

All In

Christ the Redeemer Church
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23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 12:38-44
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I almost decided to not preach this sermon. I did not want you to think I was pushing Christmas too soon. But then one of you emailed me last night and told me you had spent yesterday putting up Christmas decorations at the entrance to your neighborhood. You and the Neighborhood Association president decorated together and ended up discussing church and theology and all of that stuff that has nothing to do with Christmas decorations. So I decided to go ahead and go with this Christmas story sermon today. It takes adults to prepare ahead of time for Christmas.

Warren Buffet, the most successful investor in our time, spent 44 billion dollars this past week to buy a railroad company. His reasoning? He said, "I am all in on this one. I have confidence in the success of the American economic future." I grew up on Monopoly. You can get any of the four railroads for \$100 each. 44 billion is quite a purchase.

All in. It is an interesting term. All in.

In the game of cards called Poker, sometimes a player will feel so confident about his or her hand that they shove their entire pile of winnings into the center of the table and declare to be "All In." Not holding anything back.

Napoleon burned bridges his armies crossed so they could not retreat. They were All In.

Successful marriages require All In. Most of your jobs and professions require you to be All In. Raising a kid requires an All In approach. First-year college students learn that college requires an All In approach.

Warren Buffet bought a six-pack of coke bottles for 25 cents back when he was six years old. He then sold the individual bottles for 5 cents each, making a 5 cent profit.

Later in life when he applied to Harvard Business School, they rejected him, saying he was "too young." Worst rejection story in the world of universities. By the time he graduated from high school he had made and saved \$5,000 from his newspaper route. As a youth he was already a numbers and investing genius. From the time he was a little boy he could amaze people with his ability to calculate large columns of numbers in his mind.

Daniel's English professor asked him recently if he wanted to get an A grade in English. He has been getting solid Bs on his English papers. He told her he wanted to get A's, she set up an appointment with him so she could tell him what she is looking for in a paper, and it was just as I thought. He writes well and writes a strong paper. She told him he needs to open up with clearer thesis and then do his strong supportive writing.

He writes like his mother. He does not open up with a clear thesis. He wanders around a bit and takes you on a journey. Like his mom. No, he got this from his dad. He has spent too much time listening to my sermons. I like to take the listener on a journey.

Jesus sat near the Temple moneybox and watched people put in their money. The rich ones gave a lot and a poor widow gave but two small copper coins, which were worth a few cents. Jesus said she gave more than all the rich people did. She was All In.

What does all of this have to do with us this morning? The poor widow was All In. Jesus sat there and watched who gave what to the offering plate. We preachers could not get by with that today. But Jesus actually watched who gave what. The poor widow was All In.

I got a call this week at 6:00 am. A man who is new to following Christ told me, "Gary, I am All In on this church stuff. I have taken charge in my family of this part of our lives. I am taking the lead. I will lead the Christmas play." His name is Pinky.

Last year Tiffany took the lead in giving our church its first Christmas Play. It was wonderful. She went All In and gave us a great gift. But her plate is full this year.

So this year we have a Texan guy named Pinky leading our Christmas Play. The play is entitled What if Jesus Had Been Borne in Texas? Obviously named by a guy.

Pinky is odd. He approaches this church stuff as if his life depends on it. He approaches this play as if the future of his kid's lives depends on it. He is All In.

I told Pinky to think outside the box on this play. He said, "Gary, I don't even know where the box is." He is new to this thing called Church.

Why would Warren Buffet buy a railroad why would a guy name Pinky want to lead a Christmas Play entitled What if Jesus Had Been Borne In Texas? To go All In.

Pam and I had been married three years and she agreed to follow me into full-time ministry. We quit our jobs in California and moved to Texas so I could finish college and attend seminary. After a month or so, I changed my mind. Decided to go back. Pam went with me to Austin so I could go back to my old job by crossing back over the bridge.

Turned out the bridge was burned. New policy was --No returning to my old job

This is going to be a tough Christmas for many this year with the economy the way it is. The only good option we have this year is to help some others, eat well, and have some fun at the church Christmas Play. Actually, Pinky told me the Christmas Play will include an outdoor campfire with the Kyle boys, some Texan Firemen, some homemade chili, and some Texan animals around the manger. The manger will be by the campfire.

Any member of a new church like ours is All In. I am All In on this Christmas Play.
Amen.