

The Deliverer by Cleveland O. McLeish

The Deliverer

“The Fall & Rise of the Church of God in Blacktop”

An Original Stage play

by

CLEVELAND O. McLEISH

The Deliverer by Cleveland O. McLeish

SYNOPSIS

Thomas is told in a dream to go and visit his mother's church in a small community called Blacktop. He hasn't been to that side of the world in over a decade. He obeys, but what he finds is an empty church with only two members remaining, and they are the caretakers of the property and also former members of the church; one is old, the other is a drunk. Thomas formulates a strategic plan to restore the church. He starts by having a free bar-be-que. Of course, once there is free food people will come, and they do come. But will this bold move cause a revival or fuel a rebellion?

SETTING: *An old church fully furnished with paintings of Christ of the walls, A podium with a huge bible sitting unopened....chairs lined out for a choir, etc...*

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Thomas: MALE: Chosen to help rebuild this church.

Jessica: FEMALE: Use to be a member of this church

Pastor Jones: MALE: Use to be the Pastor of this church.

Old Man: MALE: Caretaker for the Church

Voice of God

Simon: MALE: Newscaster

Dorene: FEMALE: Newscaster

Anna: Reporter (Can be Male or Female. If Male, please change name)

Extras (6-15 members – Some with Speaking Parts)

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THE SCRIPT

LIGHTS COME UP

Thomas, dressed in full white, is standing between rows of benches. He seems Lost.

THOMAS: Where am I? (*looks around*) This place seems so familiar.

VOICE: Thomas.

Thomas spins around trying to locate the source of the voice.

VOICE: Thomas.

Thomas realizes that the voice is coming from above.

THOMAS: If that is you Lord, I'm listening.

VOICE: Take off your shoes, for the place you stand is Holy Ground.

THOMAS: God, it's me Thomas, not Moses.

VOICE: Take off your shoes!

Thomas quickly pulls his shoes off.

VOICE: I have chosen you to bring deliverance to my people. It is time.

THOMAS: Time for what, Lord?

VOICE: To bring deliverance to my people.

THOMAS: I thought I was already doing that.

VOICE: You must visit your mother's church this Sunday.

THOMAS: But Lord, there is a reason I moved out of Blacktop. I don't want to go back there, and I have a lot of responsibility here.

VOICE: Remember Jonah...Remember Paul...Remember Ananais and Saphira...

THOMAS: What time on Sunday?

LIGHTS OUT.

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SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: *An old church fully furnished with paintings of Christ on the walls, A podium with a huge bible sitting unopened....chairs lined out for a choir, etc... But there is no one here except an old man sitting on the front bench.*

He just sits there staring out at the audience....

The door to the back (DS) creaks open and Thomas steps in. He's Dressed in his best 'Sunday wear.' He carefully steps in not looking around, And slowly tries to close the door without it making a sound...which is hopeless Of course.

He turns around slowly expecting many eyes to be looking his way....the only other two eyes in the room remain focused on the audience.

THOMAS: I am either late, or this church no longer keeps on a Sunday.

He walks to the front where the old man is sitting.

THOMAS: Hello.

The man doesn't respond.

Thomas comes around and stands directly in front of him.

THOMAS: Excuse me!

The man looks up at Thomas and smiles.

THOMAS: Can you tell me where I can find the Church of God?

OLD MAN: Young man, you need to speak up. I see your mouth moving, but I hear no words. Doctor says I have a hearing problem, and I have no money to fill the description.

THOMAS: *(talks loudly)* You mean prescription.

OLD MAN: No need to shout. Just speak up.

THOMAS: Where is everybody?

The Old man looks around.

OLD MAN: This is everybody.

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THOMAS: There is just you.

OLD MAN: Yep.

THOMAS: What happened to the church?

OLD MAN: Discriminated about three years now.

THOMAS: You mean disseminated?

OLD MAN: Don't correct my English, son. It's annoying.

