

Sawbill Lake Reflections

Last summer we had the privilege of taking a family vacation to the Lake Superior area in northern Minnesota. On the second day of our vacation a local businessman recommended Sawbill Lake, which was a little ways north and west from where we were staying. He had our boys especially interested with his wonderful fishing tales from Sawbill Lake. This man also called up to the lake to see if they had a campsite for us, and they did.

We voted as a family to take this stranger's recommendation and give Sawbill Lake a try. We packed up our tents and moved out from our already beautiful campground in Gooseberry Falls wondering what we were getting ourselves into. Honestly, I was the one who had the biggest reservations about relocating. Not only was there a ton of work involved with packing up camp with eight children, but we were going on the recommendation of a complete stranger! It sounded a little "fishy" to me, but the hope of being able to do some serious fishing was too great a pull for the older boys (and their dad) to keep us in the comfort of a non-fishing campground complete with bathrooms and shower.

At one point while we were packing up, one of the boys came up to me in private and almost guiltily admitted that this man had also said that we would have to take 25 miles of gravel to get there. Well, knowing how my husband felt about taking his cars on gravel roads, I instantly dismissed my son's concerns with "Oh, you know Dad would never agree to that, so I'm sure it will be fine."

After driving north to the turn off, we drove west for one mile and the road suddenly narrowed and turned into...gravel. It was the worst gravel road we had ever been on, and it was "washboard" gravel for 25 miles. We slowed our pace to a comfortable bounce and jostle. All we could see were trees and a gravel road that stretched endlessly ahead of us. As we drove deeper and deeper into the national forest, I kept wondering what we had gotten ourselves into. I took comfort in knowing that God is always with us and that whatever happened to the rest of the week's vacation was all in his plan. Secretly, though, I hoped that if we had made a foolish mistake, we wouldn't suffer the consequences in a dumpy, rundown, hole-in-the-wall campground.

After what seemed like forever, we arrived at the campground, and it was...absolutely beautiful. The check-in lodge was a newer building, and everything seemed very clean. The campground itself wasn't very big, but each campsite was very spacious. We picked out a campsite and set up camp. It was almost too good to be true! It was so quiet and uncommercialized. Everything was so pristine just like our friend had said it would be.

We went down to the lake, and we were the only ones around. The camp staff said that we could swim anywhere we wanted. We put life jackets on the little ones and enjoyed wading around the water's edge and climbing on the rocks that were in the water. The beauty was indescribable.

Sawbill Lake borders on the Boundary Waters area, so the next day we took advantage of renting canoes and taking a 5-hour canoe trip into the Boundary Waters. It was an awesome experience. From this little vacation into northern Minnesota I found time to reflect on many of God's truths and promises, which I would like to share with the *Beacon Lights*' readers.

The most striking thing for me was the pristine beauty and peacefulness of the place. The early morning sunrises breaking forth through the mist off of the lake, the hundreds of scented pine trees reaching up to the sky, the clear water with its world of rocks underneath, the clouds drifting lazily across the sky, the loons slowly paddling wherever the breeze beckoned them, the hush of the day as the sun set with all of its brilliant colors reflecting off of the water, the night animals calling out to each other through the inky darkness, and the stars in their brightness too numerous to even begin to count were all overwhelming in their magnificence.

Early one morning my husband and I got up to watch the sun rise over the lake. While we were sitting on the bank enjoying the stillness and the beauty, my husband offered to go back to the campsite and get the binoculars. Being already engrossed in the beauty I thought I would be content to just see things as they were, but then after a moment I started to wonder what it would be like to see everything through the binoculars.

He wasn't gone long, and when he returned we took turns looking at things a little closer up. It was absolutely breathtaking! All of the fuzziness that we could barely see with our natural eye was instantly cleared up. Things became sharper and more distinct, and the colors were more vivid. Each branch and needle on the pine trees across the lake became focused, as well as the crevices in the rocks along the shore.

After several enjoyable moments of taking it all in, thoughts drifted through my mind of how life will be in heaven. Sometimes we think that what we have in this life is already good enough. We are content with the way things are. We don't want our lives on this earth to end, but God promises us more! I John 2:25 says: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." He promises us a better life—an eternal life free from sin. Sure we see some of God's beauty here on earth and experience God's goodness, but entering heaven will be like seeing through binoculars. Everything will be better. Things will be more brilliant and clear. Life will be even more glorious and breathtaking! God's goodness and glory will be magnified!

Drifting along with these musings I was also impressed with the thought that so often we don't long for heaven like we should. If God promises us a better eternal life, shouldn't we yearn for that? How often we find ourselves striving for the things of this world but putting heavenly things on the bottom of our priority list. It reminded me of our instruction from the apostle Paul in Colossians 3:2: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." This is not always easy to do. There are so many responsibilities, commitments, and temptations in this life. There are so many things that keep our eyes on the things of the earth, and yet, we are told to set our affections on things above.

We, of course, cannot do this in our own strength, and our prayer is that God will help us long for His heavenly kingdom like we should. As God reveals himself to us more and more, may we be encouraged through the Holy Spirit to long after our heavenly life.