

## *Staring at Pam the Teacher*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
January 24, 2010  
Third Sunday after Epiphany

Luke 4: 4-21  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

Jesus said that the words of God's Love and Hope are coming true as we sit here this morning.

Last Sunday I told the story of Chaplain Bill Burrell and of how he boarded a train at age 5, leaving the knee of his grandfather and going off to be raised by other family members far away. I also told of how later in life, when he was a minister who worked for me in the Air Force, he and his wife had a surprise child late in life.

Phil, who was with Bill and me in Boston, wrote back and said, "Tell your congregation the story of Bill and the saxophone player." Nearly 40 years after Bill boarded that train to go away to be raised by a relative, he was stationed near Boston and was shopping on a Saturday afternoon at the base store. A saxophone player was playing music and selling his CD. Bill was so drawn to the music and felt that the music was a part of him.

He struck up a conversation with Alphonso the sax player. Where did you grow up and where in home? Normal questions that nomadic military members ask each other.

The next day Alphonso came and played for our worship service, per Bill's request. He was wonderful and blessed us so.

I emailed Bill a copy of last Sunday's sermon after several years of no contact. The words about God's Love and Good News are coming true as we listen this morning. God is alive and working in our lives as I talk. As you sit.

Last Sunday Pinky gave his testimony and at 6 am on Monday morning he told me he was never going to speak again publicly. He felt he dribbled all over himself.

I told him that is the way we preachers feel every Monday morning. We vow to never preach again. It always feels so foolish to stand up and talk about these matters of God's Love in our lives. Every Sunday afternoon I am going to quit and never preach again.

One of you told Pinky he should learn that when you are called upon to speak following the testimony of a woman who has survived cancer, then you just stand up and say, "Ditto to that. Amen, Carla." And sit down.

The preacher's five-year old daughter noticed that her father always bowed his head for a moment before starting his sermon. One day she asked him why he did that.

"Well, honey, I am asking the Lord to help me preach a good sermon." "How come he

doesn't answer it?" she asked!

Kenny came over to our house to eat again this week. He asked me, "How many years left for you to cook?" Pam cooked the first 30 years of our marriage, I agreed to cook these next 30, and then we flip to see who cooks the next 30. I have 27 years left. Pam actually baked a cake this week. It was good. She was nervous being back in the kitchen.

I am always counting years. Years until Pam cooks again. Years until a car is paid off. Years until the next stage of life. When is my next ski trip? And hopefully life goes on.

I was asked to do a funeral tomorrow here at our church for a family that does not have a church or minister. I will also go to Houston and do the graveside service. I was not able to be at my uncle's funeral this past week and I hoped that some minister did a good job for my uncle Eugene. I told the family I will do their aunt's funeral in honor of my uncle.

God works in wonderful, gentle, patient, and mysterious ways.

Pam once had a sweet, attentive little girl in her kindergarten class. But she would just stare at Pam when Pam was speaking to her or asking her to do something. Then eventually she would respond to Pam. I stared at Pam when I first met her also.

Pam told the girl's mother one day that she was concerned about how the girl would just stare and delay her response to Pam. Pam said it was as if the girl could not hear.

The mother said, "She does have a hearing problem." The system had failed to pass on that information to Pam about the little girl's hearing problem. The little girl was trying so hard to understand and please Pam. And Pam was so patient and observant with her.

We all try so hard to understand God and to please our Creator, like the little girl. Sometimes we all have a hearing problem concerning hearing the Good News. We stare at God's and God's ways and strain to hear. Sometimes the noise of life prevents us from hearing the Teacher in our Life. But the Teacher is patient with us.

Bill wrote me back and said he and his wife had ANOTHER baby three years ago...a 4<sup>th</sup> child! I wrote and ask if the child was an adopted baby or biologically theirs! Bill wrote back in big letters that the child was Biological. Her name is Destiny Hope Burrell. God is still working in Bill's and Natalie's life and they are still naming children after the language of God – Destiny and Hope. It is happening as we speak.

Oh, Bill and Alphonso turned out to be half-brothers who had never met each other. Two brothers met for the first time 35 years later in life. God is still connecting people.

Can you hear this morning what is being said? God's Graciousness and Good News are coming into being as we speak. Sometimes, like Pam's student, we just can not hear it. And like Pam, God is observing us and patiently working with us during our deafness.

Will you say “Huh?” with me? Huh? What did you say, God? Amen.