

Sunday March 19, 2006

Guest Speaker: John Deacon

### **When We're Meant to Choose Adversity...**

The first fancy car I ever bought was in 1986, when I bought a brand new jet-black Taurus station wagon. This car had everything. It had both cruise control and automatic climate control. On one of those rare days when it wasn't in the shop undergoing a myriad of repairs, it was a living room on wheels. I could set the temperature at 22 Celsius and regardless of whether it was 30 degrees Celsius outside or 30 below, I was in the lap of atmospheric luxury. Put the car on cruise control and it was as though I was riding in perpetual first class.

We love life like that. Vacations when it doesn't rain, car rides when the kids aren't fighting in the back, no bounced car payments, and an air conditioner that always works. But life doesn't always work that way and when it doesn't we experience the headwinds of adversity.

What we've been learning in this series is how God uses adversity to shape us into people who behave like Jesus Christ...people whose faith is not shaken when our vacation is disrupted by a hurricane, who still believe in God's love for us even when we become unemployed and the bank is forced to re-possess our climate controlled living room on wheels.

But it's not that kind of adversity I want to talk about this morning. In fact, the adversity I want to talk about occurs when you are in your climate controlled car on cruise control and the car is fully paid for and your kids are perfectly behaved in the backseat and the sky is blue and you're on vacation and the warm ocean is so close you can taste the salt in the air...

Just as it begins to feel like paradise you roll down the automatic tinted windows expecting to see palm trees and flamingoes. But instead you see a ghetto. You see families living in makeshift shacks that wouldn't survive a heavy rain; kids playing in streets littered with used condoms and used syringes. You are on vacation you say to yourself and drive on, but privately you know that if Jesus were in your car, he'd insist on spending the afternoon there rather than continue on to the beach.

Jesus loves the poor and believe me there are times when I wish he didn't. It would mean I could drive past homeless people without an ounce of remorse; that I could keep everything I've bought and not feel a pang of guilt when I passed a man who needed my coat more than I did. 'Blessed be the poor', said Jesus. If he had said 'Blessed be IBM stock' we wouldn't think twice about cashing all we had and buying IBM stock for His sake.

But he said 'blessed be the poor' and the thought of cashing all we have and giving it to the poor is overwhelming. We look for some easier way to be a Christian.

Most of us here are pretty much decided on Jesus being the Son of God and that he died for our sins. It's the matter of being his disciples that troubles us. Oh sure he says: "Do not be afraid little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) We love verses like that! But when in his very next sentence he tells us to "sell our possessions and give to the poor," (Luke 12:33) we're inclined to tell him: "you have got to be kidding! Isn't it enough that we just believe in You?"

If we are serious about being his disciples there are two things that absolutely must change: Our attitude to those who have less than we have and our attitude about the things we own. Unless those two things change, the world around us has little cause to think that Jesus Christ is involved in our lives.

Put another way – say your boss comes in on Monday and tells you that over the weekend he had given his life to Christ. If in the ensuing weeks, he increases his salary, lets go ¼ of the staff and cuts staff salaries including yours, and demonstrates the same antagonism he's always had for anyone who disagrees with him, you would have good reason to question who he had given his life to. Even if you were to hear a constant stream of Christian worship coming from his office, and see scripture verses posted on his walls, you'd be hard pressed to be enamored with the God he claimed to believe in!

If you were to learn that the reason he had increased his own salary and cut yours was so he could give more to his church – you wouldn't think much of his church either!

But if the opposite happens – the boss begins to treat those who disagree with him – with respect; and starts paying his employees a salary which forces him to cut back on what he pays himself – then it becomes evident to all that Jesus Christ is involved in his life. His wealth gets re-distributed among those who have less than he does.

Remember the story of Zacchaeus – the short, wealthy, despised tax collector – who climbed a tree just to see Jesus walk by? When Jesus insisted on visiting him in his home, Zacchaeus greeted him with these words: "Look Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the

poor and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” (Luke 19:8)

This is what happens when Jesus enters the life of a rich person.

