

“Children, Teach Us How to Share, Give, Grow, Love and Praise”

A sermon offered by W. Dale Osborne

July 13, 2008 – VBS Celebration Sunday

“I have a shiny penny”, said Tessa as she smiled and showed me the very shiny penny in her small hand. Tessa, along with nearly 60 other children, was seated in this sanctuary every morning at 9:00 am this week for Vacation Bible School. The penny was an important part of the opening exercises each day. As the sounds of the rainforest played over the speaker system children passed around an offering basket row by row. Tessa, and all the other children had been encouraged to share on that very first day of Bible School. This particular time was a chance for them to share their coins or dollars. Every penny collected would be sent to Brazil to help our friends in Vasco da Gama as they try to buy furnishings for their Community Youth Center.

Brazil was a wonderful country to highlight during VBS as we learned about our theme – Rainforest Adventure. Part of the Rainforest runs through Brazil not too far from where our friends in Vasco da Gama live. Did you know that today in Brazil, our own dear friend Bob Bratcher is preaching a sermon in Portugese to commemorate the 80th anniversary of his baptism at the First Baptist Church of Rio de Janeiro? We offer Bob our prayers of support as he connects all of us to Brazil today. Bob is sharing his love for God in his sermon today.

Now how much do you know about the Amazon Rainforest? I bet our VBS children know plenty. Can any of you tell me something about the Rainforest?

You are all very bright children and very good listeners. You have probably come to understand that the Amazon Rainforest is one of the most sharing, giving and growing places on our planet. The Amazon Rainforest has been described as the "Lungs of our Planet" because it provides the essential environmental world service of continuously recycling carbon dioxide into oxygen. More than 20 percent of the world's oxygen is produced in the Amazon Rainforest.

Over 80 inches of rainfall descends upon the rainforest each year. The rain and the lush green plant life allows for more than half of the world's estimated 10 million species of plants, animals and insects to live in the tropical rainforests. One-fifth of the world's fresh water is in the Amazon Basin. The wealth of creative energy that our Creator shared with this world through the rainforest is astounding and even overwhelming at times. Children, can you tell me the three rainforest animals you heard from every day in Bible School? And do you remember one of the ways the Fruit Bat taught us to help things Grow? We heard about this growing method in our story from John's gospel. That's right, sometimes we have to prune dead vines in order for more vines and

blossoms to spring forth. Jesus described God as a faithful gardener who provides ways for us to grow in this world. How are some of you growing?

You are all growing in some many different ways. It gives all of us such joy to watch you all grow. Now, can any of you name some of the children who have grown up in VBS and are now serving as VBS helpers and teachers? It gives all of us great joy and pride to watch these children grow up in the church and then choose to share their love for God by sharing their God-given gifts with you in Vacation Bible School.

Now on the last day of Vacation Bible School, something happened away from the church that gave all of us a chance to Praise God with a loud Hallelujah. Do any of you remember what happened away from the church that was part of our prayer time on Friday? It was a wonderful celebration of something that had been growing inside of Beth for almost 9 months.

You are so right children. The birth of Beth's baby was a time of celebration for the love that God has shared with us through the birth of a new beloved child of God. Beth and Brian's baby gave us cause to praise God over and over again that day. When their baby is old enough to come to VBS, you can remind him that he was born on the last day of your Rainforest Adventure. He came into the world at a time when all of you were showing us how to share, give, grow, love and praise God. Now, children of VBS at Binkley, I want you to have a chance to share the sounds of a Rainforest Adventure with the whole congregation. Your teacher Camellia is going to come forward and help us all to imagine that we are part of the Rainforest Adventure that God has so abundantly shared with us.

And now, beloved children of God; beloved teachers helpers and students of Vacation Bible School; beloved members and visitors of Binkley Baptist Church, will you please stand and join with me in our affirmation of faith.