

Chasing a Boat in the United States on July 4th

Christ the Redeemer Church
July 5, 2009
Green Sunday after Pentecost/July 4th Weekend

Mark 6:1-13
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Most times we really do not know much about the person beside us at church, at work, in our homes, and in our lives. The people in Jesus' village did not understand Jesus. To them he was just a carpenter's son. Sometimes we are blind to who is beside us.

I sat beside Jacek in US Military War School for several months in 1993. He was the first communist Polish officer to attend a US Military War School in the history of Poland. I sat beside him for six months before I found out that he secretly was a Christian.

When I asked him if he wanted to go with me to Purgatory over Christmas break, he said he would rather go to Heaven. I then told him that if he went with me to Purgatory that it was so beautiful it would make him forget about all of this Heaven talk. Then I told him Purgatory was my favorite ski resort in Colorado. So he went with us. He loved driving across this country to Purgatory. He could not wait for his wife and three daughters to come to see the United States some day.

Yesterday Pam was riding in the ski boat on Lake Martin in Alabama with Amity and Amity's boyfriend Will and his family. The others had skied and they asked Pam if she wanted to try it out. They did not know Pam. Pam surprised them by immediately saying "Sure. I don't know if I can get up on the skis or not." She had on her bathing suit so she jumped in the water, much to Amity's surprise. (Photos of her skiing are attached).

The throttle was pushed up and the boat took off. Pam popped right up on the skis much to everyone's surprise. She stood up, went back and forth over the waves, and stayed up on the skis so long that they had to threaten to run the boat upon the beach to get her off the skis. She is an excellent water skier. She skied all over Lake Martin. Never fell.

Amity is 27 and never knew her mom was a water skier. It had been 45 years since Pam water skied in Georgia for hours on end as a 10-year-old girl. Snow skiing is something she endures. Too cold. She once told me that if it gets hot enough on the snow ski slopes to wear a bathing suit and ski then she will enjoy snow skiing.

I loved hearing of how Pam was grinning while water skiing yesterday. Amity never knew her mom could water ski. You never know much about the person sitting by you or raising you, do you?

I am glad Amity got to be in the boat with her mom for that moment. Earlier in the week I asked Pam if she would go with me to Tennessee to visit my dad in a nursing home. She said, "Yes. I will support you and your stuff." I loved that line. She has lived her adult life supporting me and my stuff. I was so glad she got to water ski and to laugh with Amity.

Marriage and being a citizen and being a friend includes supporting the other person and their stuff.

I called U.S. Air Force Major Shawn Kitchin in Tennessee yesterday and asked him if he would be willing to drive my paralyzed dad from Tennessee to Ohio to move him to a nursing home in the state where most of dad's family lives. Shawn immediately said, "Sure. Just tell me what date you want me to drive him there. Easy."

What a blessing such a friend is, huh? You never know who is beside you.

Jacek and I and Pam and others went boating in Mississippi years later when he was back in the United States for another military school. He had never driven a boat before since his country had few lakes and fewer boats. He loved being in America. We are blessed.

And Daniel spent this weekend sailing on a boat in Bavaria in southern Germany near Austria. His German friend wanted to give Daniel this sailing trip as a farewell gift. Friends and freedom are two wonderful gifts in life. We are blessed. Amen.