

Notes by an Imbedded Reporter
Inspired by Mark 8:27-31

Cast of Characters in order of appearance:

Narrator
Jesus
Disciple One
Disciple Two
Disciple Three
Peter
Disciple Four
Thomas
Disciple Five
Traveler
Paul

Narrator: The Bible leaves out the small talk that must have taken place on the journeys of Jesus and his disciples. After all, they had no i-Pod, cell phone, or Blackberry to keep them isolated from each other. The following is a reenactment based on notes taken by a reporter fortunate enough to be invited by Jesus to accompany him on one of his journeys.

The reporter, imbedded with Jesus and his disciples, is eavesdropping on a discussion between Jesus and his disciples. We join in as Jesus asks one of the disciples:

Jesus: "Who do people say that I am?"

Disciple One: John the Baptist.

Disciple Two: Some say, "Elijah."

Disciple Three: Others say "one of the prophets."

Jesus: "But who do *you* say that I am?"

Narrator: Peter chimes in.

Peter: "You are the Messiah."

Narrator: The next words Jesus spoke laid the very foundation for the Episcopal Church.

Jesus: "Tell no one."

Narrator: And it was so. An Episcopalian invites one person to church every 27 or so years.

Then, Jesus began foretelling what was to come. To his disciples, he detailed the suffering he must endure, how he would be killed and then be raised from the dead. Indeed, a very serious discussion. We were asked not to reveal the details just yet.

After breakfast the next day we were on the road again with Jesus and his disciples. The bantering continued.

Disciple Two: Jesus, I've been thinking about the future, way beyond the horrible pain and suffering you foretold yesterday. I think there will be millions following in your footsteps.

Narrator: Another disciple, thinking along the same line, nodded in agreement as he enthusiastically declared:

Disciple Four: Yes, Jesus, I think they will be organized into some kind of cohorts. They will be doing good works, helping the sick, giving alms to the poor and gathering in beautiful buildings to remind themselves of what you did in order to make it all possible!"

Jesus: Yes, the faithful will do these things.

Narrator: Then Thomas, with a doubting tone chimed in:

Thomas: Ahh, that's going to take a lot of money.

Jesus: Faith will always be free. Good works and a place to gather and share the faith with others will cost money. Yes, it will cost money.

Peter: But Jesus, they, the faithful I mean, will give their time and talents doing these good works and sweeping the beautiful buildings they'll use as gathering places.

Jesus: True. Blessed will be those who give their time and sweep the gathering places. However, it will also take treasure, and lots of it, in addition to their time and their talent for sweeping.

Narrator: Yet another disciple, one known for neatness, declared:

Disciple Five: Well, they will just have to get organized. They will need a bookkeeper, a treasurer and certainly they must have a budget, yes, a budget.

Disciple Two: Budget? Jesus, what's a budget?

Jesus: A budget is a devise Episcopalians will use to make public the financial limits they intend to impose on the good works they will do in the name of my Father.

Narrator: Jesus continued.

Jesus: Remember when I said, "Don't tell anyone?" Mark my words in red letters: Episcopalians will think I meant, "Do not talk about money."

Thomas: Jesus, if they think they must have a budget and yet you say they'll throttle good works in the budget process, I see a problem. I doubt that enough good works will come from a budget.

Disciple Five: Jesus, I understand the need both for a budget and good works. Do they have to be like oil and water? Can't they work together?

Jesus: Yes, they can! Good works and budgets, when in harmony, function as beautifully as the wings of a hummingbird. Each of you must use all of your persuasive gifts; do whatever it takes, to help my followers understand in their very souls that all they have is a gift from God. Somehow we must capture their attention and help them appreciate that they are caretakers and stewards of the bounty of the earth. Ask my followers if they cannot only survive but thrive on 90% of the bounty. They

will probably say they can. Once they understand that concept they will joyfully give at least 10% to their gathering places to be used for my Father's work. A budget will have a different use then. It will be used to help distribute abundance! When that happens, My Father will say, "My Son; that was a mountain top experience."

