

THE EMPTY BIRDCAGE

There once was a man named George Thomas, a pastor in a small New England town. One Easter Sunday morning he came to the Church carrying a rusty, bent, old bird cage, and set it by the pulpit. Several eyebrows were raised and, as if in response, Pastor Thomas began to speak. "I was walking through town yesterday when I saw a young boy coming toward me swinging this bird cage. In the bottom of the cage were three little wild birds, shivering with cold and fright. I stopped the lad and asked, "What you got there son?" "Just some old birds," came the reply. "What are you gonna do with them?" I asked. "Take 'em home and have fun with 'em," he answered. I'm gonna tease 'em and pull out their feathers to make 'em fight. I'm gonna have a real good time." "But you'll get tired of those birds sooner or later. What will you do then?" "Oh, I got some cats," said the little boy. "They like birds. I'll take 'em to them."

The pastor was silent for a moment. "How much do you want for those birds, son?" "Huh? Why, you don't want them birds, mister. They're just plain old field birds. They don't sing -- they ain't even pretty!" "How much?" the pastor asked again. The boy sized up the pastor as if he were crazy and said, "\$10?" The pastor reached in his pocket and took out a ten dollar bill. He placed it in the boy's hand. In a flash, the boy was gone. The pastor picked up the cage and gently carried it to the end of the alley where there was a tree and a grassy spot. Setting the cage down, he opened the door, and by softly tapping the bars persuaded the birds out, setting them free. Well, that explained the empty bird cage on the pulpit, and then the pastor began to tell this story.

One day Satan and Jesus were having a conversation. Satan had just come from the Garden of Eden, and he was gloating and boasting. "Yes, sir, I just caught the world full of people down there. Set me a trap, used bait I knew they couldn't resist. Got 'em all!" "What are you going to do with them?" Jesus asked. Satan replied, "Oh, I'm gonna have fun! I'm gonna teach them how to marry and divorce each other, how to hate and abuse each other, how to drink and smoke and curse. I'm gonna teach them how to invent guns and bombs and kill each other. I'm really gonna have fun!" "And what will you do when you get done with them?" Jesus asked. "Oh, I'll kill 'em," Satan glared proudly. "How much do you want for them?" Jesus asked. "Oh, you don't want those people. They ain't no good. Why, you'll take them and they'll just hate you. They'll spit on you, curse you and kill you!! You don't want those people!!" "How much?" He asked again. Satan looked at Jesus and sneered, "All your tears, and all your blood." Jesus said, "DONE!" Then He paid the price. The pastor picked up the cage, he opened the door and he walked from the pulpit.

Isn't it funny how simple it is for people to trash God and then wonder why the world's going to hell. Isn't it funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says. Isn't it funny how everyone wants to go to heaven provided they do not have to believe, think, say, or do anything the Bible says. Or is it scary? Isn't it funny how someone can say "I believe in God" but still follow Satan (who, by the way, also "believes" in God).

Isn't it funny how you can send a thousand jokes through e-mail and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages regarding the Lord, people think twice about sharing. Isn't it funny how the lewd, crude, vulgar and obscene pass freely through cyberspace, but the public discussion of Jesus is suppressed in the school and workplace? Isn't it funny how someone can be so fired up for Christ on Sunday, but be an invisible Christian the rest of the week. Are you laughing? Isn't it funny how when you go to forward this message, you will not send it to many on your address list because you're not sure what they believe, or what they will think of you for sending it to them. Isn't it funny how I can be more worried about what other people think of me than what God thinks of me. Who will pass this on?

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