

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

"Pride goeth before a fall" - Proverbs 16:18

"Yeow, splat!"

As I write to you this early morning, I see out the window a collection of yellow, green and purple helium balloons. They are flying off of a restaurant porch, which is directly across from the condo where my husband and I are staying for the next two months. We are celebrating his retirement by having a trip of a lifetime - skiing for 8 whole weeks. We're in Aspen, Colorado, a beautiful little mountainous town, which truly does feel like a town as opposed to a resort. One reason being, we've found a community of believers. Have you, Pilgrim, ever visited an unknown church? When you walked through the doors, you could feel the sweet love of Jesus? You knew that this part of God's family was alive and well and kicking. You were welcomed with open arms. Christ Church has been such a place for us.

Now, what about those helium balloons? They remind me of last night's festivities at the church. It was Mardi Gras - Fat Tuesday - the day before the Penitential Season of Lent begins - the 40 days before Easter. In many denominations a tradition of having a pancake supper on this day has arisen. It can be a fun occasion and last night was no exception.

My husband and I walked for a mile and a half along snowy white streets to the church. It was fun to promenade down the busy, bustling avenues of town and then turn off and venture back into the quieter back streets where the church is located. It was dark, but oh so light because the stars above and the ice and snow below. Have you had such a thrill, Pilgrim? Walking in the white bright quiet of a snowy winter's night? Maybe it's because I'm from Alabama and such a scene is rare, but at 53, I still find such a night quite thrilling. It always reminds me of Christmas Eve when the world must have been quiet - still - waiting - anticipating - the Birth of the Babe - our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Ah, but this was another night, getting ready to commemorate another season - Lent - the 40-day preparation for Easter - a desert time like our Lord Jesus had after His baptism. But first, the party -- it was fun. We arrived at this little church and went down to the basement. The portable tables and chairs were set up and festively decorated. There were about 50 of us gathered, all ages. As visiting newcomers, we were met with warm hospitality. We had a delicious dinner and to the end of the night, played "Bible Trivia." Some of the questions were given to the children, others to the adults. As you know, Pilgrim, I am no Bible scholar, rather a lover of the Lord - but much to my surprise and delight, for some of the questions, I actually knew the answers.

At first, I just sat back and quietly listened - but with each mentally correct answer internally I was congratulating myself. Before you knew it, a little puffiness started building up inside of me. "Hey Lucy, pretty good - you got that one right." Thank goodness we're not made like those green and yellow and purple balloons that decorated the tables that night nor like the ones I see now out our window. But you know, Pilgrim, maybe it would be better if we were - maybe it would help to give us a little warning - "Danger, danger - look how big your balloon is getting. Your pride level is getting way out of control - your balloon is about to pop!" We humans have no such apparatus. We just have to fall flat on our face and that is exactly what I did. Question -- who answered, "You are the Christ," when Jesus said, "Who do you say I am?" Boy, I immediately, enthusiastically, aggressively shot up my arm. I know this one too, I thought. If I had been in the 2nd grade, I would have added jumping up and down in my seat and shouting, "Me, me - call on me." I mean, pitiful, Pilgrim!

There was no way the preacher couldn't call on me, the newcomer, for I was making such a scene. And sure enough, he did. I was smiling and trying to look humble as I was getting myself prepared to answer and ultimately win the prize. I took a big deep breath, graciously looked around the room so that everyone would be sure and hear my response and join in with accolades for my correct answer. Right? I gave myself an internal drum roll and loudly proclaimed -

"Thomas." Then there was an awkward pause. What? No clapping? No cheering? I'm wrong? You've got to be kidding? Gulp.

Pilgrim, the answer of course after I got over the initial shock was Peter. The answer is found in Mathew 16:13-16. It says: Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea, Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist and others Elijah, but still others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." My mind had come up with Thomas because I was thinking of his declaration to Jesus in John 20:28: "My Lord and my God."

Shew! Did that incorrect answer pop my prideful internal balloon! Thank the dear Lord that incorrect answer let the wind out of my puffed up sail. Yea! Yes! I'm back to my normal size, thank you very much, the one more user friendly and appropriate for a follower of Christ. A piece of humble pie is occasionally good for our digestive systems, especially if we're getting a little oversized as I was.

That sweet community of believers didn't laugh or make fun of my mistake, but just kept on with the game, never missing a beat.

As I said, Pilgrim, it was a delightful family night, family of believers' night. Those balloons out the window reminded

me of my last night's puffed-up state and just as they will deflate, I was deflated. My prayer is that by God's grace, I will stay in this more humble state. Deflations can be grace gifts. Have you experienced such, Pilgrim? If so, give thanks, as I am.

I am your sister in Christ,

Lucy

P.S. The last question asked was a trick one. Who is the shortest man in the Bible? An eight-year-old boy yelled out "Nehemiah." "Knee-High-Mia." Great answer - not a puffed-up one, but rather a lowly, don't you think?

But the all important question for all eternity for each one of us is Jesus' "Who do you say that I am?"

Blessings and peace, Pilgrim. May our Lord reign this day in our hearts. God bless.