THOMAS: *(continues to talk loudly)* What happened?

OLD MAN: People change, some find another church...others just stay home and watch TD Jakes. If you ask me, I would blame technology. The world was gravitating towards it, the church was not.

THOMAS: Why would people need to find another church?

OLD MAN: Problems, man...problems. People find it hard to agree these days. They're always quarreling and fighting over something stupid....one by one, they just stop coming.

THOMAS: I do not believe what I'm hearing. This was such a vibrant church. I can't believe its dead.

OLD MAN: What business do you have here?

Thomas pauses to reflect.

THOMAS: I was raised in this church. My mother used to come here before she died. I used to go to Sunday School right here.

OLD MAN: Who was your mother?

THOMAS: People called her Mother Memo. Some knew her as fire stick,

OLD MAN: Fire stick was your mama. *(laughs)* That woman was something else. *(looks at Thomas)* So you was that young boy who always used the bathroom, but afraid to flush it?

THOMAS *(smiles at the memory)* Yes?

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OLD MAN: I remember you. You get big and it looks like you made something of yourself. Can I have five dollars?

Thomas digs in his pocket and takes out a few bills and hand it to the Old Man.

OLD MAN: God bless your soul, boy. *(Counts the money)* I'm sorry they killed your mother's church, but that's life. Nothing good lasts. *(gets up to leave)* Do me a favour and keep an eye on things. Need to go to the shop.

Old man heads for the exit.

OLD MAN: You want anything?

Thomas shakes his head no.

OLD MAN: Right. You town folks don't eat from shop.

Old man exits.

Thomas is saddened by all that he has heard. He walks around a bit considering The old mans words.

He takes a seat and lifts his eyes to heaven.....for a moment he remembers his Mother almost as if he could hear her voice singing in the background (play Background music).....tears grease his eyes.....

The familiar noisy sound of the front door pulls Thomas back to reality. He turns To see Pastor Jones entering...closing the door behind him.

Thomas stands to his feet. Pastor is a little surprised to see him.

THOMAS: Greetings, sir.

JONES: And you are?

THOMAS: My name is Thomas Memo. I used to come to this church.

JONES: Wait...*(laughs)*...when did you get so big, boy. You used to use the toilet and could not flush it.

THOMAS: Yes.

JONES: Come give my hand a hearty shake.

They approach each other and shake hands.

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JONES: Man...I haven't seen you since you started high school.

THOMAS: It was rough...lost my head for a bit there.

JONES: Yeah, it happens. You turned your back on church. If I remember correctly, you did not even come to your mother's funeral.

THOMAS: I...couldn't. I didn't want to see her in a coffin.

JONES: Boy...its life. One minute you're alive, the next minute you're dead and cold, lifeless, breathless, motionless...

THOMAS (*changing the subject*): I came today to enjoy the service.

Pastor Jones is sad...he looks away.

THOMAS: What happen to the church, sir?

JONES: People happen. A new generation of people. (*changing the subject*) Did you see an old man?

THOMAS: He went to the shop. Why are you changing the subject?

JONES: It's too painful to talk about man.

THOMAS: Well, Mama always said it's better to talk, than keep it inside. It can be poisonous.

Pause.

JONES: I am already poisoned.

THOMAS: What happened to the church, sir? People should be here right now worshipping God....what happened?

JONES: It's not easy having a congregation with everyone pulling in their own direction. There was no unity among the young and the old, leaders were disagreeing on everything, nobody was studying the Bible or trying to live Christ-like. Everyone was just doing their own thing. (*pause*) A kingdom that is divided against itself must fall.

THOMAS: As the Pastor, you should not have given up.

JONES: Can the Pastor alone make a church?

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THOMAS: It's not about you. If the present membership abandoned the church, you should have gone out to win new souls for the kingdom. As I see it, you're not doing either.

JONES: The fighting and politics in church these days, it's best the non-Christians stay out there and enjoy themselves.

