

Homemade Mustang Grape Jelly

Christ the Redeemer Church
August 8, 2010
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost/Color Green

Luke 12: 32-40
Rev Gary L. Smith
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He is Risen! (Now you respond "He is Risen Indeed!") He is Risen!! He is Risen Indeed!!!

Yes, I know that is what we do on Easter morning and during the six weeks of Eastertide.

But last Sunday, with my being gone to the cabin in New Mexico, our church attendance looked like it was either Easter or Christmas. Last Sunday's attendance was 92, which is 27 **over** our average attendance of 65 each Sunday. We only get 92 here for Christmas and Easter.

So last Sunday, with me gone, our worship attendance jumps about 41% for the Sunday – going from 65 to 92 on the Sunday that Pinky preaches and Randy and Carla sing a duet.

Normally when a preacher at a church goes away on vacation as I did last Sunday, church attendance plummets. When the cat is away, the mice will play, so they say. But in this church when I go away then worship attendance spikes way up.

Voltaire said, "God is a comedian playing to an audience that is afraid to laugh."

Yesterday my mom in Ohio said to me, "Gary, our family reunion is next weekend. I am hoping your three brothers can go with me." Mom loves going to the annual family reunion with at least one of her four sons each year. Family reunions are times to show off your offspring, as you know. I never get to go with mom to any of her family reunions over the years, having only been to one or two since I left home in 1971.

I told her yesterday, "Mom, next year I will plan to go to the Family Reunion with you in August. For the first time in my 7 years in San Marcos, I now have a back-up preacher to cover for me when I need to be gone. His name is Pinky. Church attendance jumped from 65 to 92 last Sunday with me gone. Folks already want to know when I am leaving town again...they want to hear Pinky preach again."

My mother the mom said, "You better watch your job, Gary." Always a mom, being concerned about me and my jobs in life.

Leslie said the funniest thing to me prior to my going to the cabin with Quin and Cameron. She said, "Have fun. I look forward to learning more about Quin and Cameron this week." She knew...you do learn a lot about others when you travel and camp and deploy with them on military missions and camping trips. And she knew I MIGHT share a bit of my new knowledge from this "deployment" with Quin and Cameron.

I will only share this data with a select few people.

I am a List guy. Quin is a Listless guy.

Quin packed three weeks ago for the trip and still forgot his cables for his camera (brought his

digital camera but forgot his camera charger so he only took photos of the FIRST day until his camera died), his cables for his cell phone, his computer cables, and his portable sound system charger. He was going to use his laptop to do work on the road in his truck while I drove...but he forgot all his charging cables. So he drove and I slept peacefully up and back.

Quin is a Listless guy. I am a Check-list guy...I make long lists of what to bring on such "deployments" as this cabin trip and then I, like an aircraft pilot, go through my Pre-Departure checklist and walk-around prior to take off. Quin makes fun of such listing endeavors.

Quin and I had a great time together. Cabin is totally about Compatibility. He was a great cabin mate and traveler. We give each other hell all the time, which is where the fun and friendship is for me, as you know. Pam was home waiting for me (she ate salads all month long and she asked on the phone "Will you cook for me when you get home?" so she was waiting for me to come home and COOK for her), but Lisa was in Corpus with Claire's tennis match...so Quin had no incentive to get home quickly! I liked traveling with him...and it gave me a good perspective on how it has been for 37 years for Pam to travel with ME! Her family always traveled slow and played along the way. That is not the way I have tended to travel and Pam has always graciously just gone to sleep in the car or van for the 12 hours of travel and stopping at midnight to search for a hotel when all hotel signs read "No vacancy" due to the late hour of my search.

Quin wanted to load up the truck THURSDAY night prior to our Friday morning departure from the cabin, which we did. In 33 years of going to this cabin, I have NEVER departed on Friday morning at 7 am from the cabin...we always depart at 9 am after **loading** the truck on Friday morning for our departure from the cabin. It always takes two hours (from 7 to 9 am) to pack the truck and clean the cabins and then depart at 9 am. I had fun seeing if I could keep up with Quin's demands. But with Quin we were on the road at 7 am...remarkable, even to me. He drove the entire trip up and back...28 hours round trip. He made fun of my making a Shopping List (Daniel and I made up a lengthy food ingredients list for Wal-Mart grocery stop) for groceries for our final Wal-Mart stop in Las Vegas prior to climbing two mountain passes to get to the cabin. He made fun of my saying "We do not like to come back down the mountain to Las Vegas to get milk and food during the week so we plan and stock up on food prior to climbing the mountains." Half way up the second mountain pass he said, "Now I see why you do not like to come back to town for groceries once you climb these mountain passes." Then...when it was HIS night to cook HIS menu of spaghetti, which we were all looking forward to eating, he said, "Drats. I got the sauce and the meat but forgot the spaghetti itself."

