

Scrubs and Cubs

Christ the Redeemer Church

July 19, 2009

3rd Sunday after Pentecost/**Green** altar but wearing a **Blue** shirt

www.christredeemerchurch.com

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Rev Gary L. Smith

It sounds foolish to think that by merely touching the coat of someone that you could be healed. But Love is a foolish thing. Connecting with others even slightly can be healing.

At 4:11 pm local time this past Friday July 17th I converted. I turned from my red ways (Boston Red Sox, Reds, Houston) and now root enthusiastically for the Chicago Cubs, the blue team. Officially.

Earlier last week I called Shawn Kitchin in Knoxville, Tennessee and asked him if he would do me a huge favor and transport my partially paralyzed dad from a nursing home in Tennessee to a nursing home in Ohio five hours away, where my brother Dave would be waiting for them at the nursing home there. To connect dad back with his family and home state.

For years Shawn has lived a Christian life. For years he has been trying to convert me...to the Chicago Cubs.

I told Shawn that if he would move my dad to Ohio for me then I would become a Cubs' fan...for one year only. I would officially, publicly, and whole-heartedly turn all of my yelling and preaching and cheering baseball energy toward trying to help his floundering-in-the-wilderness Cubbies to win a World Series this year.

He said, "Just tell me what day to move him."

Last Wednesday at the Academy during worship while the excellent preacher was sharing words about God's Love, I had many things on my wandering mind. I noticed the rich colors and fabric and visuals on the altar. The fabric was very consoling and soothing to study during the sermon.

I had 26 outstanding high school students on my mind, I missed my pillow and family and my dog Buddy, I was trying to arrange to get my paralyzed dad transported back to his home town of Ohio after two years of being in another state after his stroke, trying to focus on the sermon, and so I just studied the soothing fabric to focus my wandering mind. I was also trying to figure out what to do in the upcoming second-session of Storytelling. I had prepared well for the first round of classes but had little idea how I really wanted to run this second-level class.

Youth would ask me "What will we do in your second class?" with eagerness. I answered, "It is a surprise." Only I knew it would be a surprise to me also!

After the worship service I asked a high school student named Marquice if he could tell me the meaning of all the colors and fabric on the altar. Much to my surprise, he went into detail about the colors, how they fit into the scripture reading including a description of the color spectrum which helped shape the colors selected. He said the large anchor reflected the Peace of God. He had learned this in Altar Art Visuals class that day. The color purple, the color of the fabric draped in the center of the altar between two other colors, bridged the gap, connected the other colors, and represented forgiveness and connectivity. Purple is a blended color. He explained it all from his class that day.

I just wanted to touch the fabric on the altar.

The crowds just wanted to touch the edge of the coat that Jesus was wearing. When they touched just the fabric they were healed. It says that.

The next day I placed a Walgreen's plastic water bottle on my classroom table and asked my Storytelling class why a preacher like me would give members of his congregation free Wal-Green bottles, filled with pill boxes and lotion, etc. on their birthdays for presents. It was a rhetorical question. I expected no answer. How would they know?

A student named Cole stunned me and answered, "Because fun builds community. Fun connects us and bonds us together." Thank you for giving *me* the answer.

If we can even just lightly touch each other's lives in some way, we are healed. Fun heals. Laughter connects. Joy bonds us. Cole got it. I loved Cole's answer.

Shawn called me at 4 pm two days ago on Friday and said dad was now in his new nursing home in Ohio. He wanted to hear me say "Go Cubbies." I told him I would not say it until he emailed me verifiable and unaltered photographic evidence from his cell phone camera that dad was in the new nursing home. I said my brother Dave needed to be in the photo as proof the photo was taken in Ohio. I do not convert easily.

Shawn emailed me a photo of dad in a bed surrounded by Shawn, his wife Pam, and Dave. Dad was wearing a Chicago Cubs shirt and holding up his right thumb, the one side he can move. So at 4:11 pm on Friday I became a Cubs' fan. For one year.

Pam Kitchin was wearing medical scrubs for pants and a Cubs' shirt. Scrubs and Cubs. Fabric matters. The folks just wanted to touch the coat worn by the One who was Love in the flesh. Real Love makes you want to touch it because it is such a rarity.

If you can touch Love even lightly, healing comes. Go Cubs. Since 4:11 pm on Friday when I became a Cubbies' fan, the Cubs have gone 2-0, winning both games since I came on board. I am only a Cubs' fan for one year, per agreement with Shawn. Gonna be quite a year. Color and fabric matter. Go Blue. For one year.

I told Shawn I would send him gas money. He said, "Donate it to your church. Go Cubbies." Amen.