There is outrageous generosity which benefits the poor. No wonder Jesus told Zacchaeus: “Today salvation has come to this house!” (Luke 19:9)

Just prior to his encounter with Zacchaeus, Jesus met up with another rich man.

Reading from Mark’s gospel 10:17-27

***As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him.***

***‘Good teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ‘Why do you call me good?’ Jesus answered. ‘No one is good - -except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother.’”***

***‘Teacher,’ he declared, ‘all these I have kept since I was a boy.’”***

***Jesus looked at him and loved him.***

***‘One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’”***

***At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.***

***Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!’ ‘The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, ‘Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God.***

***It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ ‘The disciples were even more amazed and said to each other, ‘Who then can be saved?’ ‘Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.’”***

Jesus is quite emphatic about what the rich man had to do. He had to sell every thing he had. The passage says Jesus looked at the rich man and loved him. But when the rich man turned away, Jesus didn’t run after him and say: “Why don’t you start by giving 10%?” or “Don’t you

know that faith's a journey and if you'll follow me, maybe we can negotiate something you can live with?"

Can you imagine how the rich man's parents might have reacted on hearing the audacious request Jesus had made of their son? They'd be furious!

Put yourself in their shoes. How would you react if your son - after you had paid his way through university - were to approach you and say: 'Hey, I've decided to join this church that is right in the heart of the Jane Finch area. Since they don't have much I am going to empty my savings account and sell those IBM stocks you gave me as my graduation present and donate it all to the church.'

Now we'd probably have one of 3 responses. Either 'Go with God' or 'Over my dead body' or 'Why don't you join our church instead? We only ask for 10%!

Hang around in churches long enough and we tend to forget what Jesus asks of us.

He asks for everything we are, everything we have.

For whatever reason I was reminded of this when several weeks ago I was watching 'The Apprentice'. Since it was the first in the series, all the candidates were asked to meet with Donald Trump in his private jet. Donald didn't mince his words. He was asking for faithful commitment. He told them he would have them working harder than they had ever worked in their lives.

But should they be successful, he told them they'd earn more money than they would know what to do with...maybe enough that they could buy their own personalized jet just like his.

"What is wrong with the world", I muttered to myself, "that 16 perfectly capable young attractive, intelligent people would be willing to make this kind of sacrifice to someone with such bad hair?"

I was trying to imagine the scene if the candidates had boarded the plane only to find Jesus instead of Donald Trump. First of all, the plane would probably be overcrowded with a whole bunch of undesirables who couldn't afford to be on a plane. Second, Jesus would be asking the candidates to somehow feed his guests with five Saltine Crackers and 2 shrimp. And finally Jesus would tell the would-be apprentices that to follow him would cost them everything they had...that the only personalized thing they'd get would be a cross.

And yet these apprentices would have done better with Jesus than with Donald Trump...serving Jesus is less onerous, more liberating, more meaningful...even though admittedly, Jesus asks for much more...

Looking back at the rich young ruler, he had probably done the Donald Trump thing. He had succeeded big-time but knew that something vital was missing.

He was desperate. The text says he ran up to Jesus and fell on his knees.

Who knows why? Maybe he was weary of the accumulating game. Maybe he was working for 18 hours a day and for what? Maybe he was distraught that the only 3 friends he had in the world were his accountant, his life insurance agent and his tax attorney.

Or maybe he had been on cruise control for so long, the only thing he could feel was nauseous. Nothing could make him happy anymore and he was tempted to call it quits.

So he came to Jesus for the one thing he knew he didn't have: eternal life. He wanted life with substance to it. He knew it came with a price, but it was a price he honestly thought he could afford.

He just wasn't prepared for the news that it would cost him everything he had!

Nor were Christ's disciples! The text says that they *'were even more amazed and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"*

Jesus said that left to us it is impossible, but God makes all things possible. Even giving up one's possessions.

So the question is: 'how does God make it possible?'

Jesus response to the rich young ruler is worth re-visiting.

Jesus tells him to 'go sell everything he has and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me'.

