

## *Top 15 CTRC One-Liners from 2005-2010*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
March 7, 2010  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent/5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CTRC

Luke 13:1-9  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

Church work is done by those who have a shovel in their hands, have dirt under your fingernails, and who smell like fertilizer. One of my own favorite sermon lines a few years ago was when I was preaching about being a shepherd and I told people that I lived on and worked on a sheep farm for a few years growing up and that most of being a shepherd consists of shoveling manure. Keeping the barn clean is important work.

A few people really got upset at my saying that, saying I was irreverent. They were looking for things to get upset at anyway in life. Many others embraced and understood what I was saying. Mostly the ones doing the real church work – the ones with a shovel in their hands shoveling manure in the barn – liked that sermon. An adult who grew up in a preacher's home loved that imagery of mine. She knew. The work required to do ministry in a church is mostly hard and dirty work...long hours, leading meetings, paying bills, doing administrative work, balancing personalities, etc.

The parable this morning is about how it takes time and work for a tree to produce fruit and that the Master was going to cut down the tree due to lack of fruit. Interestingly enough, it is the servant who pleads for the tree to be given one more chance. The servant pleaded with the Master to give the fig tree another year. Master, I will dig up the dirt around the tree and fertilize the tree." The servant was attached to the tree emotionally. Give the tree one more year. I will work hard to help it to produce, Master. Just give me a chance. One more year.

Church work is like parenting and working – it is pleading with the Master, having shovel in hand, giving time, digging in the dirt, spreading fertilizer, having dirt under the fingernails, waiting and hoping for fruit to appear.

Every person in this church has a shovel in your hand and dirt under your fingernails.

We have had five good years of digging in the dirt and producing fruit so far. Some of my favorite lines from the past five years since we started this church are:

1. **"When you fall off the horse, get back up on it. That is what folks in this town are looking to see you do."** (Ed Mihalkanin, 2005 at a private breakfast after I resigned from a church).
2. **"I like watching people being baptized in the river and being able to see girls float by in bikinis at the same time."** (Curtis)
3. **"Don't move out of the skating rink for at least two years as you will find out who**

really is committed to serving by seeing who is willing to set up and take down chairs for years.” (Attorney who reviewed our By-Laws prior to our submitting them to the State of Texas in March of 2005.)

4. **“We will buy the chairs and hymnals for our church.”** (Gaye Cobb, 2005)

5. **“We will be in church every Sunday except for the weekends when the Houston Astros are in town.”** (Brenda Smith). I knew then I was in the right church!

6. **“If it dies, we will just plant another tree.”** (Leslie at the church Tree Planting ceremony when she was asked what would happen if my tree died. I had stated that one of my personal and church goals in life was to “plant a tree and watch it grow.”)

7. **“From a disco ball to a chandelier – you always have made our marriage fun and interesting and adventuresome.”** (Pam, 2007)

8. **“Go to Alabama and take care of your daughter and stay as long as you need to.”** (Bert Cobb). Randy Roberts said, **“Tell me if you need me to drive to Alabama with my horse trailer and move ‘er here to Texas for you.”** I can tell you too many horror stories of minister friends whose church leaders did not have this attitude toward the minister and family during a time of family crisis in the minister’s family.

9. **“Can I go with you the next time you go to Cabela’s?”** (Pinky asked that after my sermon when I told about taking a hand full of candy corn out of a jar at Cabela’s and gobbling up the corn, only to realize that the kids and adults staring at me were sitting there at the table participating in a contest to *Guess how many pieces of Candy Corn are in the jar*. Pinky said that I seem to have more fun at Cabela’s than he does so he wants to go with me from now on.)

10. **“I invited a guy from Conley’s to come and play softball with us tonight.”** Daniel brought 3 friends from Conley’s – Conrad, Michael, and Stephen – and we won 5 city championships after they joined our team. Inviting people to church changes lives at many levels.

11. **“The bid on this pig goes to Christ the Redeemer Church for \$675.”** 2010 -- the day our church bought Will’s prized show pig at the auction. Yes, we bought a pig.

12. **“Will you be the director again this year for our VBS? Yes, I know it is the 6<sup>th</sup> VBS in a row you have directed.”** 6 years of Vacation Bible School. That says it all.

13. **“I’ve been waiting for the right time to donate this item and I believe it is now. Remember the CTRC 2005 VBS quilt that was raffled and I won. I would like to donate it to the silent auction. There are some VERY special handprints on the quilt...as far as who gets credit for it, you or Janice, not my problem. (too funny). Lisa”** Here is the quilt. These are Mona’s handprints.

14. **“I will be at the Memorial Service. I do not have to work Sunday.”** (Valerie, the night manger at Texas Road House. She is the young lady who gave Curtis his free Last Dessert on February 17, the night prior to his surgery. She gave him a free Chocolate Brownie topped with ice cream and fudge. Curtis loved the attention and he told that story to many during the next (last) week of his life. Valerie lives in Austin. I met yesterday for an hour and a half with her and Brea, the other waitress, and staff and told them in person about the rest of the Curtis story. They gave me 40 designed and created on the spot Texas Roadhouse coupons for free desserts for our youth – with the words **“One Free Dessert in honor of our friend Curtis.”** I thanked the staff for being so kind to Curtis and for playing along with my levity in a serious situation. I reminded them that they never know what the person is going through or about to go through in life when you are simply kind and caring to another person.

15. **“Yes, I will be glad to speak at church this Sunday about why this church is needed in this community.”** Steven Price 2010, spoken this past week. He is a community leader and businessman in town who is one of the visionary founding members of CTRC who helped to start and fund this new church.

God, give us one more year to shovel the dirt. Then maybe another year after that. Then perhaps another year after that.

Amen.