THOMAS: You don't sound like a pastor.

JONES: I am not a pastor anymore.

THOMAS: I am disappointed in you, sir.

JONES: Just take my advice.....go back to your Town life and forget about this place.

THOMAS: And leave this place to the devil. I don't think so.

Thomas turns on his heels and exits almost knocking the Old Man over as he Enters with his shopping bag.

OLD MAN: What's wrong with him?

JONES: (*shouts*) Young people these days. Always going around trying to save the world.

OLD MAN: He almost knocked me over.

JONES: So, did you buy the pepsi?

OLD MAN: Of course...did you bring the rum?

JONES: I have it right here.

OLD MAN: A little wine is good for the stomach right?

JONES: Yees, preach it brother.

OLD MAN: I will preach later. Right now, let's drink and be merry.

They exit as....

LIGHTS FADE.

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SCENE II

LIGHTS UP

Thomas is sitting behind a slant drawing table with a paint brush in his hand. There are cans of paint lying close by as he puts the finishing touches on a Banner he's doing.

Enter Old Man and Pastor Jones sipping from glasses in their hand.

They stand behind him peeking over Thomas' shoulder trying to catch a glimpse of what he's doing.

OLD MAN (*pointing at banner*) What is that word?

JONES (*reads slowly*): It says Bar-Be-Que.

OLD MAN: Sweet! (*a pause*) So what is a bar-be-que?

JONES: I'm pretty sure it has something to do with food.

THOMAS: That's close enough.

JONES: So what is it exactly?

THOMAS: It's an outdoor cook out.

JONES: Well, if it's a cook out, then it must be outdoors. Why not just say cook out?

Thomas rolls his eyes. He notices the glasses in their hand.

THOMAS: What is that you're drinking?

JONES: This...uhm...ehm...it's sprite.

THOMAS: It smells like alcohol.

JONES: What? What would a big Pasten be doing sipping alcohol in the house of the Lord?

THOMAS: You two need help.

OLD MAN: So what is this bar-be-que all about?

Thomas stops what he's doing to give them his full attention and demand theirs.

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THOMAS: This is a church where the membership has stopped coming out. The community doesn't know that a church still exist here, so we need to send a message. Now if you want ghetto people to come out, what is the first thing you do?

JONES: Pray.

THOMAS: No.

OLD MAN: Fast.

THOMAS: Nope.

JONES: I know...I know....visit them.

THOMAS: Naw.

JONES: What is the first thing you do then?

THOMAS: You feed them.

JONES: Oooohhhh. The way to a man's heart is through his belly.

THOMAS: Exactly.

JONES (*nabs Old Man*): This one have a little sense.

OLD MAN: So, who is doing the cooking?

JONES: I can cook.

OLD MAN: I have had your cooking, and I wouldn't exactly call it cooking.

JONES: I can handle myself in the kitchen.

OLD MAN: Right...this is serious business. If we're going to feed people, best to give them some good food. Right Timothy?

THOMAS: It's Thomas!

OLD MAN: It don't make no sense you tell me your name. I won't remember it.

THOMAS: Don't worry. I already have someone in mind to cook. I invited a few people from my church to come and help.

JONES: Your church? I thought you backslide!

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THOMAS: I came back to the Lord five years now. When you're grown in church, you never forget where you're coming from. Eventually the prodigal son will return.

JONES: I hear you (*looks in empty glass*) The ru....(*eyes Thomas*) Sprite finish.

OLD MAN: I have some more sprite in the kitchen.

JONES: Tom Tom....I am going to get myself a refill. I soon return.

Thomas shakes his head without responding.

Jones exits.

Thomas touches the banner a few more times with his brush. He steps back a little to vet his handiwork. Pleased, he hangs it over the rail (USC)

OLD MAN: You really think you can buy out people with free food?

THOMAS: I have to try something.

OLD MAN: Okay, and how do you intend to get the word out.