Now Jesus as a televangelist wouldn't last a week. Televangelists say: "Sell your possessions and give all your money to me and I'll make sure it gets to the poor" – a scenario where the poor would be lucky to get 10%.

But this is the amazing thing. Jesus was poorer than any televangelist. For the 3 years of his ministry he was homeless, had to go to extraordinary lengths to pay his taxes and frequently went without food. Jesus really could have used a generous donation from a sympathetic ruler of any kind.

He had alienated the rich by telling them 'woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your reward' (Luke 6:24). He had alienated the religious elite by calling them 'snakes and a brood of vipers' (Matthew 23:33) and he undermined any political sympathy he might have gained from King Herod by calling him a 'fox' (Luke 13:32).

And yet rather than tell the rich young ruler to give him money, he tells him to give it instead to the poor. For Jesus his own interests were second to his love for the poor. He knew he wasn't going to be around much longer, but the poor, as he told us, 'we would have always'.

Think for a moment what it would have meant for the rich man to sell his possessions and then give the proceeds to the poor.

First he would have had to find people who could afford to buy what he owned. And probably explain as to why he was selling his possessions in the first place. They would have been the first group of people with whom he'd share the story about his encounter with Jesus.

Then he would have to find the poor to whom he could give the money. 2000 years ago there was no United Way, no Jewish Appeal to donate to – the only way he could have given to the poor was by getting to know them personally so he might learn what they needed.

He would have had to go door to door where the poor lived and gotten to know them and how many children they had and whether any of them needed a doctor they couldn't pay for, or on the verge of being evicted because of a payment they couldn't make. He would have discovered the ones who were struggling with alcohol and which women had gone into prostitution just to feed their kids. He would have met people having twice the ability he had, but who were so discouraged by being repeatedly denied the chance to prove themselves, they had long ago given up.

He would have seen the raw faced joy the poor know with even the slightest excuse to give thanks, he would have learned the freedom one finds 'when there's nothing left to lose'. He would have experienced what it is to be real without pretense, how vulnerability better defines a person than anything they own. He would have known the joy of their knowing him by name, of their referring to him as their friend. He would have told them that the reason he was with them is because of Jesus.

He would have experienced some of the adversity they suffer by advocating on their behalf. He would know what it is to plead with judges who are indifferent, and with politicians who are sympathetic only when it means votes. He would have experienced a sense of family that uniquely comes to people who are powerless.

In other words, in becoming acquainted with their adversity, he would have discovered 'treasure in heaven'...experiences no one could ever steal from him and nothing could decay. He would have found eternal life.

Jesus was asking the rich young ruler to trade in his 'climate and cruise controlled' life for the obscurity and adversity of living with the poor. In the affluent world we live in, it's hard to imagine anyone willing to make that kind of sacrifice.

There are two reasons why Jesus could ask the rich young man for so much.

First, because He is Lord of all. He is the Commander and Chief. He knew the rich man better than the rich man would ever know himself.

The text says Jesus loved him. He knew the one thing the rich man lacked and hence asked him to do the one thing that would truly make him happy: *Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.*

The other reason Jesus could ask the rich young ruler to give up everything he had, was because he too was a rich young ruler, the only Son of His Father, who had given up all he had. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul notes that Jesus:

***'though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich' (2 Corinthians 8:9)***

This is the adversity he chose for our sakes. To become poor that we might be rich...to die that we might live...Now the Bible says that

**'whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did' (1 John 2:6).**

So put up your hands if you are willing to become poor that others might be rich...

Having difficulty?

Why?

For many of us it's because we're afraid. We fear that if we provide for others no one will provide for us. Check out those RSP ads! If we're going to have enough to retire on, we just can't afford to give to the poor!

The biblical injunction to be content just with food and clothing (1 Tim 6:8) seems hopelessly naïve to us. So is seeking God's kingdom first (Matthew 6:33) prior to our having financial freedom. So is taking care of others before we've taken care of ourselves.

If we are struggling with this – let's admit it. We will be of no help to anyone unless we are honest about our own fears, our own unbelief. But at some point, if we really want to make an impact for the kingdom, we must begin to take Jesus at his word.