I told him, "You are darned lucky to be married to Lisa who IS a list keeper and who keeps you organized in life." He said, "Exactly." We never got spaghetti dinner since he did not have a list and since his memory failed him in Wal-Mart.

Bert said we should have given Quin Ex Lax to force him to stop more often on the road trip. Oh, and Quin does take a natural ex-lax daily to keep him regular in life and to "keep the ol' tube cleaned out daily" as he told the boys. Even THAT did not force him to stop more than every 8 hours on the road. I have had military generals be more generous with stops on military convoys than Quin was on our trip with stops.

I played poker until 1 am each morning with Cameron and Daniel on the cabin porch and then slept until 9 am each morning, ready for another day of eating, fishing, reading, sleeping, hiking, and another round of poker from 10 pm to 1 am each night with the boys. Cameron's pipe odor

was perfect for the poker match in the mountains. Great time. Cameron owes me some money, which the entire church will hear about this morning. Great ministry and great fund-raiser for CTRC. Youth ministry at its best.

“Don’t be afraid of risking, little flock.” That is what Jesus said to his followers. This entire church is filled with Risk Takers. Any person that helps start a new church and any person that joins a new church is a Risk Taker. Any person who preaches is a Risk Taker. Any person who donates to the ministry of a church is a Risk Taker.

I am only impressed these days with church leaders and members who take risks, who sacrifice financially to make a Community of Service church work, who risk business relationships to start a church to do the work of God...to serve, Welcome Children, treat people of all races and all genders equally, forgive each other, risk enough to Laugh and be human, and get real enough in life to get dirty in life.

Little flock of Risk takers, take heart in responding to God’s call to you five years ago to start this community of Faith and Service called CTRC. Little flock of Risk Takers, God has blessed many through your decision to take a risk and follow Christ’s footsteps in serving others through CTRC.

It takes a Risk Taker to start a church. It takes a Risk Taker to join a new church. Everyone here this morning is a Risk Taker.

Carla, I suspect you would not have had the kind of support from so many had this Church called CTRC not come into existence, don’t you?

Two Sundays ago while I was trying to say Good-bye to all 65 in worship prior to my vacation, Carla and Reese and Sydney were running around the church, giving away jars of Homemade Mustang Grape Jelly. Pam and I got one.

Carla wanted to say thanks to every member in her church family who had helped her survive her cancer and chemotherapy and surgeries over the past year. Jar after jar of homemade Mustang Grape Jelly, made from grapes in the Robert’s backyard, was given out with love.

Life is too short to not love. Laugh, love, attend worship, risk, serve, make and give away lots of Jelly. Especially to your pastor. We opened our jar of Mustang Jelly last night, prayed and gave God thanks for our lives and for our church and for Carla, and then enjoyed the delicious jelly.

Pinky told me this morning he was “In all the way” when I asked him if he was willing to start preaching once a quarter on the fifth Sunday of the month, on the months that have five Sundays. He talked to me for an hour and 15 minutes this morning on the phone, from 7 am to 8:15 am. He was still excited about having preached last Sunday. Pinky is willing to take the Risk to follow God and to preach the Good News regularly here at CTRC. That will help our attendance to jump at least once a quarter.

Finally at 8:15 am I said to him, “Pinky, I enjoy talking to you but I HAVE to get off the phone and WRITE my sermon for this morning since it is due to be delivered at 10:30 am.”

Fun to love and life with you Risk Takers who risked it all in the past five years to love and serve Christ and to love and serve so many in this town.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Amen. *(We had 57 in church this morning with me preaching, down 61% from last week's attendance. 93-year old Wren said, "Good thing YOU have a sense of humor about this preaching and attendance thing, Gary." Amen.)*