

Before we start, I need to be honest about one thing.

I did not want to like Calvary. In fact, the first words that came to mind as I walked through the front doors for the first time were not beautiful, or awe-inspiring, or even pretty. No, the words ran more along the lines of “old” and “rickety.”

I did not want to like Calvary. I was eleven years old, and this church was about to become the fourth church I attended since I was born. I guess I have my mother to thank for that. Her work as an organist-choirmaster in the Episcopal church has taken her all around the Memphis area. So wherever she goes, my family follows.

So when I found myself sitting on the couch in the living room on one Sunday afternoon, my parents sitting across from my brother and me, let's just say my reaction to the news that we were moving churches yet again was not joyous or celebratory in any way, shape, or form. I reacted in the way that you might expect any eleven-year-old to react when met with some sort of change.

I protested. Now there may have been a few tears, maybe according to my brother and my parents, but I don't personally remember any. But I was still very upset because I had just settled into our church at the time, Church of the Holy Apostles in Collierville. In a church as small as that one, I had finally learned just about everyone's name, gotten to know the rest of the kids my age there, and I loved running around the gym with my brother on days that my mom would bring us into work. The place felt comfortable, and to any kid, that's everything.

I guess what I'm getting at, is that I was frustrated. Frustrated that I was going to have to start some part of my life over again and tired of repeating a process that I had gone through three years prior.

And I think that's similar to how the disciples felt when we look in on them in this week's Gospel. They're tired, they fished all through the night—to no avail. They've caught nothing, and they just want to rest. But it was from that frustration, that an opportunity for abundance appeared. It appeared when they felt the most weary and worn out. But they gave it a chance.

When I first read this passage, I began to question: what made the disciples go back out onto the water? At this point, they had no idea that the man who told them to get back into the boat was Jesus, so as far as they knew, he could be anyone. Maybe it's just my impatience or extreme dislike of spearing worms with hooks, but if I was there, you would not see me back in that boat.

Was it the need for food, a desire for success, a certain feeling they got from the man who ordered them back out into the sea? We may never know exactly what made them do what they did, but I know for certain what made me give Calvary a chance.

It was the apparent abundance of love that I saw from every person and every thing here at Calvary. It was that love that made me “throw the net over the other side of the boat,” so to speak. When I walked into my first Sunday school here as a seventh grader, I was by default, the outsider. Some of the people

in the room with me had know each other since infancy, some had gone to school together, and some were even related. But it didn't take long for me to feel that same amount of comfort I had felt at Holy Apostles.

Some of my favorite memories from my time in the youth here have taken place at the lock-ins and on the mission trips that we have taken over the years. I mean, it's pretty hard *not* to bond with people you barely know when you're lying down under the insanely small pews in this church, hiding from the group of "zombies" in zombie tag. Or huddling together on the fourth floor, as someone tells the story of the monk that has haunted the hall. It's been ordinary times like these that I am retrospectively aware of the abundance of love that this place and its people hold.

But I have also seen love in extraordinary times too. I experienced it when a group of the youth travelled to Nashville to take part in a yearly mission camp called Collide. All throughout the week, we drove around Nashville to different project sites, doing as much good as we could. But no matter how hot it was, no matter how many hours we had been working, everyone approached the work with the most positive attitude possible. There were few complaints, which, as you can imagine, with a group of middle-schoolers, is an commendable accomplishment.

A group of us also spent a week of last summer in San Augustine, Texas doing hurricane relief construction work. It was a very labor-intensive week—one group laid the foundation for a home and the other did demolition work—but we all approached it with the same attitude that I now know to be a staple of the Calvary youth. After every one of these experiences together, we have ended with a "rock ceremony," in which every member of the team is recognized with a rock that describes their time on the trip. I am not able to say that I have walked out of one of those ceremonies dry-eyed, but few people *can* say that. It is in these times that I have been overcome with the amount of love that this group of people brings with them.

Another community and experience that has blessed me with God's love has been the Calvary Choir. Most of you see me up here every Sunday morning singing with them, and truthfully, it's because there's no place I'd rather be. I started my time in the Calvary Choir as a 9th grader, which meant that I was the youngest member of the choir by more than a few years. But these amazing people welcomed me just the same, which means I look forward to Wednesday night rehearsals and Sunday mornings for more than just the music.

In fact, I've been out of the country with the choir, and I can safely tell you that the spirit and love of Calvary travels with them. Every time I sing with this group of people, it allows me to feel faith in a greater power because I believe that something so beautiful must be of divine origin. When I look back on significant moments in my faith, I frequently look back on countless Evensongs and other services both here, and at Bristol Cathedral in England this last summer. I owe it to this group of people and to the music we make to showing me how powerful God and God's love can be.

Now that I am seventeen years old and graduating high school in approximately fifteen days, I could not be more excited to take the next step in my life and attend Princeton University in the fall. But that does

not mean that I won't miss Calvary and everyone here. I owe it to this church and to all of you for supporting me and showing me God's love every moment I was here. Ever since I cast my net onto Calvary's side of the boat, it has been overflowing with love, and for that, I thank you all.