What would our lives look like, if we weren't worried about 'what shall we eat' and 'what shall we wear?' How much could we provide for others if we were to stop storing up treasure for ourselves? What would our day look like if instead of our trying to serve both God and money, we simply served God alone?

This is scary stuff! And if it seems impossible to you, it is to me as well! But Jesus said that with God all things are possible.

It reminds me of something GK Chesterton once wrote. He wrote: 'The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried.' But Chesterton also wrote that 'if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.'

This is worth doing, even if we do it badly.

For the need is overwhelming.

Over 35,000 children die every day because of hunger or malnutrition.

Nearly 25 million people have died of AIDS since the illness first surfaced in the mid 70's.

Another 45 million people live with the AIDS virus, predominantly in Africa and Asia, over ½ of whom are women. It is estimated that by the year 2010 Africa alone will have as many as 25 million orphans, children less than 12 years old, whose parents will have died of AIDS.

Nearly ¼ of the world's population have no access to clean water. ½ the world's population have no access to sanitation.

The developing world now spends \$13 in debt repayment for every \$1 it receives in grants.

The average Canadian consumes as much as 520 Ethiopians do.

To provide water and sanitation for everyone in the world would cost about the same as North Americans spent buying cosmetics last year.

To provide basic health and nutrition for the world would cost less than Europeans and Americans spent last year on pet food.

If we were to take 3 cents out of every \$1.00 spent on military expenditures globally, every person on this planet would have access to clean water, sanitation, basic health and adequate nutrition. No child would die of hunger.

The problem is we don't see it. Oh sure, we see it on our televisions, but it doesn't impact us the same way as it would if it happened on our streets. If any one or 100 of those starving children were to knock on our door, we'd feed them!

If we knew those children by name, there's no way we wouldn't clothe them. There's no way we wouldn't sell whatever it took to provide for them. It's just that they don't live on our street!

Shane Claiborne in an incredible book entitled 'The Irresistible Revolution' writes:

*I once asked participants who claimed to be strong followers of Jesus whether Jesus spent time with the poor. Nearly 80% said 'yes'. Later in the survey I sneaked in another question. I asked the same group of followers whether they spent time with the poor and less than 2% said they did. I learned a powerful lesson: We can admire and worship Jesus without doing what he did. We can applaud what Jesus preached and stood for without caring for the same things. We can adore his cross without taking up ours. I had come to see that the great tragedy in the church is not that rich Christians do not care about the poor but that rich Christians do not know the poor. When the worlds of poverty and wealth collide, the resulting fusion can change the world. But that collision rarely happens...*

Let me ask you some questions, which I wouldn't do well to answer for myself.

How many poor people do you know?

How many friends do you have who are on a disability pension?

How many people do you know in Old Age Homes?

Do you have any friends in prison?

When is the last time you wrote a politician on behalf of people whose interests were not your own...like write the Mayor pleading that allowances be made for Group Homes in Markham?

Part of the reason the poor are not among us is we're not that keen to have them live in the same neighbourhood as we do. There is a term in social agency circles called 'Nimby'ism (i.e. not in my back yard). In other words, stick the poor in Regent Park or in the Jane-Finch corridor but not in my neighbourhood.

It may be the spirit of our age, the unspoken 'right' of the privileged – but it is contrary to the Spirit of Christ.

We tend to distance ourselves from those in need. We'll write cheques to agencies that help the poor, but not get involved ourselves.

But Jesus is more interested in small local acts of love than he is in long-distance acts of charity.

In Matthew 25:34 when Jesus is commending the righteous he says:

***'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Matthew 25:34 NIV***

So how are we going to move from long distance acts of charity to local acts of love?

**We've already started.**

10% of what this church receives in donations is targeted for those in financial need. The Branch Out Fund has distributed \$thousands to those in need, in some instances to people with little or no affiliation to this church. In every instance, this assistance has been delivered in person.

