

Spring Garden and Opening Day

Christ the Redeemer Church
March 21, 2010
5th Sunday of Lent

John 12:1-8
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Spring follows winter. Easter follows winter. This is personal. This is for you. Each of you has either had a winter in your life or you are having a winter right now. May you hear the Good News today.

Pam came home from school a few weeks ago and told me she had volunteered to help a second-year teacher at her school named Omar on a garden project at school. I was fascinated that Pam had volunteered to serve on a school committee to help a new teacher named Omar to build a flower and vegetable garden at the school. The kids were going to plant flowers and vegetable plants, tend to the plants, and watch them all grow. I thought it was a great project for Pam and Omar.

Pam tends to gravitate toward good dogs and good people. I selected four dogs in our marriage and each dog was a disaster. She picked the last two -- perfect pets.

Then she dropped the line to me. Omar needed a truck and some labor two weeks ago. So I loaded up and hauled a truck-load of dirt -- in the snow.

Yesterday I had a Saturday planned out...preparing for today, watching some NCAA March Madness men's basketball, fireplace, nothing. After I served her waffles she asked what I had planned and I asked her what she wanted. That is marriage. She asked me to call Omar. I did. He wanted to meet me in 20 minutes at school so I could haul some dirt and plants from nurseries in the area for the new De Zavala School garden.

I went out into the cold and wind. Pam stayed home. That is marriage. In the cold rain and driving winds on our first day of spring, I spent hours with Omar again. We went from nursery to nursery in the area, picking up plants, visiting with nursery owners, and picking up broken bags of garden soil. All donations to the new school garden.

Spring follows winter. Easter follows winter. I am so excited that Major League Baseball Opening Day is almost here. The Season begins Sunday April 4. Easter Sunday. Perfect.

Spring follows winter. Easter follows winter. Growing up, Baseball meant that winter was over. I think it is perfect that Easter falls on Opening Day this year.

Our church softball season opens this Tuesday, March 23. We have 13 players on our roster. 12 of them are returning from last season. We have had basically the same team and line-up for the past two seasons. Pinky is bringing a new player this Tuesday. He did play for the Connection Church, our main competition in the league. But now he is going to play for CTRC. He wrote me yesterday and asked, "When are we playing the

Connection Church?" I love that question.

Spring follows winter. Easter follows winter.

Omar is in his 40's and is living out his dream of being a school teacher. He teaches third graders math, science, English, Probability, and other basics. He believes he can teach the needed subjects while also teaching the students about agriculture and the basics in life. He says he has one student who does not know the difference between fur and a feather. Omar teaches what he needs to teach and teaches about life also.

All teachers teach about subjects and about life, in one way or the other.

Omar grew up in Venezuela. Dirt poor. By 16 he was scared to death of his future. He became driven. By 19 he had put himself through college, earning a degree in Agriculture. He then got another degree in Education. He ended up going into the corporate work force world, married, had a child, rose up in the corporate world, moved to the United States, and raised his daughter with his wife.

Three years ago he went back to college in his 40's, got his Texas Teacher Certification, and now lives out his dream of teaching.

He dreams of writing a book. He peppered me with questions yesterday about the process of writing a book. Then he said, "I want to ask you something else." I braced for the question. I knew it would be personal and I knew I would be honest with him.

He said, "Why has Pam not written a book? She would be an excellent author for children's books." I was just the truck driver for Pam. Labor for Pam. So funny.

The garden will be beautiful. The students and faculty are so excited about the beautiful and visible flower and vegetable garden that Omar is heading up. With his degree in Agriculture and his love of teaching, his love of students, his love of this country. He told me that we have no idea how poor his country is where only the cities have hospitals and grocery stores. He rewards the kids...they do their work and he rewards them with time in the garden. He wants them to get their hands dirty and learn about the earth and food.

A few months ago in the earthquake in Haiti, a United Methodist missionary was killed in the earthquake. He lived and spoke years ago here in San Marcos when his wife was an Associate Minister here at the United Methodist Church. Folks still recall his sermon. .

He said, "Americans dream of hitting the lottery. We already have hit the lottery by being born here. We are blessed beyond measure. We hit the lottery at birth."

Jesus told Mary it was okay to waste some expensive perfume in life. We cannot change the world through our own efforts alone. We who are socially concerned and wishing to eliminate the suffering of others, are told to do what we can for others and also, at times,

go ahead and splurge and do something fun and extravagant. Play baseball. Build a garden. Buy a motorcycle. Be extravagant at times. In and for our marriages. In our jobs. In our church. For ourselves. For God. For the students. Build a garden and enjoy the flowers. Have some fun.

To be extravagant at times is to trust God. We are not God and we can not eliminate suffering in life, no matter how hard we try. But we are to try. And we are to be extravagant at times.

Omar needs some lumber and someone to build the raised garden frame. Only thing I could think to do was tell Omar, "We have a guy in our church and he has a shop and has wood." Don has agreed this morning to contact Omar and help out. Connections.

I am labor. I am the truck driver. I hit the lottery at birth. Can you imagine the kind of good impact that Omar and his dream of teaching and his dream of a school garden are having upon the students in his class?

On my way back home from driving and being labor for Pam and Omar, Cheryl texted me from the hospital, "Where is my cross?" I did not even know she was in the hospital.

After taking a hand-made wooden cross to Cheryl in the hospital and having prayer with her, I got home and Daniel and Pam both said, "What is for dinner?" (I am in my 3rd year of my 30-years of cooking in our marriage, remember?). I cooked dinner.

I am labor. I am truck driver. I am head cook. Life is a gift. I lost my Saturday. Oh well.

Spring follows winter. Easter follows winter. In our lives. Let's Play Ball. I love spring and Easter and gardens. Amen.