

## Michael & the Groome Cross

We woke up, at the rest area east of Amarillo, TX, to a gorgeous morning. Sun shining warm and waves of spring green carpeted the plains as the cool breeze blew through the tender winter wheat. None of us knew the correct time 'cause ev'ry clock in the Coach seemed different. One Pacific, one Mountain,...which one is "Tulsa time"? oh well...doesn't matter...time to go!

Beautiful day, traffic was light... and this was the final stretch before reaching our base in Lawton, OK. We've always loved this part of the country. You can drive forever through the peaceful prairie. After a while we passed a sign **"World's Biggest Cross" ..."truly a spiritual experience!"** That sounds kinda "cheesy & touristy", I thought to myself. But just then Mark said "We have to stop." "Have to?" I wondered...Hmmm...



The cross was a huge lighted structure. I remembered how brilliantly it illuminated the barrenness of the plains when we were headed west last Wednesday night. "Okay" I said compliantly.

We exited I-40 near Pampas, Texas and pulled into the area. The cross was encircled by Bronze figures...

"The Stations..." I whispered.

"Looks like it" Mark replied.

We began..."Jesus is Condemned to Death".

The bronze figures were skillfully crafted to depict each station of the passion of Christ. We had recently seen the movie and the emotions were still raw from the experience. Each Station captured attention and demanded reverence as you gazed into the faces before you..."Mary", ..."Veronica", ... "Jesus Fell",... "Simon of Cyrene",... on and on...tears ever present as I pondered each step.

I paused at the rendition of His last fall, an exhaustion beyond comprehension under the brutal weight of His/our cross...then a distraction...

A family had just pulled into the area and released a young boy onto the grounds. He was standing on the prone cross, where Jesus was being nailed, grasping and pulling at the bronze artwork like it was a Little Tykes toy.

"Don't stand on that, Sweetie." I chastened.

He must have been 6 or 7 years old...and as wild as any 6 or 7 year old boy that you'd ever (or never) want to meet. Where were his parents? How could they allow this ruffian to disturb the reverence of my moment? I looked around and saw an old van loaded with some rumples & boisterous adults slowly emerging from it.

"Oh." I thought, and tried to recapture my "spirituality."

"Jesus is Stripped of His Garments" I noticed the detail of the art...

"I'm gonna take this hammer and smash you in your face!" a young voice grunted out as he pulled at the hammer in the soldier's hand. I realized he was talking to the soldier... "Oh Honey, Jesus wouldn't want you to do that" I corrected.

"Michael..." an impatient yelp broke into our encounter. I looked toward the parking lot to see a woman calling to the boy. I guess they'd decided this wasn't to their liking. "Good" I thought..."he'll be going, now."

"Yes he would!" the boy wailed. "Look at him!" I glanced down to see the face of my Savior contorted in agony as the nail was driven through his flesh. Then I looked at the child standing there desperately trying to pry the mallet from the grip of the very thing he saw as the enemy of something or someone good. My heart broke. This boy was trying to process this horrific scene the only way he knew.

"Michael..." the woman barked repeatedly.

He hopelessly kicked at the cross as he turned away; then said in a disgusted tone "People died here..."

Before I could say a word, he quickly ran off up the concrete steps toward the three crosses on the hill.

"Michael!" she screeched sharply.

He yelled to me from atop the hill "Look! They killed Him!"

By this time I was almost to the foot of the cross at the Golgotha scene. "I know, but..."

"Are there three Jesus-es?" Michael interrupted.

"No," I said, "the other two were thieves. One made fun of Jesus, and one was kind to Him..."

"Thieves?" he asked.

"Yes, you know they stole stuff." I explained.

"What did they steal?"

"I don't know..."

Michael began to look dismayed.

"Michael," I said, "This isn't the end...it's not the best part..."

"What do ya mean?" He looked confused.

"Three days after He died, He came back to life...He's alive!" I said.

"No way!" he chimed.

"Yes He is! You know, Easter?" I reminded.

He looked puzzled, as if he were wondering what this had to do with bunnies & colored eggs.

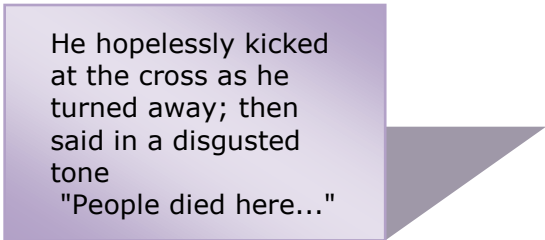
"See for yourself..." I added.

"What? Where?", he asked excitedly.

"Go down these steps, then go around and look in the tomb under this hill."

Michael darted out over the mock up of the tomb from the top of the hill. I, again, cautioned him to go down the steps for safety sake (there were signs of caution all around this route).

He raced toward the tomb as his angry mother threatened to leave him.



He hopelessly kicked at the cross as he turned away; then said in a disgusted tone "People died here..."

He emerged from the tomb jumping and beaming with joy! "He's ALIVE!" he proclaimed excitedly...and ran back in.

By this time, a frustrated man began walking toward us with purpose in his step.

"Michael, you'd really better go...your Dad is coming." I warned.

"He's **not** my Dad" Michael replied, through clenched teeth, almost under his breath; and again went inside the tomb.

Soon Michael re-appeared and, waving wildly for the man, said "Daddy, come quick...you're missin' the best part!"

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I'd love to say that the man joined Michael, at the tomb, and found Jesus...but he didn't. Michael was right...they had come all the way out to the cross in the middle of the prairie, and had missed the best part.

The last time I saw Michael, his "Dad" was dragging him by the arm toward the overcrowded van of annoyed adults. He was pulling & pointing toward the tomb exclaiming "...but there's an Angel, and everything,...you're missin' it..."  
...but Michael hadn't missed it...

...and thanks to Michael, I didn't miss it either...

^j^

## BE WILD FOR CHRIST!

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