What we are aiming for is to provide 1 to 1 care for every person in this church who is unemployed, or ill, or depressed, or lonely, or in the midst of a marital break-up. There is not one hurting person in this church who is meant to be going through their adversity alone. Through the various clothing drives we have established personal contacts with agencies working with Toronto's poor including The Toronto Christian Resource Centre, 416 Dundas, The Yonge Street Mission, The Good Shepherd Centre, Sanctuary and others. By conducting worship services at the Scott Mission, and assisting in serving meals, we are getting to know by name some of Toronto's chronically homeless people.

Our Christmas Hamper program provided food and presents to over 50 families this past Christmas. Each of these hampers was delivered in person.

As one lady wrote Yvonne Clunies, who heads up this program:

*Dear Yvonne:*

*I just wanted to thank you and all the people involved at the Olive Branch Community Church for the 2 hampers I picked up just before Christmas. The two families to whom I delivered the hampers were astounded by the extent of your generosity. We who have a lot cannot know how important this is for people who have no food to put on the table and no money for Christmas gifts.*

*Let me share a little about my two families. One family shared their hamper with another needy family. When I went to the 2<sup>nd</sup> home, a family of 4 children who recently emigrated from Africa the mother's face lit up in amazement when she saw the hamper and she literally danced for joy.*

*This ministry you continue every year is the real meaning of Christmas: sharing, caring and giving to people in need. This is what Jesus would do if he were here on earth.*

This Wednesday we are having the 2<sup>nd</sup> “Rich Man Poor Man Lunch” involving 8 street people and 8 business people featuring a scrumptious 4-course meal at George Brown College...an event that brings rich and poor to the same table that friendships might ensue.

On May 27<sup>th</sup> The Olive Branch is holding a Giant Garage Sale – which is the perfect occasion for all of us to sell our possessions and give to the poor. The proceeds will be going to the poor.

But consider these opportunities before us:

- Unionville, a local Seniors Residence is looking for a group of 6-8 of us to conduct 6 Sunday morning services per year. They are hoping we bring some of our children as well.
- Markhaven, which is another local Seniors Residence is likewise looking for that kind of assistance.
- The Toronto Christian Resource Centre in Regent Park is looking for volunteers who can offer basic computer training to first time computer users in the area.
- There’s a church in the Carlton and Sherbourne area looking for ‘partner’ churches to assist them in providing meals and friendship to homeless people on Saturday evenings.
- The King Bay Chaplaincy is setting up a mentoring program to connect troubled youth in the Jane Finch area with ‘foster dads’, recognizing that one of the root causes of the tragic violence involving our youth has to do with absentee fathers.
- Now that you’ve been introduced to Phyllis Novak, who is the Artistic Director and Founder of ‘Sketch’, an agency working with street youth, you may wish to speak to her directly about ways you might assist the work of her agency
- The City of Toronto is looking for 1500 volunteers in conducting their first ever Street Needs Assessment on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006. These volunteers will interview the homeless to determine their number, their needs in order to help them find and keep permanent housing. (tel: 416-397-4401 or email: [streetneedsassessment@toronto.ca](mailto:streetneedsassessment@toronto.ca))

If you are interested in any one of these opportunities, or have an idea of your own of ways we might get to know those in adverse circumstances – like connecting with new immigrants in the Markham area, or joining an advocacy group which works with the poor – let us know!

Write what you'd like to do and give it to the Branch Out Team member sitting closest to you. (at this juncture, have the Branch Out Team members stand up...)

All these opportunities will introduce us to the poor, to get to know them by name, and just as importantly, so they'd get to know our names.

The key thing, until we live where they do, we must find them where they are. For many of us it will mean giving up one of our most precious commodities – our time – just to be with them!

Jesus said about the poor: 'theirs is the kingdom'. If 'theirs is the kingdom' the matter of getting to know who they are is for every one of us to do, without exception!

To be honest with you – I'm a cruise and climate control kind of guy. I like my days sunny, my bills paid for, my \$2.50 espressos, my troubles few and far between, and my dinner table a place of peace and harmony. So the injunction for us to 'sell our possessions and give to the poor' are definitely Jesus words and not mine.

