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Acknowledgement

This story was written by Dr Barry Chant, Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. It can be found on www.barrychant.com. Dr Chant is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the founding president of Tabor College, Australia. He is married (to Vanessa) and they have three adult children and twelve grand-children.

For further information and other writings by Dr Chant visit www.barrychant.com.

Barry Chant

On the Streets of Sydney

One warm, bright afternoon, I was walking along George Street to the Town Hall railway station when I passed a man handing out leaflets. He was dressed in a 1950s-style sports jacket, with his tie askew. His spiky hair protested against the teasing breeze, like empty stalks in a wheat field after harvesting. I half-smiled at him and to my utter astonishment he glared back at me and responded with, ‘What have you got to smile about?’

I stopped, turned around and said, ‘Why on earth did you ask me that?’

‘Well,’ he responded sourly, ‘What *do* you have to smile about?’

‘Many things,’ I replied. ‘In particular that God loves me and sent his Son to die for me.’

‘Praise God, hallelujah!’ he responded still with a stern manner that was strangely oxymoronic, given what he had just said. ‘You’re the first person all day to say that.’

‘Well, why don’t you *tell* people that God loves them? It would be better than scowling at them!’

‘I am speaking to them in love,’ he explained.

‘It sure doesn’t sound like it,’ I replied and hastened to catch my train.

Believe it or not, a few paces further on was a tall, affable man with a battery-operated megaphone preaching to people as they crowded on the footpath waiting for the lights to change. At least he was smiling.

A group of young men were standing nearby, wearing the compulsory tee-shirts and sneakers, with baseball caps reversed. A couple carried skateboards.

‘There are no skate boards in hell,’ shouted the preacher cheerfully.

Naturally enough, the boys reacted with mocking and scorn. One young chap began to imitate him, much to the delight of the others. The lights changed and we all started to move.

On impulse, I spoke to the group as we scurried across George Street, the traffic banked up on either side. ‘Hey!’ I said, indicating the preacher. ‘What if he’s right?’

‘What if we’re right?’ one young man answered.

‘What if you’re wrong!’ I replied.

The crowd moved on and I had to leave it there. I prayed that my words might somehow lodge in someone’s heart. But deep down, I must confess my sympathies lay with the boys. The man deserved to be mocked.

One night, a week or so later, after a delightful anniversary dinner, my wife Vanessa and I were strolling along Castlereagh Street when two men, both somewhat under the weather, staggered towards us.

‘What do you think of this!’ the smaller of the two demanded, for no obvious reason that I could fathom and with no attempt to explain what he meant, ‘One woman and six men!’

‘Sounds fair to me,’ commented Vanessa. ‘About equal in intelligence, I should think.’

He hooted with delight. ‘That’s a good answer!’

He was slightly built, but big in personality. As we chatted we learned that his name was Adam. He had once been a believer. His friend David was quiet and retiring. He carried a shopping bag in his hand and wore a stained baseball cap on his head. He had a sad story of disappointment and rejection.

Vanessa said, ‘You know my husband is a minister and he would like to give you some good news.’

Adam took one look at me and shook his head. ‘No,’ he said. ‘No. He’s not a minister.’

‘Yes I am,’ I protested. He stepped closer and squinted up at me. Then he laughed. ‘You really are, aren’t you!’ he said.

We talked some more. ‘I am going to pray for you,’ said Vanessa. She promptly placed her hands on both of their heads, right there in the street, prayed for them by name and asked God to touch their lives and bless them. They did not protest.

They wandered off amiably and we did not see them again. But we prayed for them as we drove home that night. And we felt reassured. Miracles could happen.

Even on the streets of Sydney.

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