



DAY 18

The Stories We Carry

Philippians 3:13-14 - "...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

The summer of 1997, I was a high school junior standing on the pool house porch at Camp Christian, caught between the sounds of splashing and ping pong balls. Tensions ran high as campers buzzed about next year's senior officers. Then I saw her—the girl running against my friend. My chance to put her in her place. I marched up, met her eyes, and fired off: "Just because you think you're so great doesn't mean people are gonna vote for you." Victory? Satisfaction? No. Her wide, tear-filled eyes and retreat to a counselor left me with a hollow ache. By nightfall, regret settled in, but I never had the courage to say anything.

Fifteen years later, I was back at Camp Christian—this time as a dad, husband, and pastor—when I saw her again. Would she remember me? I avoided her at first, but something pulled me back. Outside the craft cabin, I introduced myself, confessed, apologized. I meant it. She was gracious, brushing it off saying we were all "young and dumb back then." But it meant something to me and I think she appreciated it.

Walking away, I felt lighter. I had carried that moment for years, wishing I could forget the version of myself who let insecurity and loyalty twist into cruelty. But forgetting wouldn't change what happened. Instead, remembering taught me. Words can wound or heal. Regret can grow compassion. Owning my failings can shape me into a better person--more like Christ.

If I could go back and rewrite that moment in the pool house, I would. But I can't. Instead, I can press forward seeking to better follow the way of Christ. Strength isn't found in tearing someone down but in building others up. Grace isn't just something we receive—it's also something we extend. And the stories we carry—both the ones we cherish and the ones we'd rather forget—become part of who we are, shaping us into who we are still becoming.

God of grace, thank you for the lessons that shape us — even the ones we'd rather forget. Help us to live with kindness, seek forgiveness, and extend the same grace we have received. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

-- Rev. Chad Delaney