How we respond to his words is both an individual and corporate responsibility. Jesus asked the rich young ruler to sell everything; for Zacchaeus, it was enough that he gave half of all he had.

If our children want to go beyond where we're at with this command, don't discourage them.

Let us dream of ways of venturing out just to get to know the poor. Let's make giving a priority, fundamental to the way we do life and fundamental to our future. We gain the courage to give sacrificially when it becomes communal; when all of us are giving more.

Let's deal with the fear factor that inhibits our generosity. We live in a world whose prevailing ethic is: 'I'm looking after Number # 1 and number 1 is me and my family'. To reverse that we must agree to care for one another even when we're old. We can set less aside for a rainy day if we know when our rainy day comes, we will be cared for.

Acts 4:32 says:

***All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. From time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles feet and it was distributed to anyone as he (or she) had need. Acts 4:32 NIV***

We're not there yet. But it gives us something to aim at...

If we even get remotely close, we'll encounter a freedom and a joy and a happiness that we can barely comprehend.

The freedom will have something to do with being less anxious about the things which used to possess us that we have since learned to give away. The joy will have something to do with learning how Jesus provides when we can't provide for ourselves. And the happiness will have something to do with the poor being able to identify us by name.

I'd like to close with a story – if only to emphasize that to connect with the poor requires persistence and on occasion, assistance from the most unlikely sources.

My business office overlooks the corner of Yonge and Adelaide in the heart of downtown Toronto. Being downtown has given me occasion to develop friendships with street people, some of those friendships going back over 10 years.

There is a woman who for the last 10 years has sat on the west side of Yonge Street. I see her most mornings from my office window.

But unlike other street people I knew, I had had no success in getting to know her.

Typically my approach with street people is to offer them a coffee and in the ensuing conversation ask them their name and then tell them my name. Once they're assured I work neither for the Police Department or the Welfare office, they usually not only tell me their name but their life stories as well.

But I had absolutely no success connecting with this woman. Everytime I'd approach her she'd either scream at me or throw an empty Tim Horton's cup at me or ignore me completely. Other times she'd just talk to herself and become agitated if I even looked in her direction.

Now typically women don't respond to me in this way, so I did my best not to take it personally. I had to conclude she had probably experienced abuse from other males, perhaps even her own dad had abused her. Mental illness may also have been a factor.

For over 6 years it was like this and I had pretty much given up.

Until one day, a really hot day in late August in the summer of 2002, I was walking down Yonge Street. Sitting on a street vent across from this woman was a guy I had become friends with named "Dukey". On this occasion, Dukey reeked of alcohol, so when he called me by name and asked me to do him a favour, I was somewhat reluctant.

'Johnny', he stammered, 'I want you to do me a favour.'

'Depends Dukey', I said like the reserved business person I am, hoping he wouldn't ask me for money to buy more wine.

'I've got this extra can of pop that I'll puke all over the place if I drink it', he said, 'so I want you to take it.'

'Thanks Dukey', I said, trying really hard to be gracious, affected somewhat, by the image of what might have occurred had he decided not to share this pop with me.

'Oh Johnny, it's not for you', he said, 'I want you to give it to that lady on the other side of the street.'

'Oh no', I said, 'she'd never take it from me. Everytime I see her, she either screams or ignores me'.

'Don't worry', said Dukey, 'she knows me. Tell her you are coming in my name. Tell her, "Dukey wants you to have this".'

"You've got to be kidding!" I said.

"Just go ahead and do it", Dukey demanded.

So I did.

I remember inching across Yonge Street with this can of ginger ale in my hand. About ½ way across I'm yelling at her 'Dukey wants you to have this.'

No reaction.

Until I'm within a foot of her and she takes the can of pop from my hand and she smiles.

I couldn't believe it. If Jesus himself had smiled at me, I could not have been more elated!

Maybe he was...

***'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.***

***Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?***

***When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?***

***When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'***

***The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers (and sisters) of mine, you did for me.'* Matthew 25:34-39 NIV**