

Tall Texas Tales
(Actually Short Texas Tales)

Christ the Redeemer Church
September 6, 2009
Texas Brown Time/14th Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 7:24-37
Rev Gary L. Smith
www.christredeemerchurch.com

Life in Texas this past week.

The writer Mark could have simply written that Jesus helped these two people, a tortured daughter and a deaf man. But Mark added the details that people around these two begged and pleaded for assistance. People cared enough to get involved and to push for God's help.

Jesus helped a non-Jewish woman in today's reading. She begged him for help, they argued a little, her arguments won him over, and her daughter was helped. She was a devout and determined mother who just wanted help from someone. He responded.

A deaf man who could not speak very well stood near-by. The people begged Jesus to help him. Jesus did. He put his fingers in the man's ears and spit and touched the man's tongue and said, "Be Opened" and the man then was able to hear and to speak.

We have the opportunity to help others daily.

Curtis wanted to leave at 7:00 am from his house to drive to Terrell, Texas and he asked me if I would make the drive with him. So I showed up at 6:45 am, ready to go. We left at 7:00 am sharp since Curtis wanted to leave at 7 a.m. and not at 6:45 a.m. So we sat for 15 minutes after I arrived and then we took off at 7 a.m. sharp. We were taking off on our 14-hour journey in his bright red Cadillac to see Mona's grave and new headstone in Terrell.

We did not get two blocks until Curtis stopped in the middle of the road. We sat there a while and finally I asked Curtis what he was doing. He said he was waiting for the school bus in front of us to finish loading the children. Then he commented that the kids sure have to get up early for the school bus these days.

I told him that it looked to me like we were sitting behind a garbage truck, a green truck and not a yellow bus, and that unless they were now loading kids onto school busses with a large mechanical arm by picking them up and dumping them into the top of the bus now that I was sure it was a garbage truck and not a school bus.

He then drove around the green garbage truck. We were off. I called Pam and told her I loved her, just in case I never got to tell her again. She asked me if I was okay. I told her I was ok...for now. It was going to be a long day.

Cindy, a school nurse from Ohio, wrote me and told me of a first grade teacher in Ohio this week that had a first-grader ask her at lunch on his first day of school “When do we get to go home?” The kind teacher told him sweetly that this is first grade now and that he will be there all day. The kid heaved a big sigh and flopped his head down on his desk and said, “I have just one question. Who signed me up for this stuff?” He did not say “stuff” though. He got to meet his new principal. Both are going to have a long 12 years.

It is nice to hang around people who like to do uniquely nice things for others. Some friends wanted to take Randy dove hunting this week. They could have taken him locally on a normal dove hunt in a near-by lease. Randy and Carla have had a long summer with her successful battle against cancer. Carla was glad some church friends wanted to take Randy dove hunting at a unique and expensive location. His friends wanted to do some healing in his life.

So they took him dove hunting this past week in San Antonio. On a golf course. Randy said it was odd to be watching for dove and to have golfers walk by you. I asked what the golf course/lease manager said to them. Randy said “The guy told us to watch out for the golfers.” He said it was odd to shoot a dove and have to go pick it up on the green by the hole.

He got a birdie on that hole.

He said they had killed five rattlesnakes on that course this week so he had to watch out for golfers, errant golf balls and also for rattlesnakes. I jokingly asked him if he had beverage out on the golf course. He said periodically a Hospitality Golf Cart driven by a young lady came by with drinks for the hunters. Non-alcoholic drinks.

His friends simply wanted to treat him to a special day of hunting and healing.

I met H.E. up in Terrell. H.E. was a high school football teammate of Curtis’. He and Curtis joined and served in the Marines together during the Korean War. H.E. was later the best man in Mona and Curtis’ wedding 60 years ago. H.E. quit the football team in high school, later got a Master’s degree in Art, and spent his life teaching art, theater, and dance for a living.

He is now 81. Recently two hoodlums moved out of a house they were renting from him. They left the house in shambles and owed him rent money. He graciously stored their household goods in a rental storage unit. They actually called to ask where their stuff was and he took them to the storage unit.

They got belligerent with him, cursed at him, and threatened him. Fearing his own safety, he swung and hit one of them. The thug had to go to the hospital. The other guy called H.E. from the hospital emergency room and said, “You broke my friend’s jaw and knocked out some teeth. We did not think you had it in you, old man.” He said, “I tried to warn you.”

He told me he was embarrassed about the incident but that his Marine training just kicked in. The 81-year-old dancer started out trying to help but things got twisted.

Sometimes you have to act to take care of yourself in life. 81 years old.

The mother argued with Jesus about her evil-spirited daughter and the people begged for their deaf friend to be helped. People desperately wanting to help. Mothers and friends trying to help. Action was taken by caring people.

Who signed me up for this stuff? Many of us ask this on a regular basis. It is good to be in a church where men want to help a friend so badly that they will sign up to take him dove hunting on a golf course filled with golfers, birds, and rattlesnakes.

It all reminds me of when our German landlord asked me how we liked his large German house that we had signed up to take without seeing back in 1992. I told him I loved the house but was a bit surprised by the pig farm right by our back door, the cemetery out the front door, and the church bells right outside our bedroom window that rings each morning at 6 am to wake up the entire village and us.

His daughter smiled and said, "Oh, We don't tell you everything." I got it.

Mark Jones, age 10, asked his mother Janice if Mona's headstone was flat or stood up in the air. It stands tall and beautiful, like Mona lived. Mark told his mother that on Mona's last Sunday teaching Mark's class, just days prior to her going into the hospital for the last time, that Mona told Mark and the others that she was going to die someday. Mark said, "I guess she was preparing us for her death." Mona taught and helped others right to the end of her life. He will never forget Mona and what she taught him.

Who signed us up for all we faced this past week? Some of us came into this thing voluntarily, some of us came in to this Church thing desperately, some of us grew up in it gently, and some of us came into it with enthusiasm.

No, these are not Tall Texan Tales. This is just life in a little church in Texas this past week.

God will give you the strength to make it through whatever you signed up for this coming week. Amen.