



THE OLD BIRD CAGE

There once was a man named George Thomas, 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.

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. On the bottom of the cage were three little wild birds, shivering with cold and fright. I stopped the lad and asked, "What do you have there, son?"

"Just some old birds," came the reply. "What are you going to 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 'm 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 a world full of people down there. Set me 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 are 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 blood, tears and your life." Jesus said, "DONE! Then He paid the price. The pastor picked up the cage and walked from the pulpit.

Martin Luther said it this way, "He has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death." Jesus setting us free is what we call redemption.

The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us.

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. Revelation 3:19, 20 NIV

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