

Making Snow Angels in Chicago

Christ the Redeemer Church

Matthew 27 read by Michelle Darling (high school principal)

Proverbs verse read by Fred Pratt (Spanish teacher)

Hebrews 13 read by Dr. Bert Cobb

May 31, 2009

Rev Gary L. Smith

Pentecost Sunday/Graduation Sunday

www.christredeemerchurch.com

Brenda asked me if the focus today was on Pentecost or on Graduation Day. I told her we would blend the two for I think that there is no better way to celebrate the birthday of the Church (Pentecost) than to celebrate the lives of our youth like Cameron and Raine. Raine is not able to be here this morning so come up front by yourself and sit here, Cameron.

Cameron, let me set the tone of my comments today concerning you.

Here is a thank-you note that recently arrived in our mailbox:

“Dear Pam and spouse, I would like to thank you for the birthday gifts. I know Gary really had nothing to do with the gifts and that they were your idea. Anyways, say hello to the old man, he needs a friend. Humorously, Cameron.”

You borrowed my cell phone from me four years ago and played with my caller ID system. From that day to now, when you call me or when I call you this is what shows up on my caller ID on my cell phone face in bold letters, **“Gary stinks.”** Actually it says something worse than that but I can not quote it in a sermon in front of adults.

So good luck and good riddance in Chicago. Congratulations on finally graduating from high school. You failed to live up to your capabilities in high school. When you should have been home studying you were out playing around the world as a high schooler and performing to the delight of crowds at Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., New York, Italy, the Broadmore Resort in Colorado, and in your own church.

Had you stayed home and applied yourself you would have been valedictorian of your class instead of only graduating number 7 in your class of 386. I hope you learn to focus in college.

People asked me all the time if you play the piano at our church. I love to tell them you are merely our back-up pianist. Annette is our starting pianist and you ride the piano bench and come in when needed.

I met your dad at a Vacation Bible School in 2004 at First Christian Church which I served at that time. He and your mother were looking for a church that would accept and love you just the special way you were. No church would embrace you so your parents

and other parents started this church. This church was started for you and for your sister. Not many youth can say that a church was actually started for them.

You climbed the 11,000 foot El Porvenir Mountain in New Mexico with me, Matt, Clinton, and Daniel back in 2005. I never thought you would make it since you had asthma. You never complained, never slowed down, never wavered. You even kept up with me on the 4-hour and 45-minute climb straight up the mountain. I was impressed. We stood on that mountain top and became family that day.

I took you on your first church youth group Ski Retreat in Colorado in 2005. Everybody was in the bus at the end of the day, ready to go home. Everybody except you. I found you laying in the snow on your back on the side of the hill at the base of the mountain...you were making snow angels. I asked you if you knew what time it was. You said you did not. And your arms never stopped making snow angels while we talked.

The next year we again had to wait on you at the end of the day. I went to find you making snow angels. You were not there. When you finally came down the slopes, I yelled at you like I would yell at my own son. Parents yell at our kids when their safety is at stake and we yell after we find out our child is okay. You calmly listened to my yelling and then you said, "I was helping an injured girl at the top of the slopes. Would you have wanted me to leave a young lady stranded on a mountain?"

You won that debate.

Go to Chicago to Northwestern University and try to apply yourself in your double major in engineering and piano.

Here is a Rangers' cap to wear to Wrigley Field. Here is an Astros' shirt. Don't turn into a cubbies fan. If you do, don't come home. Stay there. When I come to visit you, take me to my first game ever at the historic Wrigley Field which was built in 1913.

Here is a CARS nightlight for your room. Here is an article on Einstein, a person you idolize in life. This article quotes him as saying "Fail Big." Go Fail Big in Chicago.

To help you remember what is back here in Texas, here is an autographed photo from this year's 2009 beauty queen Miss Kyle. She signed it, "To Cameron, with Love, Good luck at Northwestern University. Call me anytime at 512-558-1293."

Your younger sister recently sent us a note. Compare her note to yours. She writes: *"Dear Mr. Gary and Mrs. Pam, Thank you for all of the goodies you gave me for my birthday. How did you know that I needed a swimming tube thingy? And my mom and I enjoy the whole bucket of hotel shampoo and conditioner bottles. Gummy bears never get old. Free stuff is always fun. Thanks again. You are the best, Mr. Gary. I am so glad to be in the same church with you. You are the best preacher in the world. Thanks for always beating my brother in ping-pong. You are great. Thanks again, Claire."*

Claire wrote most of that note.

Now that is the way to write a note full of respect and gratitude, Cameron. This is why your sister is already ranked higher in her class than you, Cameron. Hope you learn that in Chicago.

Call Miss Kyle's number from Chicago and speak sweet nothings into that voice mail. Yes, it is my number. Call me and I will pass on your message to the beauty queen. Trust me. She and I set it up that way just for you.

Go make some snow angels in frigid and windy Chicago. Dream away. Keep your arms and fingers moving on the keys. Love ya, man. Amen.