

Missing Jesus

A conversation about finding Jesus based on Matthew 25:31-46

By David Radcliff

Pastor: (practicing his sermon to an imaginary congregation): *Jesus is comin'! Y'all better get ready, ya hear!?*

Custodian: (woman enters with bucket and sponge) Oh, hello pastor. Didn't mean to interrupt. Practicing for your sermon?

P: Good morning, Graciela. Yes, you know what Tony Campolo always says: "Sunday's coming!" And this week I'm preaching on Jesus coming!

C: That was your topic week before last, wasn't it? And the week or two just before that?

P: Well, yes, but you know you can't preach too often about something so important.

C: Yes, I understand. I remember one year Jesus was predicted to come on my birthday. I had mixed feelings. I was excited for our Lord to come, but my mom had baked my favorite kind of cake—and I hated to miss that.

P: Oh Graciela, there's nothing more important than the coming of our Lord—except maybe getting the restrooms cleaned before Sunday.

C: Yes, if Jesus was to come unexpectedly, we'd want to have those in top shape.

P: That's very funny, Graciela. How are you liking your work as our new custodian?

C: It's fine, pastor. I've been a little distracted lately though.

P: Oh? Why's that?

C: My auntie and uncle—I think I told you they came here illegally a few years ago. After the trade agreement, they couldn't make a living on our farm in Mexico anymore, so they felt like they needed to immigrate. They have jobs cleaning and doing yard work. But now I'm worried they'll be sent back home.

P: Well, either way, I'm sure the Lord will provide.

C: I hope he helps those people down at the intersection while he's at it.

P: You mean the panhandlers? They are a nuisance, aren't they? The key is to turn up the radio and not make eye contact.

C: That's not easy for me, since I'm walking. And besides, my heart goes out to them. Who knows what they've been through—drugs, maybe abuse, and some of their signs say "Help a veteran"—you know how war hurts people.

P: I read online about a church that gives its members socks filled with personal items—shampoo, soap, deodorant—and in a situation like that, they roll down their window and toss them out to these people. I'm thinking that our congregation could do that!

C: So we feel good, these poor people get toiletries, we didn't have to actually talk to them—plus they'll smell better and have clean socks for a few days.

P: Exactly! Great ministry, eh?

C: (pause) I was being sarcastic.

P: We just can't do everything for everyone, Graciela. I mean, look at all the need in the world!

C: Yes, I was reading about that drought in East Africa last night.

P: Graciela...

C: Our world is warming up, and people are suffering both from too much rain—like in Houston—or too little, like in Kenya, Uganda and Djibouti (Ji-boo'-tee).

P: Ji-*who*-tee?

C: On the Gulf of Aden, by Ethiopia. Anyway, people—especially the poor—are facing many water-related challenges—and some of them seem to be our fault, as our way of life is changing the environment.

P: Graciela, I would love to keep talking, but as Tony Campolo always says...

C: Yes, I know, Sunday is coming—and so is the Lord—right, pastor? What Bible text are you preaching from Sunday?

P: The Great Judgment, in Matthew 25.

C: Oh...is that the one where it says the Lord has already come—in the poor, the hungry, the prisoner and the thirsty...? I sure hope we don't miss him...