

## *The Doll Cabinet*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
August 29, 2010  
14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost/Color Green

Luke 14: 1-14  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

I heard recently the comment that the maximum size of church should be no more than 15 people. Reason? The definition of a church is that every member of the church is changed by every other member of the church. I liked that.

Jesus came to change people. Jesus came to change and shake things up a bit. If I am the same person today as a Christian that I was 5 years ago then probably I am not allowing God to do much good in my life. Jesus talks this morning about even being concerned about the seating arrangements in your life. Simple stuff. Do you sit next to people whom you consider important or are you willing to sit by folks who need you and can not do you any good?

Bill Kurtz once told a church Board something like this, "If you hire Gary Smith then be prepared to work. He will not come here to lecture and pontificate. He will come to work and he will work you." I always took that warning as a compliment.

Change.

When Pam and I met and finally started dating in 1973, I was driving my cherished brand still-new bright red 1971 Ford Ranchero. For the 37 years since, she has laughed at my silly boy ways of wanting to protect my Ranchero. I would park far away from other cars in a parking lot. She chuckled when I could tell any new ding or chip in the paint. She was not a car person. A car was a piece of metal that carried you from point A to point B.

We married in 1975 and every year for many years when we would visit her parents as newlyweds, her father would say prior to my arriving in my truck, "Oh, Pam you can take another box of your stuff with you when you leave us." I began to wonder how many boxes of stuff Pam had in her parent's house and barns.

One time he said, "Oh, Pam, you need to take your box of dolls with you next time you are home." I chimed in on the phone and said, "We really do not need those dolls." Pam said we were bringing the dolls home with us.

Turns out they are dolls from countries around the world. Pam's dad Dan was an Air Force chaplain who was once assigned as the chaplain to a unit that had mapping stations all around the world. Every time Dan would fly with the unit to a country then he would bring back to his daughter Pam a handmade doll from that country.

10 years ago we moved the boxes of dolls from our house attic back to Pam's parent's barn on the farm in Mexia.

South America, Europe, the Orient...tens and tens of dolls. Being a boy from Ohio that did not play with dolls, I had no appreciation for the dolls. Cars for me.

Time and relationships change us. Love changes you. I have spent the past 15 years searching for just the right antique display cabinet so that we could display Pam's dolls. I have come to really cherish not only the dolls but the story behind how Pam got the dolls. Pam had a treasure chest of dolls in our house that we kept in a tub. From 1997 to 2008 we stored those tubs of dolls back in Pam's parent's barn on the farm. Having a daughter made me more aware of just how much love an Air Force chaplain dad put into choosing and bringing those dolls to his daughter waiting at home for her dad to return from far away.

I went to Dallas a few weeks ago to do a funeral and on the way back stopped at an antique store in Salado, Texas. Going out of business sale. I found a nice antique display cabinet. Not perfect but nice. The owner said, "If you like that cabinet, you might really like the one I have back here in the corner."

There it was, in the corner. Perfect. The one I have been searching for over the past 15 years. When Pam got home from school that day, the perfect doll cabinet was sitting in our house, waiting for Pam to place and arrange her collection of dolls in it. She was stunned.

I loved watching Pam take out each doll one at a time out of the tub. Then she would fix their hair and rearrange their colorful dresses from all over the world. She fixed some broken arms. She caressed each one gently, as a good Parent does.

And she talked to each doll. I thought at first she was mumbling to me and I asked her what she said and she said, "I was talking to my dolls. You have to talk to each one and catch up on news from the past with each one."

They are absolutely beautiful sitting there in that doll cabinet. Each one arranged and placed with love and memories. She recites the background, history of arrival, and country of each doll.

She drove me to the store the other day in her new VW. I asked her why she was parking so far away from the store and so far away from other cars. She smiled, "So I will not get nicked by the other cars." I said, "A car is just a piece of metal to get you from Point A to Point B." She laughed and parked even further away from the other cars and store.

Now she drives her red VW and parks far away from all other cars in the store parking lots. I try to talk her into parking closer but there is no way she will risk a ding or a scratch on her new Salsa red VW convertible. I laugh at what she has become...a lover of her first car, her red VW. She picked it out and she will not let me drive it much.

My Ranchero needs a new paint job after many years of dings and paint chips. Life does that. Chips away at you and your appearance.

Pam is now a car girl and I am now a doll guy.

The dolls are admired by me every day. You will get to see Pam's doll collection this Christmas at our 2010 Church-wide Open House. I will host it. Pam is busy with her teaching job which she loves this year. She used to host all of our parties at our house but now I host parties while she focuses on school and her career. Change.

Life and love have rearranged most of our lives and values and roles over the past 37 years. She loves her red car and I love her dolls that her father lovingly selected for her and brought home to her all those years ago. Good dads are always doing that...thinking of their children way before the kids know the depth of the Love and the longevity of the Gifts. I cook and she loves her red car.

Love changes you and every fiber in your being. God's love changes you over time...every fiber in your being.

Lest you laugh at this doll thing, hear this. Stephen Jones was best friends in high school with a guy who loved to play with dolls. Stephen the jokester told him, "Quit playing with dolls and get a real job."

The guy's name? Jeff Dunham. Jeff is the famous comedian ventriloquist. Listed on Forbes list of most successful entertainers in the country. Dolls. <http://www.jeffdunham.com/>

Come to the communion table and open the tub and enjoy seeing the surprise gifts that God has waiting for you. Gifts that God gave you long ago, long before you really knew the meaning of the gifts. Gifts of Acceptance, Love, Hope, Joy, Forgiveness, Peace, Generosity, Kindness, Eternal Love. Enjoy the changes God is bringing about in you today.

Oh, and at Christmas at our Open House you will get to see my European Napkin collection. Right beside my Baseball collection. Things change. Amen.