

## *Pingers*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
April 19, 2009  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

Psalm 133, Acts 4:32-37  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

Some folks in my last church liked my preaching style. Some did not. Once they had a public discussion on the matter. A congregation venting session, they called it. A couple hundred people gathered for the entertainment. A few got up and said they were tired of my story-style preaching. Wren Giesen, a founder of this church at age 90 and here this morning, got up and spoke. She was and remains a dear friend. I figured she would say that she considered me a good preacher.

She stood up and told the crowd, “You must remember that our denomination is not known for having good preachers.” I almost laughed out loud. It caught me off guard. That was so funny. She went on and explained that there is much more to worship and much more to being a pastor than being a good preacher. She told them that if they did not get much from the sermon, just preach to themselves while I talk. It was a beautiful point.

No, I am not taking hits here for my preaching. I am just having some fun with the topic of preaching this morning.

Sitting through sermons is an experience which requires humility. To sit in a pew and listen to another person spout off some words about life and God is to acknowledge that we are not gods. We need help. That is humility. I always appreciate anytime anyone shows up for church.

Pam’s uncle Bob sent me some hard data research findings on preaching this week.

Timothy Merrill says that pastors should “preach like their hair is on fire”. Of course, this is difficult for me now that Tommy and 35 other youth cut off all of my hair last Sunday in church on Easter Sunday!

The early believers were “united in their hearts and in their spirits.” What does it mean to be united in their hearts and in their spirits?

It means to for everyone to be broken down to the same level. To be humbled. To not be better than the other person. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We are equally in need of assistance from our Creator.

On October 4, 1971 I was united in heart and in spirit with 57 other teenage boys. We were in basic training in nearby San Antonio, Texas. My first airplane ride happened earlier that day. I flew from Cincinnati airport to San Antonio. Everyone was nice to us along the way. We were grown men now going off to serve our country in the days of the

Viet Nam war. We were tough guys. Some were long-haired and bearded guys going off to military boot camp.

Then they shaved off all of our hair and faces. It was all over in 5 seconds. All of us were stripped bare. Clothes were taken. Jewelry taken. Money taken. We were given new clothes. Green uniforms that all matched. All of our hair was shaved from our heads.

They do that in military boot camp to break you down, to make us all even, to make us equals, to reduce us to nothing.

They were not so nice to us anymore. They started yelling at us. With no hair, you have little resistance. We were united in hearts and in spirit. We were humbled. There were no girls in our unit which was fine because we were so embarrassed about having no hair that we did not want to see any girls. We were being broken down in order to be rebuilt.

My professor of Pastoral Counseling in seminary years later told us of when he and his wife were in marriage counseling. They were talking divorce and could see no way out of it. They were in marriage counseling and the counselor broke them down. My professor, Howard Stone, and his wife broke down in the counseling session and started crying uncontrollably. They loved each other, had a daughter, and did not want to divorce. But they could not figure out how to fix it all. They each had a list of ways the other spouse was wrong. Their own list of their own wrongs was much shorter.

Dr. Stone said that when they got to the point where they broke down and started crying about losing each other that they were stripped bare of all other things in life at that point.

Once they broke down and cried, then God could start rebuilding them into new people again. Once the military basic training barbers cut all of our hair off, then they could rebuild us into new people...to be good soldiers who could work together as a unit.

We all need to be broken down in our lives at some points.

Pingers we were called. Ping, ping, ping...the sound of growing hair.

Bob wrote "Do you know what it means when a preacher takes off his watch and lays in on the pulpit prior to the sermon? Nothing." Bob says that he and Pam's dad learned that growing up in a Primitive Baptist Church and listening to one-hour-plus sermons.

All sermons should have a good beginning, a good ending. And the two should be as close together as possible. More advice is, "After ten minutes of preaching, if you have not struck oil, quit boring."

Some churches now serve coffee after church to make sure worshippers are awake before they drive home.

After a vigorous sermon, the pastor was met by a little old lady at the door who said, "You know, Pastor, every sermon you preach is better than your next one."

A preacher was shaking hands with members of his congregation after the service when a man approached him and said, "That was a wonderful sermon today, pastor." With Christian modesty, the pastor said, "It was not me, it was God" to which the reply came, "It wasn't *that* good."

Every marriage, every relationship, every church ought to have times when we all get our heads shaved and we are made equals in appearance for the good of the relationship. Dr. Stone said it good for all of us to cry and release our emotions and cleanse our spirits. He learned that in going through his own counseling to try and desperately save his marriage.

He told us students that story 25 years ago. He and his wife have now been married nearly 40 years now.

Steve Jones Pinky recently fell in love with following God in life and through this church. This week I told him that he was a good man. He said, "I did not used to be but I am trying to catch up."

You should have seen 26 members of CTRC last night at the Austin Turfcats Indoor Football game...all selling programs to raise money for summer youth camp. All wearing these new shirts with these words on the sleeves..."In Loving Memory of Mona Parkerson." We were united in heart and spirit. As we are this morning. Pingens. Amen.