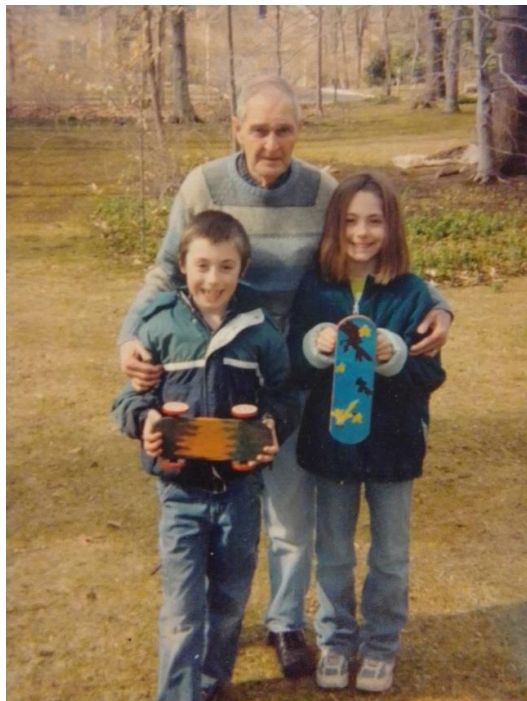


this memory would suddenly take on new meaning while I was in seminary and I read this passage in the Gospel of John:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3)

In the cross of Christ, there is a hope that transcends all earthly loss and grief. There is a hope that removes all sadness and uncertainty. That moment fishing so many years ago was like training for faith. My father knew we would go fishing again, and he knew I would make up for that day's losses. It was as certain as salvation. And, you see, the best thing about the salvation found in Jesus Christ is that, once Jesus has caught us, *His* line never breaks.

Pastor Mark



R. Byron Breese, Sr. (November 15, 1930 – June 22, 2014) with two of his grandchildren, probably around 2010.

(This reflection was originally published in a church newsletter at First Baptist Church in Niagara Falls, NY. It is among my favorite memories of my father, and what I chose to share as part of his eulogy.)

Daily Reflection
From
Pastor Mark

Community
Missions
OF NIAGARA FRONTIER, INC.

Sunday
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By: Rev. Mark Breese

Pastor Mark is the Agency Minister and the Director of Ministry & Community partnerships at Community Missions.

For Father's Day: Fishing and Faith

Once, when I was very young, my father took me and my brother out fishing at a Boy Scout camp in Northern New Jersey. In years to come, I would get to know that lake better than the lake that I grew up right next to in my home town. I went to summer camp there. Later I work there and teach Scouts to row, canoe, sail, and swim. I would stand in awe of the way storms could suddenly crash in over the horseshoe ring of mountains that were around that lake. I would learn what the fish liked best, where they congregated, and which old sunken stumps would invariably yield a fish.

Aerial View- Kittatinny Mountain Scout Reservation / Ashroe Lake - Fall



Early in the mornings, I would stand on a walking bridge by the dam at the end of the lake (it was man-made) and look over the 40 acres it covered and see the steam from the water hanging low, slowly

drifting above its glassy stillness. Sometimes, and probably foolishly, I would stand on that bridge on a stormy night and watch lightning flash between the mountains like a great burning spear, see it bounce off the lake, and feel the water and air shake with the force of the thunder. And on hot lazy summer days, I would stand in a lookout tower on a point jutting out from the cove that held the boatyard and watch the way young scouts, just discovering the joys of emerging manhood, would sit in a row boat or canoe for hours and look at that lake seeing, perhaps, some of what I saw—trapped by its peace and beauty



Of all the memories of this lake though, I remember most often that first fishing trip there with my father and brother. Because it was a Boy Scout camp, the lake was not open to the public. That meant that it was not fished very much, except for only a few months each summer and occasionally by people who got permission from the Scouts to go there at other times.

Usually, it was a trade. If you went and fixed up something at the camp, then you would get to stay for a few days and fish. This was something that our family tried to do every spring during much of my youth. My father would go and usually work on repairing some of the sails for the sail boats, or fix leaky canoes or row boats. Then, we would go fishing.

On this first trip there (for me anyway) we went out fishing in a row boat, casting rubber worms at the shore line and by stumps. I remember vividly the first time a bass grabbed my line. It was this big tug, like someone had suddenly dropped a rock on the end of my line.

Then, there was nothing. The line had broken. This would have been no big deal except that it kept happening. (Later we discovered the reason. The line on our rods had, for some reason, deteriorated since

the end of the past summer. Instead of being 12 pound test, it was breaking at 5 pounds!)



On that day, we lost lots of fish. One pickerel that we managed to get nearly all the way to the side of the boat was longer than the blade of our oars. Huge! Then the line broke.

This may all sound rather sad (and at the time it was...I was only 8 or 9 and there were tears) but *now* what I remember most was my father's smile and determination. I know now that his heart was breaking more that day than mine was. But he never gave up. When a rain storm finally drove us in, still doggedly trolling one of our few remaining lures, which was eventually sacrificed to the breaking line as well, I remember how he hugged me and held me for just a moment, there in the rain with the thunder just starting to roll in.

It was not a gesture of resignation, or even just of comfort. I remember that moment because of my father's smile as he wiped the tear off my rain stained cheek and said it was time to go because it was not safe to be out in the boat any more.

At the time, I never wanted to fish again. It was too tragic of a sport. But in my memory of that day, my father seems to stand there as a pillar of faith. In years to come I would see that moment in my mind's eye whenever there seemed to be no hope. Many years latter