THOMAS: (*smiling*) I have some friends at the news station, and I also plan to use this.

Thomas picks up a loud horn from behind the table. He pats Old man on his back.

OLD MAN: Easy with the patting young boy. I'm not as sturdy as I used to do.

THOMAS: You will get worse if you keep drinking that rum.

Thomas exits. Old Man looks up to heaven.

OLD MAN: Okay, so you send us a smart one this time. Let's see where this goes.

Old Man takes a seat on the front bench.

LIGHTS OUT

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SCENE 3

LIGHTS UP

CBC (Christian Broadcasting Corporation) Network.

Seated at the News Table are Simon and Dorene. They prepare themselves to Deliver the news.

On cue they lift their heads and smile at the audience.

SIMON: Blessed Assurance! I am Simon...

DORENE: And I am Dorene....

SIMON: Welcome to tonight's Christian Broadcasting Corporation Network News.

DORENE: Where only good news makes the news.

SIMON: Tonight....over a dozen more churches have closed their doors as inflation sores and conflicts go unresolved.

DORENE: The nation mourns as yet another Pastor has stepped down from office.

SIMON: And our poll question for this evening...'Should the Church be Forced to Pay Taxes?' To participate simply dial 999-2001, press five, then six, then three, then two, then nine, then eight and follow the instructions.

DORENE: Now for the news. Over a dozen church doors are now officially closed by the government as these churches in question have failed to produce the proper paper work to auditors. It seems that there is money coming in and out of these institutions that cannot be accounted for and therefore some prominent Christian figures have been taken into custody for questioning.

SIMON: The Church of God in Blacktop will be opening their doors once again to the public and especially to past members of the church after four years of dormancy. They will be hosting their first inaugural Bar-Be-Cue this coming weekend free of cost and all are invited.

DORENE: And in Kingston a Prominent Pastor who has stood in office for 16 years has submitted his resignation. It is said that there was weeping, mourning and gnashing of teeth as the members of the church refuses to allow anyone else to stand over them as pastor. More on this later.

SIMON: In an astonishing turn of events it seems that more and more Christians are walking away from God for the pleasures of this world. The question is asked

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considering all... 'Is it Worth it?' Anna will be coming on live from the streets of Downtown Blacktop where we hope to get some feedback from the public on this matter. Over to you Anna...

Anna is standing in the aisle among the audience with a microphone in her hand.

ANNA: Yes, Glory Halleluiah, our God reigns! Uhmmm! I am here on the streets of Downtown Blacktop where I intend to get some feedback on what is happening in our society, as clearly the membership in churches have declined somewhat...so basically, the question being asked is, where are God's people?

Anna approaches a gentleman sitting close by.

ANNA: Sir....Sir.....Can you tell us why only the minority of the population now goes to church.

MAN: Am I on television?

ANNA: Yes sir.

MAN: Look at it this way. The church is sleeping while crime and violence taking over our communities. They do nothing, but exploit poor people, when they should be invading these different communities and making a change. It's a sad reality, but the church is too much talk and not enough power.

ANNA: Thank you sir.

Anna moves on to someone on the other side.

OTHER PERSON: Lack of interest. People want to do what they feel like doing and not be accountable to anyone.

Another person gets up and grabs the microphone.

ANOTHER PERSON: Aside from that, church full of hypocrite. How can you say you're representing Christ, and doing your own thing? Personally, if a church is not effective, they might as well close their doors.

More and more shouts of displeasure from the audience.

Anna is overwhelmed by the responses, she turns to face the stage where Dorene And Simon stares back at her.

ANNA: There you have it. I don't need to summarize what these people think as it's clear as day that they are not pleased with the lowered standard of our churches. *(pause)* God help us! This is Anna Pappartzi reporting live for CBC News.

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Anna exits.

Simon and Dorene looks at the audience and smiles.