Narrator: Now, about that time the disciples saw a farmer in his field separating grain from chaff by tossing it into the wind. The chaff was carried off by the wind and the grain fell into a collecting basket at the farmer's feet. Upon witnessing the separating of grain from chaff, Peter said to his fellows:

Peter: If an Episcopalian sees how that is done, good works will be in trouble.

Disciple Five: What do you mean?"

Jesus: Here's why. Episcopalians will assume that if they can take folding money from their wallets, the change from their pockets then toss it all up in the wind, all that falls into the collection basket can be used for good works.

Narrator: Further on along the way they came upon a flock of sheep in a lush green meadow. A cool stream flowed through it. A plump ram drank from the stream, raised his head and looked at the rest of the flock. It was a thin, hungry thirsty, grumbling flock. Each sheep held its head high so as to be perceived as being above lowly grass eating, water slurping beasts of the earth. The plump ram urged them to bend their necks and partake of the grass and water. Lo, they would not. The flock mumbled among themselves muttering: "Who does he think he is, so high and mighty and plump. Why doesn't he feed us and bring some water? There is no reason for us to bend our necks to the succulent grass or touch the cool stream with our lips. I'm not giving my sweat." Another muttered through dry, parched lips: "We don't have to give our sweat, any wooly sheep can plainly see that he already did it, therefore, we don't have to give anything. But why is he so plump and happy?" Another croaked: "I'm awfully hungry and thirsty, I wish he would bring us something to eat and drink."

Jesus called out to the plump ram.

Jesus: Hello, Benny! 'Looks like your parents taught you well!

Narrator: The disciples were astonished that Jesus not only knew the name of the plump ram but knew his parents as well. Jesus explained:

Jesus: Benny's father was Max who owned a factory that produced makeup for lady sheep. Benny's full name is Benny Factor.

Narrator: Around the next bend two deer, and then another jumped across the road right in front of them. All three deer stopped on a sand bar which was in the same cool stream Benny Factor had enjoyed. One of the disciples exclaimed:

Disciple Five: Be mindful, those may be Episcopal deer.

Narrator: Another disciple agreed as two more deer barely missed them as they jumped across the road and joined the others at the sand bar. They all drank the cool water.

Disciple Five: See, I told you they were Episcopal deer.

Thomas: How do you know?

Disciple Five: When two or three are gathered there will always be a fifth.

Peter: Plus, two were late to the service!

Narrator: Now, it came to pass that Jesus and his disciples were nearing a village, a village unknown to them. It was midday and very hot so they rested under the shade of a giant oak. Along came a stranger from the direction of the next village. A disciple called out:

Disciple Two: Sir, you appear to be coming from the next village. Tell us, what manner of folk live there?

Narrator: The traveler scowled and hissed.

Traveler: They are a selfish, grumbling lot. I get a sour taste in my mouth even thinking of that place. I'm going to Greener Pastures. Now, get out of my way, I'm busy.

Narrator: Soon another traveler appeared; he too, was coming from the direction of the next village. Again the disciple hailed.

Disciple Two: Sir, you appear to be coming from the next village. Tell us, what manner of folk live there?

Narrator: Replied the smiling traveler:

Paul: Hello there! My name is Paul. Thank you for asking about the people of my village. A wonderful lot they are indeed. They are saints. They help each other and they share. Their lawns are green because they water them. The children of the village are all above average and do good works. As an example, a man just left our village after he discovered that his tree only produced lemons. Our children found the lemons he threw away, made lemonade and are distributing it to those less fortunate than they. Please pardon me; I must go tell others about our village and its wonderful people. Please be sure you stop at our new lemonade stand. We love to have strangers in our midst.

Narrator: Having said all that, Paul was off on his mission to bring people to his village.

Jesus and his disciples resumed their journey in the direction from whence Paul had cometh. Soon they crested a hill and saw in the valley below a beautiful little village. From it came the aroma of jasmine, honey and, yes, lemon.

Jesus turning to his disciples said:

Jesus: These people are just what we expected to find. They must be the saints of Paul's.