroes and how God is the only superhero. It was just a bit more exciting than what I just wrote, but you get the idea. We then broke into our small groups and talked some more about it, ending with handing out Gospel tracts that folds in several ways to reveal the message. I actually picked up a fifth boy who hadn't been selected already by another leader so I may have ended up with the largest boy's group of the night. I felt the discussion went very well. The two visitors actually attended different churches, so they weren't as green as expected in an outreach event, but that was okay as I'm sure everyone still picked up something from the small group, especially on sharing Christ with others if they had already had a relationship with Him.

It was a great night- I can't wait for Winterblast in a few months- the overnighter at the church. The only disappointing time was seeing another fifth-grade boy at the church with his mom for a single-parents meeting who chose to not attend movie night because the ones he wanted to invite were not in 4th or 5th grade, which I learned was sort of a limit in this event though not strictly enforced.

Partially immersed

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If the characters above got rendered properly in your browser you should see Japanese writing. The proper response for me would be, say what? Of course, if I knew what that said the real response should be:

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Sorry, I guess you probably don't know Japanese either. The first question was, "Do you speak Japanese?" The response was, "No, I do not speak Japanese." When encountering a Spanish-speaking classroom, I always start with, "No hablo español, solamente inglés." (I don't speak Spanish, only English). It's fun to see the kids' reaction, especially if I add a little bit more from my severely limited Spanish vocabulary. With Japanese, I can't even begin. Three times in the space of two weeks I found myself in dual language classrooms- twice for Japanese, once for Spanish. What kind of class is this you may ask? I will answer. Once upon a time the way to teach kids a foreign language was to offer it as an elective in high school. Then, someone learned that the best time to learn new languages was as a young child, so they added the classes to the junior high curriculum (in some cases making kids take five different ones in sixth grade!). This trickled down to intermediate grades with one language twice a week like gym. Still not happy, the powers-that-be started dual-language classes allowing children as young as six to start learning a different language, and that is where we are today. In such a class, the younger grades slowly learn the language, and then they start instructing in that language as they get older for a sort of immersion experience. In the Japanese class, this means that for the entire afternoon teachers and students use only Japanese. The teaching assistant took over this duty of course since I would be unable to converse in or even understand Japanese. It was an experience not unlike working in a deaf classroom as I have done before, but knowing that I could converse with the students in English when necessary. This was sixth grade, so

they were on their sixth year of this. They seemed pretty proficient to me- having read Japanese books for starters and giving a book report in Japanese. When it came time for me to instruct, however, we all went back to English.

The Spanish class was 4th grade, so they weren't as proficient in their second language as 6th grade was in theirs. There were no book reports or the like in Spanish, though of course it could have just been the day. When trying to read the Spanish social studies book, it became clear many did not understand very well. Unfortunately I did not have a Spanish-speaking assistant at this time as I did for Japanese. When math time rolled around, the Spanish-speaking assistant finally arrived and I expected she might take over for a bit, but she didn't so we did the subject in English as I could do little more than the numbers and operations in Spanish. As it turned out it was probably a good thing we did it in English as they had a difficult enough time with the topic in their primary language.

So what's next, dual language French? Italian? I guess I may find out. It's odd that this is the first year I have been in this sort of classroom in all my years of subbing. Bilingual and regular foreign language classes yes, but not dual-language. This may mean then that the chances of doing it again are somewhat remote, so we'll see.

Missing them already

This post was written last Tuesday, before the last post, but the sentiments still apply of course. There was a video too, but unfortunately I did not get permission to post it here. However, once it is officially posted at the church website I will be allowed to post that link. Technically, the video is viewable now online via the site it's hosted on, but since the link isn't public yet it's still being treated as private. So, to the post:

Well, this last weekend was it. Maybe it was the way we went back to permanent small groups so I had the same kids each week, or maybe it was putting together the video, the first time I have ever made a video like this for 4th/5th grade, but I don't recall feeling this way about any other group of 5th-graders leaving. Maybe it was both. It's not as if I haven't gotten close to the students before, I have. There is even a select group who I shared a cabin with for two summers a couple years back. Maybe my memory is just faulty. I don't know. So two weeks from now we'll be introducing an entire new group of kids into 4th grade as we move this last year's 4th grade up to 5th. Due to the way things are done in the kid's ministry with 4th and 5th grades going to service with their parents the last weekend of every month, the 3rd-graders actually have one more week before they come to us as 4th-graders. This weekend was also the swan song for this year's drama for the K-3rd grade kids. This would ordinarily have been my week, but I had switched with someone who couldn't do his week last weekend. Ironically, I received a call on Friday night that the one playing the guest role for the weekend couldn't make Saturday night, so could I fill in for him? I did, which rather made things strange. I was performing with my cast, but not in my normal role. I did wear a false mustache and Fedora (can you guess the role type it was from the headwear? ☐) so I would at least look less like me in my other role playing a different role. Hmm, could that last sentence of mine be more confusing? At least you now share something with undoubtedly some of the kids who watched. ☐ . If you haven't yet figured out the guest role this weekend, I'll have to pull out my whip and... do something with it. So anyway, as it turned out the original actor couldn't make Sunday either, but the director filled in that day so I could at least spend an entire service with the very last 5th grade group at the 11:15 service. Yes, I do miss them.

While I'm waiting...

