

## *Snack Time*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
June 7, 2009  
Trinity Sunday

John 3:1-17  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

As a pastor and preacher, I probably do not do a very good job of preparing you to deal with eternal issues. I leave the eternal issues to others to preach about. Having daily access to a physician in our church is interesting and enlightening to me. This doctor told me this week, while we were discussing life and church and theology and stuff, that the human body is designed to live only 30 years, then it is supposed to die off to allow room for the next generation.

Anything after 30 is a gift for every human being. I have preached for years that Life is a gift but I did not realize just how biologically-sound that message is for all of us!

It was a private and serious conversation. Nicodemus, an important leader in the Jewish faith, came to Jesus during the night to talk. Privately. Quietly. Not to argue but to become the kind of person that he ought to be. He wanted to inquire about eternal life.

Ah, it was a surprising conversation.

I love surprising conversations. When we got a new chaplain boss named Father Peter Flood, a new president at our college and a priest, in at the Air Force Chaplain School at the university in Alabama, some of us younger ones would march into his office and have some controversial and urgent academic or curriculum matter that needed to be dealt with immediately. He was calm and we had urgent academic situations that needed his attention.

If things got the least bit tense or confrontational, Father Flood would maintain eye contact with us while we talked and he would quietly open the bottom drawer of his desk and pull out snacks. Twinkees, apples, crackers, etc. He would say, "Here, have a snack." Meaning, why don't you stick a Twinkie in your mouth?" Hard to talk with a Twinkie in your mouth.

He would open the small office refrigerator behind his desk and ask us what kind of drink we wanted. Soon we all were eating snacks and drinking a cold Coke.

Here, stuff a snack in your mouth. It worked well. He would stick enough Twinkees in our mouths and enough cold Cokes in our hands that we soon would just be eating and visiting. He would glance at his watch while we were eating and he would say, "I have a meeting to go to. Thanks for stopping by for a snack." And off he would go.

Can you imagine how many marriages and work situations would improve if, every time a small matter was about to blow up into a major issue that one mate would shove a

Twinkee in the mouth of the other person? Here, calm down, stick a Twinkee in your mouth. Have a snack. Issues are not the most important things in life...relationships and having snacks together are most important.

Once Don told me I did not need to attend a meeting he was leading. I told him I would be glad to just sit in on the meeting and listen and not say anything. He said, "Gary, you can't sit at a meeting and say nothing." I looked at him, pondered his words, realized he was right, and I did not attend the meeting. I did not need to. Here, Gary, have a snack. Stay home.

The first year I coached Daniel's t-ball team, Pam warned me to take snacks for the kindergarten players. I laughed and told her this was baseball, not some snack time thing. Within three minutes of trying to teach the kids baseball, one asked, "When is snack time?" Pam was right.

I was standing by the pitcher trying to help the kids learn the game. I turned to say something to my little second-baseman and he was lying on his back, motionless. I thought he was hurt or dead. I ran to him and pulled his cap off of his face and asked him if he was okay.

He opened one eye and said, "When is snack time?"

Janice is Director of Vacation Bible School here at Christ the Redeemer Church. Every year she puts a lot of energy into selecting curriculum. But the question she is asked first and the most is, "What is on the menu each night and who is cooking?"

Snack time. Important. Michael Whittington, who spoke here at this church back in January and who was the new dean at our college in Alabama, and I had some lengthy and engaging email exchanges this week on the subject of church liturgy and history of worship, etc. I loved the exchange. He wrote back and said, "*Gary, it's always good to hear from you but what I really enjoy is sensing your passion for life and ministry between the lines.*" His words meant a lot to me.

We focus in this worship service on what God is doing in our lives this week here in San Marcos. It is a passion. Mason told his grandmother this week that he needed to get back home for church today. Amazing. We focus on the little things here. We laugh a lot. We pray a lot. We cry together at times. I love your passion for life and for love and for God. I love being able to have a good laugh daily with you. It all gives me Hope.

Judy Norris gets our church emails and reads of you each week in Arizona. Her daughter Karen is a colon cancer survivor. Judy sent me a package this week that contained this beautiful scarf and this note which reads, "Gary, Would you please pass on this to Carla? Thanks. Judy Norris."

She has never met Carla but she has met Carla. That is worship. That is Family. That is

being born again into the Life of caring and compassion.

I called Sherry Slaughter this week on the phone. She has visited our church three weeks in a row and then missed last Sunday. I told her on the phone, “Sherry, when you are a visitor and you visit our church three weeks in a row and then you miss a Sunday, you get a call from me, even though you are a visitor.”

She said, “I am not *visiting* your church anymore. I filled out a Membership Card and gave to you last Sunday. What else do I have to do? I am a member now. I love the church.” I thought she filled out the Membership Card in error, thinking it was a visitor card.

So I put her in the line-up to read Scripture today. John 3 about Nicodemus. While having snacks with some Kyle members of our church, they told her she was in the line-up to read today. She called me to ask me what the reading was. I told her and she said, “Oh, that Nicodemus story is a favorite. My parents brought me a statue from Italy. It is a statue of Nicodemus holding Jesus at the crucifixion --holding the body of Christ after taking Him down from the cross.”

The night before the crucifixion Jesus had Snack Time with his Disciples. A good thing to do when life is about to get difficult is to sit down with friends and eat and laugh. Also a good thing to do after surviving difficult times in life -- eat with friends.

Whenever you eat bread and drink wine together from now on, remember this Dinner and me. That is what Jesus said to his friends. Have a Snack and remember me and the good times.

Cameron Dennis took my cell phone four years ago, when he was a freshman and I picked him up from band practice at school, and he fixed it so that every time he calls me or every time I call him my phone Caller ID reads, “Gary stinks.” The wording was worse but I can not quote it in a sermon in church.

I have waited four years for yesterday to come. Yesterday he graduated. I drove to his house and gave him his graduation card and check. Card read, “Some say that money does not buy happiness.” Then inside it read, “But others say ‘No money sucks.’” Then I wrote “Good luck at the bank, Cameron.” A check was inside the card. Pam refused to sign either the card or the check. So much fun!

The check was made out to “**Gary stinks.**” Cameron’s name in my phone book is Gary Stinks, which he set up to read that way. Cameron, used to getting money from an ATM machine and not used to checks, asked his mom when the check was good. She said, “When the bank cashes it.” Amity said, “Poor Cameron.” Snack time. Cameron will figure it out. Nicodemus did. Amen.