SIMON: This is indeed a very dark hour for the church...and one is forced to wonder if we'll ever see the dawn of light...but Jesus is yet to return which means there is hope....somewhere, there is hope of a new dawn. *(pause)* I am Simon....

DORENE: And I am Dorene for CBC News.

SIMON: Amen & Goodnight.

*Simon and Dorene turn to each other miming a conversation as they would when
The news is over as....*

LIGHTS FADE...

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SCENE 4

LIGHTS UP

Old Man and Pastor Jones is busy putting up decorations and stuff.

OLD MAN: You saw the news last night?

JONES: Yep.

OLD MAN: Mother Memo son look like him mean business.

JONES: We'll see.

Enter Jessica. She looks around a bit touching some of the benches and smiling at pleasant memories.

JONES: Hello there sister....it's been a while since I saw you here.

JESSICA: Yeah.

OLD MAN: You still look delightful.

JESSICA (*talks loudly*): Thanks.

OLD MAN: Are you married yet? I'm still single and looking.

Jones jabs him in his side. Jessica smiles.

Thomas comes out with more decorations in his hand....he sees Jessica standing there...their eyes meet...they remain in silence just looking at each other.

OLD MAN: Oh oh. Young boy mesmerized...like cat get him tongue.

Jones goes over to Thomas and slaps him in his back.

JONES: Speak boy....

THOMAS: Huh. (*as if snapping out of a trance*) Right...right. (*pause*) Huh...Jessica...is that really you?

JONES (*throws his hands in the air*): Finally talk and end up asking a foolish question. (*motions to Jessica*) No Thomas, she's a ghost.

Jessica laughs again.

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JESSICA: Yes Thomas. It's me.

JONES: And you really answer that question. You're just as bad.

Thomas throws the decorations in Jones hand.

THOMAS: You two have work to do, so mind your own business.

Thomas and Jessica greet each other awkwardly.

THOMAS: How long has it been?

JESSICA: Eight...maybe nine years.

THOMAS: Wow! And you still look the same.

JESSICA: Yep...not much has changed.

THOMAS: Other things have changed.

JESSICA: Like what?

THOMAS: The last time I saw you, you were on the pulpit leading out worship and praise. Now you're not even coming to church.

JESSICA: Oh...that reminds me.

Jessica slaps Thomas hard across the face.

OLD MAN (*excited*) Wooooi!!!

JONES: Turn the other cheek boy.

THOMAS: What was that for?

JESSICA: You promised you would call. You never did. I felt like such a fool.

Thomas rubs his jaw and smiles.

THOMAS: Ok, I guess I deserved that. Now that you get that out of the way....can we talk.

JESSICA: What do you want to talk about Thomas? Why I no longer come to church? Why I no longer lead worship and praise? If you really cared, you would have called.

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THOMAS: I won't make excuses, but I am here now. This church is empty and I really need help to restore it.

JESSICA: Why would you want to do that?

THOMAS: This is where I grew up...my foundation....and if you know anything about me, you should know that I can't see a problem and not try to fix it.

JESSICA: The great Thomas, always trying to save the world.

THOMAS: It is really God at work, but He needs hands and feet and eyes and mouth and ears....I'm just an instrument in His hands. We all are.

JESSICA: So you're having a bar-be-cue with the hope that the people will start coming back to church?

THOMAS: It's not a definitive solution, but we must start somewhere.

JONES: He thinks that this community is filled with hungry, greedy people.

JESSICA: I won't lie. I miss church. But nothing has been happening here, and I doubt one man can make any lasting difference.

THOMAS: One can chase a thousand....two can put ten thousand to flight. I count four...In God's hand, this is an army.

JESSICA: Count me out.

THOMAS: Why?

JESSICA: I don't do church anymore.

THOMAS: There is something worth more to you than God?

JESSICA: Who gives you the right to put me on the spot?

THOMAS: Tell me what happen to you Jessica.

