

Timanous Chapel Sunday, July 22, 2018

James Temple

Good morning and thank you all for being here today. I'm so grateful to be up here this morning. Since the time I was a Mallard I've wondered if I'd ever get the opportunity to give a chapel, and if I did, what I might say...

I'm so humbled to think about how many people have stood here throughout the years. To think about how many stories of hope and brotherhood have been shared in this very space. To think about how many have sat in these very benches and looked up to the swaying branches or listened to the rustling leaves.

I wonder how much growth these trees have witnessed. Standing tall, watching over us as we grow over the years from boys into men - progressing through the bunk line and moving back up these benches. And for some, to do it all over again, the next time wearing green.

We all experience dramatic growth over the years at camp. If you don't believe me, just look at how big the Neafseys got... but physical growth aside, our industrious and active lifestyle here at camp makes growth inevitable. By the end of camp, we will become stronger swimmers, more accurate marksmen, faster runners, better firebuilders, more chilled out handicrafters...

But over the summer, maybe we will also learn to be more kind, or patient, a better sport, or more authentic. Maybe we'll learn what it means to be a

true friend, or how to be a hero to someone younger than us... This latter type of growth is hard. It takes more than showing up to activity periods. It takes looking at yourself and daring to be a more full and honest version of yourself. The most ripe time for growth happens when you're at your lowest, struggling through doubt and confusion. The most important moments of growth and transformation in my life have come at these times of facing the trials... as a homesick Mallard, a Loon separated from all my former cabin mates... A Crow, frustrated with a hard summer, not invited on the 5-day, scared I wouldn't be invited back as an Aide... jumping a few years later... I think of the time when I was forced to take a semester off from college, after injuring my shoulder playing lacrosse and learning that my mom's heart was periodically stopping... You can imagine the uncertainty and doubt that consumed me then, at the time I couldn't have imagined that period as one of the most valuable and important moments of my life. My mom recovered, and I found my path back to school and on the field, and back to camp. And I can't express how much growth and positive change came out of facing these trials and how much better I am because of it.

I want to be clear that when I think of the trials, I don't think of them as being as dramatic as what I've already spoken about. And they aren't anything inherently negative or wrong. Trials could be anything that is on your mind, anything you're working through, or any challenge that poses itself to you...

I think of the trials like ropes that are holding you back, threatening to keep you from being all that you can be. Anything that you can toil against and

lean into to break through. And when you do, you leave the hardship behind you, you shed whatever was holding you back and you become a bit more whole.

Trials can be tangible, like an elusive award or a grueling hike, or having a hard time hitting in twilight league, or maybe suffering an injury.

But they can also be of mind and spirit. Maybe you're homesick or are finding it difficult to make new friends. Maybe you're feeling distant from a close friend. Maybe you miss someone who can't be here this summer. You might be in the midst of a transition, a new school, or maybe you're at the crossroads of life and you don't know which way to go.

I'd like everyone to take a second to think about a trial you're facing right now. Anything you're struggling with or anything that's on your mind that you're working on...

The trials you face as a mallard will be different than those you face as a Cogle, or a Loon, or a Cardinal... the guy who sleeps on the top bunk above you will have his own trials unique to him... For some of the guys here today, this is your first chapel. Your trials are going to be different than the crows', most of whom only have two chapels left... two chapels left.

Everyone here, from the younger guys in the front all the way to the Crows, from the Aides, all the way to the super heads. Everyone is going through some trial of their own.

Once we recognize this we're in a much better place to help each other through our trials. We can stop getting caught up in ourselves, stop blaming each other, we can be more patient with those younger than ourselves, more forgiving of mistakes. Once we recognize that we are all in this together we can support each other, we can grow.

Although we all have our own unique trials, it doesn't mean we have to face them alone. In fact, the best way, the only way to grow through your own trials is to be supportive of others.

Just like everyone has their own trials unique to them, every one of us has our own gifts. Just as important as supporting each other through the trials, it is vital to celebrate each other's strengths.

I have a hard time accepting that sometimes. Sometimes I see how incredible and amazing the people here are and I can worry that I am inadequate. But we all need to realize that we each have our own way to give and that's okay. The difference in each other's strengths and the variety of people is what makes Timanous such a full and special place...

I may never be as funny as Nick Ribolla. Or as witty as Tommy Hauldren... I may never be as genuine as Charlie C., or as nice as Alex S.. I might not ever be as cool as the Pineman or Pat Hayes. I may ever be as dependable as Reed Spearman or as loved as Evan or as humble as Dan Prior. I might not ever boogy as well as Nate Kelsey or be as calm and cool as Jack Hamilton. I might not ever be as original as Leo F. or as

authentic as Owen M.. That Jim Poulin, well that's one heck of a guy. I might not ever be as kind as my brother or as strong as Sandy...

But this is all okay, because I'm so lucky to be surrounded by everyone here who in their own contributes something of their own.

Support each other through the trials... celebrate each other's strengths...