

Fun and Constant

Christ the Redeemer Church
January 31, 2010
4th Sunday after Epiphany

Luke 4:21-30
Rev Gary L. Smith
www.christredeemerchurch.com

After the burial for Captain Pena on Friday at Ft. Sam Houston military cemetery in San Antonio, everyone just quietly walked back to our cars. What do you do next after such moments? Bill Breedlove came over to me and invited me to join him and Jackie for lunch at a nearby restaurant. I was lonely at many levels and that invitation to dine with someone meant a great deal to me. Plus I was hungry! I hope today's invitation to Communion Meal is equally meaningful to you.

Kevin Ryan thanked me this morning for all the email descriptions the past few days of the memorial and Mass and interment ceremonies this week. Kevin said, "The scriptures talk about each of us being a body part in the Body of Christ. You have been our eyes and ears this week. Thank you." That meant a great deal to me.

"He passed through the midst and went on his way." There was great trouble and danger as the rages of life faced Jesus and he "passed through the midst and went on his way."

Sometimes the only thing we can do when facing raging storms in life that threaten our existence is to pray for strength to pass through the moment and go on our way.

My favorite picture of the Lord is the one of the Laughing Jesus. Long week for many. I mailed a large mortgage payment check on Monday to Sylvia in my mom's small town. We have been paying for 15 years on the trailer and lot that mom lives in and on and a balloon payment was due January 31. I mailed it on the run Monday morning and then emailed Sylvia that her that the check was in the mail. Yesterday Sylvia emailed me and said that I accidentally put her name on the envelope but mom's address. I said, "My God. I can not believe I did that. Well, actually I CAN believe I did that." She wrote and told me that Mom brought the check to her and they laughed and schemed...Sylvia was going to tell me she did not get the check and that she saw mom on a huge shopping trip.

Fun and constant get us through life.

Susan Bridges, wife of 29 years to Hollywood actor Jeff Bridges, says that "Jeff is fun and I am constant" when describing their marriage and how they raised their kids. Jeff was always working but he was fun when he was around. And she was constant, always there to raise the kids. Every relationship and situation needs a balance of fun and constant.

I asked Jackie to give a 2-minute testimony of Why I am Glad I am Baptized and Why I So Love Playing the Piano for God's Glory, which included a piano piece. Last night she told me, "My testimony is 4-minutes long. You just have to cut your sermon short."

Constant. Friday night at midnight Melanie Jones called me from the ICU unit in Beaumont, Texas. Her father had been rushed to ICU.

Pam asked me yesterday morning, after waffles, "What are you going to do today?" I said, "I am going to buy a pig." She said calmly but immediately, "You are not going to bring it home, are you? I said, "Trust me." She said, "Right. Tell me you are not bringing home a pig." I kissed her good-bye and told her she sounds like all the other people in CTRC who donated toward the pig. They ask, "I don't have to feed it or keep it, do I?" I say, like a good pastor or politician, "just trust me and write the check."

Daniel asked where I was going. I told him I was going to buy a pig. He said he had asked for a dog, not a pig. I told him that when he was a little boy he asked for a dog and we gave him a guinea pig instead to trick him because he was young and would not know the difference.

After a few weeks he asked us why his new dog never barked, why it never followed him around, and why it lived in a cage. Fun and constant. We dumped the pig for a puppy.

So yesterday ten of us church members bought a Grand Champion #1 first-place ribbon show pig yesterday at the auction. Pig is named Cash.

Several church members here in town pooled money and went to a pig auction at the Youth Lifestock Show and bid on a show pig. The pig was raised by Will in our church His father is not around for the moment. Our church family looks for ways to help and support every youth in our church that way.

I got interrupted at the auction with a call from the hospital. Fred Timms, 86-years old, had been admitted for uncontrollably bleeding. Georgie called to tell me. I said I would go see him and Georgie said, "Fred would love that."

I went to the hospital and waited an hour in his room until they brought him back from tests. When he was rolled back to the room he said, "Where have you been? I have been waiting for you." I told him that if he had called me earlier in the day I would have been there and that it was his fault that he was there for 12 hours before I got there.

Then I said, "I came to get your pig money from you while you are still alive. You owe me \$50." He said he did not have his checkbook and that it was in the car. I told him to give me the keys to his car. He just looked at me.

Then the nurse came to his defense. She said, "Are you family?" I said, "No. I am his pastor. My job, to be it in theological language, is to give him hell here on earth. And I am doing my job." She and the other staff members starting laughing hard. Fred laughed even harder.

She said, "Fred is medicated and he is not legally allowed to write a check for 24 hours." I told her I have never had a parishioner give me such an excuse for not writing a check...that he was on drugs and could not legally write a check. Fred agreed with her.

Soon two more church members arrived so there were five of us in the room, the staff was working on Fred and trying to find some place to get blood out of him while I was trying to get money out of him.

He asked how the pig was. I said, "Well, you are one tenth owner of a pig. Which part do you want?" He is having problems with his lower end of his body and he said, "Give me the rump of the pig and they can transplant that part of the pig to me."

I told him he did not own it until he paid me the \$50 he owed me.

Out in the hallway I told the nurse that I hoped all the laughter was not too much for Fred. She said, "No, laughing helps." I told her I have been a hospital chaplain and seen too many times when patients have no one to visit them, so I figure too many people and too much laughter is better than no visitors. She totally agreed and asked where our church was located.

Mae Smith wrote and said, "Wouldn't it be nice to hear our tribute before we die? Well, unless you are a cubbies fan – that would be hard."

Fun and Constant. God's love is fun and constant. He who Gave the Last Full Measure of Devotion for all of us. Pay tribute to each other today... while alive.

Pinky asked me last night on the phone, with all the family gathering at the hospital, "Preacher, what should I do?" I told him his job is to take care of Melanie and to take care of the kids." Bert told me to tell him he is like the father of the bride at a wedding...just shut up and write the checks.

Pinky emailed me this morning at 4:30 am:

Blood gas' are much,much, better this morning! Blood pressure is close to almost ok. If that makes any since. Tears are over smiling cheeks this morning. I think I will try to squeeze in 18 today! Whew! What a morning!

Pinky made it through the raging weekend and is now playing golf this morning.

Amen.