I wrote a post two days ago, but because it involves a video I need permission to link to and the ones I asked have yet to respond. Well, I don't really know if I've asked them yet or not- if I send an email asking a question, is it asked when I hit the send button or when they read the email? Apparently they are swamped at work right now. Sigh.

So, how about this week then? Well, on Monday I drove to Crystal Lake to observe a job photographing cars for online/magazine classifieds. While this sort of job is done by one person at any given dealership (or rather, group of dealerships) there were two there I was able to observe and question since one was in training. Training? I wasn't told about that, or the meager \$250/week during such training, but hey- it's \$250/week more than what I made over the last several summers. I guess it's roughly equivalent to an \$8/hr fulltime job, but only when training. After that, it's \$7/car commission. The ones I observed do around 100 cars a week, so that's \$700 per week right there. I called the owner back Wednesday and said I was still interested, and will meet with him next week.

Tuesday I felt like I was in uniform with the rest of the kids as I subbed in 4th grade. You see, the school I was at has a dress code (the only one in any of the districts I'm in as far as I know, well besides the standard stuff like no exposed midriffs, no beer t-shirts, etc). They can wear red or blue polo shirts with I suppose certain pants or shorts (not sure of the exact code on the legwear), and I just happened to wear a red polo shirt that day so I ended up matching a third of the class ☐ .At one point during the day all the red-shirts were grouped together in the same general area doing partner

work and I just had to comment on it. And for the Trekkie readers, yes we all survived as we weren't on an away mission ☐ .It was a pretty enjoyable day.

Wednesday I was in another elementary school subbing for an MI (mentally impaired) teacher. He had eight kids, mostly 6th grade, so they were in their last days at this school. So was the teacher apparently as he will be retiring after this year. In fact, there seem to be half a dozen retirees-to-be at this supersized district school- When parking that morning I saw no less than six reserved spots for retiring teachers, including the teacher I subbed for. I didn't park in his spot, but I wonder if I should have? Back to the class, Ironically, the largest student there was one of the 5th grade girls. It was mostly a day of simple things like alphabetizing words, identifying letters and coins, and reading a simple book with them. The end of the day had the students making predictions on how many blocks the kids could stack in a minute, then seeing how good their predictions were. There was one who liked making predictions of forty-something or seventy-something, even after seeing the last student stack less than 20. Well, I said what sort of class this is. They also made cards for the teacher which is how I really discovered he was retiring since I had mostly ignored the names on the reserved parking signs on the way in.

Today saw me back in supersized district for 7th grade language arts. For the first time in a long time, I saw one of my former students from church in one of the three block periods I had. This school apparently has an abundance of teachers as the average class size was only 15 students. In junior high. This would seem to me to be the probably first place for cutbacks if they have any for next year from our sagging economy. The students listened to a reading of [Rikki-Tikki-Tavi](#) by [Rudyard Kipling](#), which I just now discovered while finding these Wikipedia links is actually a short story in [The Jungle Book](#), which likewise I never knew until now is a

short story collection rather than a full novel. I knew the movies were based on the book of course, I just always thought it was a novel- you learn something new every day! Of course, never having read the book this was the first time reading this story for me as well.

So that catches me up for now. Hopefully I can move that one post from drafts tomorrow, just as soon as I get the permission I'm sure they'll give once they have a chance to respond to my email.

Misc Kid Updates

My 10 month old's physical appearance is about to change dramatically. Well, first, let me start here – he's been suffering from lethargy, crabbiness, diarrhea, and diaper rash lately. You seasoned parents out there know what I'm talking about – teething! Sure enough, the other day when we were playing and he was upside-down, I saw not one, not two, but THREE little tooth buds on his top gums. Poor little guy. So pretty soon, he will have a *mouthful* of teeth! I just hope that's the end of his awful diaper rash – he's been taking about 3 baths a day; it's one of the things that helps his sore little bottom. And being 10 months old, he's been doing all sorts of other things: climbing stairs, pulling things down, pulling himself up on everything... they grow so fast and it seems that his trouble is just beginning!

His 2-year-old sister, Disney has gotten a Dora the Explorer obsession from somewhere. She wants to watch Dora constantly, and it's so cute to hear her talk back to Dora on the tv – she is even learning Spanish as a result!

And today is their sister Sammie's birthday! She is

officially 5! We already had her birthday party, but I think we will take her out to dinner and maybe to the store. She has been a little better behaved lately, but still not as great as she was a few months ago – her behavior comes in waves, I guess. At least we're not stuck in horrible-acting Sammie-ness as a constant any longer – there have been glimmers of hope! She is getting ready for Kindergarten in the fall and has been practicing writing her name. A note about this – she would have aced the writing her name part already if we had just named her "Maps", a word she writes over and over!

Taylor is 9 and almost ready to go to middle school next year. You read that right – where we live, kids go to the middle school for 4th-8th grades. She is VERY responsible with her school work and also when it comes to taking care of their 4 pet rats, so I think she'll do well in middle school. We have noticed an increase in her displaying a poor attitude – typical tween stuff, but I wish my child was somehow exempt. Is there an exemption card I can get for this?

So anyway, there's just been a lot going on with the kids lately, and I wanted to share some things before time passed me by and they moved out of the house before I had a chance to blog it. TIME FLIES!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SAMMIE!!!!!!