

I Met Jesus in New York City

I had an exciting time last week with a turn of events that at first amused me, but the more I thought about this rendezvous with Jesus, my host while preaching in New York, the more I was convinced I was receiving some important reminders. I was informed by the staff at the International Baptist Church of Brooklyn that my host would be a New York City policeman by the name of Jesus (pronounced by the Hispanics as Hay-soos) Ramos. Immediately the pastor, staff and I began to have fun with all the parallels. It began when the Lord (Christchurch's executive secretary, Victoria Lord) made the Pope's (yours truly) reservations and sent "the Pope" to New York to be picked up by Jesus. It only seemed the proper thing to do. So bear with me in what may be, at first, a trivial pursuit. I shall, however make some serious points:

1. Jesus told me where I was.

I landed at LaGuardia Airport and soon after touching down I received a phone call from Jesus! He said, "Dr. Pope, do you know where you're at?" I said, "Honestly I don't." He then said I should be at terminal B. He had no sooner said this than I looked up and, sure enough, a sign just above me confirmed I was at terminal B. Soon he drove up to the curb and picked me up.

How many times have I not known where I was in the plan of God or what God wanted me to do? How thankful I am for those times when Jesus contacted me through prayer and His Word and told me just where I was. It is good to know when you don't know where you're at, Jesus does! *"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off"* (Psalm 139:2).

2. Jesus directed my steps.

The church had planned for another preacher and myself to tour the new 9/11 Memorial at Ground Zero in Manhattan. We were told we could not get on site unless a reservation had been made a day before. Well, Jesus had a reservation for me with my name on it. He took us up to the busy entrance and said, "Go right in there, follow the arrows, I'll park the car and find you." We did exactly what Jesus told us to do and soon he was coming in behind us with a huge smile on his face. It felt a little awkward as I greeted him by saying, "Hello, Jesus! Glad to see you." Jesus explained that he had become a policeman just four months before the infamous attack by the Islamic fascists on American soil. Two days afterwards he was on guard at the sight. How touching as he told us how the debris covered the zone like a thick fallen snow everywhere you looked. He told us how long afterwards the horrid smell lingered. He told of his comrades who were part of the "bucket brigade" that spent weeks emptying the wreckage from the gaping holes. It was so sad to know that many of his fellow policemen lost their lives months and years afterward because of the constant exposure to the lethal fumes.

I love the way Jesus escorted us through this veil of sorrow knowing and explaining everything about my new environment. I would be remiss not to make the application: *“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23). *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:6).

3. Jesus met my every need.

After we toured the 9/11 Memorial, we were headed to Brooklyn for our evening service. I saw the familiar Starbucks sign and said to Jesus and Lonnie (the other preacher friend), “Gentlemen, please allow me to treat us all to Starbucks!” As usual, everyone smiled and we headed for our refreshment. We put in our order and as I pulled my wallet out, Jesus took me by the arm, raised his hand and simply shook his head “no” and pointed to his heart as if to say, “I’ll take care of this.” I said, “Thank you, Jesus, but really, I want to do this.” He then opened his wallet that had his NYC police badge attached. He then pointed to the badge to humorously and kindly showed his authority to pay for the treat. He then smiled this beautiful magnanimous smile. I said, “Thank you, Jesus; you not only meet my every need, but many of my “wants.” *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:19).

4. Jesus was with me everywhere I went.

My last place to preach was in Stony Brook, which was sixty miles from Brooklyn. At every step, Jesus was with me. He was unassuming, often in the background, but nearly every time I turned around, he was in the room or area I was in. When I saw him, he always smiled. Being a policeman, he was armed. Not only was he with me, I was also protected. *“...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”* (Matthew 28:20). *“...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:5). *“The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. THE LORD shall preserve thee from all evil...”* (Psalm 121:6.7a).

5. Jesus promised me he was coming for me.

I became friends with Jesus on my trip to New York. As the time approached when I would be flying home, Jesus told me what time he would approximately be at the hotel to pick me up. I always look forward to going home. I simply replied, “Even so, come Jesus!” He laughed, because by now we were having a good time with this. I said, “I am not worried; I shall wait on you, knowing that I shall soon mount up with wings as the eagle.”

In these last days as perilous times come (II Timothy 3:1), it is good to know that our Lord and Savior Jesus has promised, *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”* (John 14:3).

I was anxious to see Jesus as I exited the hotel. I preached on Monday night and five times on Tuesday. “The Pope” was “pooped.” I was ready to go home. I want to serve Jesus everyday of my life in everyway possible. Although we may become tired, we should not *“...be not weary in well doing”* (II Thessalonians 3:13). We have so much to look forward to, Jesus is coming!

6. Jesus did not come early, but he was most certainly not late!

Although I often run tardy, rarely am I late to exit my hotel when it is time to go home. So hurriedly that morning I packed and went outside the hotel entrance. Shortly after I walked outside I received a phone call from Jesus, explaining that he would not be there at the anticipated time, but it would be soon. It was raining and I knew that might slow the traffic further. I was getting very nervous because if I missed the plane, I missed my hospital call I had to make when I got back to Houston and might even possibly arrive too late for our mid-week service. He arrived twenty minutes later than the planned time of departure! He told us not to worry; we would make it. Oh how glad I was that he was sure! – because I was not sure. After picking me up, he knew right where he was going, weaving in and out of traffic. When he got to the airport, he entered a lane that took us close to the terminal when another policeman said, “You cannot go there, you are not allowed...” but when he found out that Jesus was a fellow officer the smiles and handshakes followed and soon we were heading through the “forbidden” zone, because Jesus had the authority. I made it on time. Jesus was right; we made it!

Often in life, I have discovered when God moves, seldom is He early, but never is He late. Jesus is right on time! *“My times are in thy hand...”* (Psalm 31:15a). *“There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand”* (Proverbs 19:21).

I was reminded of the loving-kindness of our Lord by a young man that bears the same name and many of the same traits of our Lord. I can say in perfect candor, after meeting Jesus in New York, Jesus made me want to be more like Jesus!

-Pastor Pope-