

## *Mark's Butterfly*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
August 22, 2010  
13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 13:10-17  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

I like the team to stay together. I like the family to stay connected when possible.

Ricky is visiting with us for the first time this morning. He is a junior in the McCoy College of Business here at the university. He works part-time in the Accounting Department. One of the staff members in his department found out he was looking for a church to attend in town. She also found out he was looking for a softball team to play on.

He told me Friday on the phone, "I never thought Lisa would find me a softball team." God works in Mysterious ways to connect us to each other and to God.

Matt Timmons was my best friend in high school. He was the catcher and I was the pitcher. He was Catholic and I was Protestant. We were young and Baseball united us for life and for eternity. His parents Don and Virginia (I always called them Mr. and Mrs. Timmons and I still do) were always hosting us boys over to their house for food, ping-pong, fun, and talk about sports. Great memories to this day.

The entire family loved the outdoors. Mr. Timmons, a very successful reporter/writer who as a newspaper reporter for the Dayton Daily News as the staff writer selected to travel with and cover JFK's campaign in Ohio in 1960, retired and worked in the sporting goods department at Wal-Mart...his dream job. Working in Sporting Goods. No pressure or stress. At age 80 three years ago, I played him in golf. I won \$5 from him. It was a close game though. Great athlete and competitor. He still wants a re-match to get his \$5 back!

His older brother Mark was a great guy. He had a younger brother named John. You get the pattern...Matthew, Mark, John. Boys named after the Gospel writers. People of Faith and Love. Good people. Their house was so much fun. I beat Matt so badly in ping-pong regularly that his mother privately asked me to go easy on Matt. Matt was a first-string All-State linebacker on our football team but she said his ego was fragile. She asked that I go easy on him and that he needed to win sometimes. So periodically I would throw a game just for her. Matt would be so happy to win every once in a while.

She was a very good mother.

Mark, aged 59, died this past week in Middletown, Ohio. He married not too long after high school back in the 70's. Life and marriage and making a living and divorce and a hard life separated him from his parents over the years. Life does that...separates us from the ones we love and the ones who raised us...the ones who would die for us if need be.

Often the family would not know where Mark even lived. But last year Mr. Timmons had

a stroke. When Mark heard about it, he showed up immediately. He has spent a lot of time with his father over the past year. Fishing was one thing they had always loved to do together. That is a Timmons family thing. Fishing and hunting. Duck hunting at Spring Valley Lake was one of Mark's favorite places.

When Mark got very sick last week, he was moved into Hospice. On his final day on this earth this past week his family gathered around him. Mr. and Mrs. Timmons, his brother Matt, Matt's wife Valerie, and Mark's long time and loyal girlfriend Amanda.

Mark asked to be taken outside. He wanted to be outdoors. So these five people wheeled his Hospice bed outside.

They surrounded him and stood there as he was so happy to be outside again. A butterfly landed on his head. He was re-connected with his family. The butterfly was there to accompany him to his New Home.

Valerie said the butterfly then flew and landed on each of the girl's heads -- Mrs. Timmons's head and Valerie's head and Amanda's head.

Matt and Valerie married a few years ago and I officiated their wedding. They had dated in high school and later in life married. 35 years later to be exact! Valerie had 20 live butterflies released by the pastor at the wedding. Mail order butterflies. I was the pastor who had to keep the butterflies alive in a cool pack box and keep them breathing during the ceremony until my time to release them! One butterfly died and I had to make it look like that butterfly was alive...I gently placed it on a flower to make it look alive! Folks clapped that the butterfly looked like it lived. We needed that butterfly to live.

Mr. Timmons's birthday is today. He is burying his son on his birthday. His Faith will sustain him. I can not imagine having to bury your own child.

My brother David turns 54 today. My brother George turns 46 today. They were born on the same date, August 22, 12 years apart. As happens with all of us as adults, life and its pressures separates us from our family as we have to focus on life. Many years my brothers and I had some sort of distance between us due to miles and life.

David texted me and told me he would attend today's Memorial Service for Mark Timmons in order to represent me and because he thought highly of the family.

Mark's last wishes were to be cremated and for his ashes to be spread in the shallow part of Spring Valley Lake, where he loved to duck hunt. So that is where he will be laid to rest at a later date...in the place he loved by the people he loved and who loved him so much. I was so glad to hear that Mark and his dad got to spend the last year together.

May God your Father and Mother and you be re-connected this morning.

Life is brief. Love as if you have no tomorrow. Love and forgive as if today is your last day. And enjoy the butterfly angels and people angels in your life. Don't miss them. You will need them to escort you someday to your New Home. Amen.