JESSICA: You want me to talk in front of the Pastor and the caretaker?

THOMAS: Well, the caretaker is already deaf....

Jones grabs Old Man's arm.

JONES: Listen, youngsters...you two talk. We two taking a break.

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OLD MAN: Whhhhyy??? I want to hear.

Jones drags him and they exit.

Jessica takes a seat in a nearby bench.

JESSICA: You really want to know the truth?

THOMAS: Yes.

JESSICA: I could not make a move without someone dragging my name in the dirt. They pray for you, and then talk about you. It was too much.

THOMAS: Gossipers made you turn your back on God?

JESSICA: I hate them. I tried to adjust my life to suit them, but nothing works. They were everywhere in church, on the choir, band leaders, ushers...everyone was talking about somebody else. I couldn't handle that, so I left.

THOMAS: Did you go to another church?

JESSICA: Yep. But it was the same thing. I think the world treats us better.

THOMAS: From whose perspective?

JESSICA: Don't judge me.

THOMAS: I admit there are hypocrites in church...but they weren't the reason you came to church.

JESSICA: Well, I cannot worship God in the same atmosphere with hypocrites. It's like trying to breath in polluted air.

THOMAS: Jessica....my point is...it was never about you.

JESSICA: Tell that to the hypocrites.

THOMAS: I came here yesterday for church, and I didn't see either you or the hypocrites. What happen? Did you all leave in the same boat?

JESSICA: I will slap you on the other cheek.

THOMAS: Help me rebuild this church, Jessica.

JESSICA: No.

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THOMAS: So maybe you can't do it for me or yourself...but do it for the one who really matters. Do it for God! Supposed He was the one asking you right now.

JESSICA: I haven't heard His voice in a while.

THOMAS: He never stopped speaking. We are the ones who stop listening.

Pause.

JESSICA: I hate it when you put me on the spot.

THOMAS: So you'll help me then?

Pause.

JESSICA: We'll see.

THOMAS: Good enough

Jones and Old Man returns.

JONES: Hey Tom Tom...by any chance did you move a...uhmm...bottle of sprite that was in the kitchen?

THOMAS: You mean the rum?

JONES: Sprite man. There's a difference.

THOMAS: Let me introduce you to Jesus. He's the well of living water. You drink from this well you will never thirst again.

JONES: It's all good, man, but where is the sprite?

THOMAS: Pastor....you really need Jesus.

Thomas and Jessica step past them and exits.

OLD MAN: Did he tell you what he did with the rum?

JONES: I think he dumped it.

OLD MAN: Why would he do that? I hurt people for less than that. I don't have any money to buy another bottle.

JONES: Let's just finish with these decorations.

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OLD MAN (*starts to take up one of the benches*): Decorations? I want justice. I want a drink. I'm going to use this bench to block the road and demand justice.

JONES: There is lemonade in the fridge.

OLD MAN: I'm too old to be drinking lemonade. That will do nothing for me.

Jones takes the bench and replaces it. He holds his friend by the shoulder.

JONES: Forget the rum man. We have work to do. (*pause*) Something is about to happen in this place. I can feel it. Don't you feel it?

OLD MAN: I can't feel anything without my drink.

JONES: Thomas is right. You are hopeless.

*The Old man is a bit reluctant...but he eventually joins Jones with completing
The decorating as...*

LIGHTS OUT

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SCENE 5

LIGHTS UP

The Day of the Bar-Be-Que...

Seems the turn out is a whole lot better than expected.

Thomas and Jessica is busy serving people drinks, food...

Jones and Old Man are refilling people's water/wine glasses.

It's a jovial mood as everyone engages in idle chatter, laughing, jeering, Pointing at others, criticizing, etc.

Jessica takes Thomas by the arm and pulls him aside.

JESSICA: I wasn't expecting so many people.

THOMAS: *(smiling)* I know. It's awesome.

JESSICA: This is no time to be smiling. We just ran out of food and there are some who haven't received anything yet.

