

*A Blinkin' Easter Bunny, Chicken-eatin' Methodists, a Bear, and a Donkey*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
March 28, 2010  
Palm Sunday

Luke 19:28-40  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

A WWII veteran bought a *Letters from Boerdonk* book yesterday at the Hays-Caldwell Women's Shelter fundraiser and asked me to sign it. He was wearing a WWII cap that identified his unit. He served under General Patton. He and I had a good talk. He was about 90 years old or so. Said every day since WWII he wakes up just glad to be alive since he lost so many close friends in the War.

He and his wife are chartered (founding) members of Canyon Lake United Methodist Church. He said, "We are chicken eatin' Methodists." Chicken-eatin' Methodists.

This sermon will include a chicken, a donkey, a bear, and a blinkin' Easter Bunny.

I have a confession this morning. I never told you the complete story back in November. When Duane hit his hole in one on that foggy morning, I preached an entire sermon on it entitled "Golfing in the Fog." I even dedicated that sermon to our dear friend Scott Anderson who is my age and had just begun chemo treatments for leukemia.

I did not tell you the entire story. I did not tell you how much I lost that day. For 25 years Duane and I always played that if you got a birdie, you won \$2. Eagle \$5. Hole in one \$10. It started out years ago at dimes and quarters but over the years it expanded.

So...it was foggy and no one could see and dumb me got all confident prior to our first shot and I said, "What the heck? How about we play \$5 birdie, \$10 Eagle, and \$20 for a Hole in One today in this fog?" He shrugged and agreed. We had never hit an eagle or a hole in one so it never really mattered.

First thing I thought when he hit his hole-in-one on the par 3 155-yard hole over the ravine in the fog was, "Darn. I don't even HAVE \$20 on me." I pay with debit card! So I have owed him \$20 since November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Susan is joining Christ the Redeemer Church today. Her colleague Pam Jacobs told me that Susan recently asked, "What am I agreeing to do by joining the church?" What am I signing up for today? What am I getting myself into today? I told her I have wondered all of my life, since my river baptism, what I got myself into when I became a Christian.

The disciples had little idea what they were getting into that day when Jesus told them to go get him a donkey. A parade was about to happen. Lots of laughter. Lots of excitement. None of them had any idea what was about to happen the following Friday in town.

Once Pinky asked me what would happen when he joined our church. I told him that

nothing would change...life would just keep happening the same as before. He looked at me and said, "Well, that is kind of disappointing. I thought something would change."

Nothing inside the frame, called life, changes. But with the right frame everything changes. Nelwyn Moore the counselor calls this "reframing life." Nothing changes but the frame changes everything. Larry Weston the artist used to emphasize the importance of the frame to the painting. How you frame your life changes everything.

Go get me a donkey. You boys are in for a ride on this donkey in this parade. Just walk with me to Jerusalem and let's see what happens. Join the parade with me.

Tom Bartels, dear friend in Montgomery, Alabama, is a Lutheran at heart. I told him that I recently played golf here in town with a leader in the local Lutheran Church and that the Lutheran leader told me all about his choir ministry. I asked who the minister was at his church and the guy said, "I don't remember our minister's name."

I love that line. *I can not remember the name of my minister.* The Lutheran guy said, "Our minister is just the interim minister." I said, "We are ALL interim ministers. I can attest to that." I wrote my Lutheran friend in Montgomery and told him the story.

Tom wrote me back and said, "This is typical of what I call liturgical church members. They can have a meaningful worship experience regardless of the quality of the sermon...however, the **quantity** (length) of the sermon can ruin a good worship experience!!"

What have I gotten myself into, Lord? They don't even recall my name!

I have played golf at least once a week ever since Curtis' funeral. Life is too short to not play. I called Duane last week and asked him to meet me in Bastrop early Friday morning to hit a round. Talk preacher talk. He agreed and said, "Don't forget to bring me the \$20 you owe." I told him I just scheduled a root canal rather than pay him his \$20.

I took the Score card from that November 6<sup>th</sup> hole-in-one, signed by him and myself and dated, to Hobby Lobby and told them to frame it. And to frame the brand new, crisp \$20 bill IN the frame, under glass. Duane will have to break the glass to get to the money. And I added a copy of my newspaper article about the Ace, which includes my photo. I crack myself up some days. This was getting fun. Spending \$50 on a frame to hide the \$20 bill behind glass to prevent Duane from spending his \$20.

Preacher humor. The guy at Hobby Lobby laughed, read the article and said, "So you are a preacher?" I said, "Yep." He said, "Preachers are not supposed to gamble." I said, "Preachers are not supposed to lose. Now be quiet and just frame this article, score card, and \$20 bill." It was beautiful.

Duane had no idea what he was getting into in life in 1973 when his Air Force dad moved him from Colorado to Edwards Air Force Base. Duane was a freshman in high school and was not happy about the move. His parents made him attend chapel and they made him

attend a youth camp at his new church. I was his high school counselor at that camp. I carried this Teddy Bear to bed with me. Duane was already over 6 feet tall as a freshman and he just stared at me and my Teddy Bear. I said, "Hey, where is YOUR Teddy Bear? How can you sleep in this cabin without a Teddy Bear?" He just stared at me.

Now we are both preachers. What a donkey ride it has been over the past 37 years. He did a funeral service last week for a girl in his church. 16 years old. She was driving and turned in front of a pick-up truck and was killed instantly. The Funeral was held in the high school to accommodate the hundreds who attended.

Duane said, "You can not make something good out of that one." He is right.

Don Fatout just got asked this week to make and sell a large number of hand-made wooden pocket crosses to a very dear Air Force friend Chaplain Bill Burrell. Bill says he wants the "Special Crosses made by a Special Man" to give to special people in Virginia...veterans in the Veteran's hospital, chapel workers who have served the Lord for over 20 years in the same chapel ministry, etc. Special people. Special Cross. Special Cross Maker. Bill wants a photo of Don and a biography of him to give out with the crosses...to let Special People know who the Special Man is who made the cross.

Napoleon Hill liked to tell a story about his grandfather, a wagon builder in North Carolina. When the old man cleared the land for cultivation, he always left a few oak trees in the middle of the field at the mercy of the elements, unsheltered by other trees in the forest. It was from those trees that his grandfather made the wagon's wheels. Because they were forced to struggle against the fury of nature, they grew strong enough to bear the heaviest load. Welcome difficult challenges, for the greatest opportunities will come from challenges that force you to expand your mind as you search for creative solutions. During life's bleakest hours, take solace in the face that you are strengthening yourself through struggle so that in the future you will be prepared to take on even greater challenges. Like the old oak tree, you grow strong only when you are forced to struggle.

What happens when you join a church? Nothing. Same job. Same town. Same house. Same kids. Same co-workers. What changes when you join a church? Everything. Everything changes. Preacher humor. His life has never been the same since being in that camp cabin. This was supposed to be about this Blinkin' Easter Bunny but this little story ended up with a chicken, a Teddy Bear, a donkey, and this rabbit. Life starts out one way and ends up totally different. Hang on. Just untie the donkey and follow Me.

Amity is placing membership at First United Methodist Church in Auburn today. This is her first church to join other than mine. I am so happy for her and for her new church.

Some tough days...an oak tree in the middle of field. Go get the donkey, boys and girls. This is gonna be a parade and a ride you will never forget. Susan, do you still want to join this church in order to serve others? If so, come on down and join the parade. Amen.