THOMAS: Whoi!! *(pause)* Ok. Let's try to stay calm. I really wasn't expecting so many people.

JESSICA: I just said that.

THOMAS: Are you sure the food is finished?

JESSICA: Yep. All the meat and rice is gone. All we have left is water.

THOMAS: I'm thinking we just need five pieces of chicken and three stick of fries.

Thomas laughs. He's the only one laughing.

JESSICA: Glad you're enjoying this. These people came for food. They will not be pleased that they came for nothing.

THOMAS: I really wasn't expecting so many people.

JESSICA: That is the power of free food. What is the plan?

THOMAS: I need to say something to them, before they realize there is no more food.

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JESSICA: I don't think these people want a sermon.

THOMAS: I have to try, Jess.

Jessica is still not convinced, but she nods just the same.

Thomas turns to the crowd.

THOMAS (*speaking loudly*): MAY I GET EVERYONE'S ATTENTION PLEASE!

No one pays Thomas any mind. They continue doing what they're doing.

THOMAS: Hello...please, hello.

Thomas pleas fall on deaf hears.

Jessica puts her fingers to her lips and whistles loudly. Everyone stops and turns to them. Thomas looks at Jessica half surprised and half proud.

JESSICA: Somep'n I picked up on the streets.

Thomas turns to the attention of everyone now looking their way. Jones and the Old Man exits.

THOMAS: Just wanted to say thanks to everyone for coming. (*pause*) Hope you enjoyed the proceedings so far, but we got some things we need to talk about.

MEMBER FROM GROUP: Hey, where's my food?

THOMAS: Coming to you sir. Just give me a couple seconds...yeah, anyway...We all got some connection or the other to this place...this church...which is not a church anymore, just a building because people are the church and people no longer occupy the building...but we want to change that.

MEMBER FROM GROUP: For why? We like things just the way they are right now. Church was always a psychological burden. We are comfortable now. This is true liberty...real freedom...

THOMAS: Jesus did not call us to be comfortable.

MEMBER FROM GROUP: Same thing. You are about to burden us with guilt about how we live. We don't want that.

Protest from the group...half agreeing, half saying let the man speak.

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THOMAS: We're not here for our self...we here for others. God is depending on us to deliver His word to a fallen generation. If not us, then who. If not now, then when.

MEMBER FROM GROUP: Oh, so the free food was just bait to get us here so you can preach on us.

ANOTHER MEMBER: This was a setup.

ANOTHER MEMBER: I'm out of here.

ANOTHER MEMBER: Nothing I hate more than a con man.

Half the group agrees and exit...the other half remains sort of convicted by Thomas words.

JESSICA: That went well.

Mrs. Reid from those who remain walks over.

MRS. REID: You used to be a shy young man.

THOMAS: Good to see you, ma'am.

MRS. REID: I'll be here for church Sunday. I should be able to convince my family to come with me too.

THOMAS: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Mrs. Reid hugs Thomas.

MRS. REID: Good to see you back.

The others also pass and shake Thomas hand or offer a hug as they exit, Until only Jessica and Thomas remain.

JESSICA: I guess you're having church Sunday.

THOMAS: Yep. I'm going to need a worship and praise leader.

Pause.

JESSICA: Good luck finding one.

Jessica exits.

THOMAS: Not exactly the answer I was looking for.

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OLD MAN and JONES enter with refilled jugs. They stop and look around to see that everyone has left.

JONES: Aww man. We missed the fun part.

OLD MAN: Aww man.

JONES: Nobody taught these people that it's bad manners to eat and then leave.

Old man rubs his belly.

OLD MAN: Well, I am not the eat and leave kind. I am the eat and sleep kind.

Old man finds a bench to lie down on.

JONES: I know why your stomach is so big.

OLD MAN: How can you see past yours to see mine?

Thomas can't help but laugh at these two.

JONES: So, Tom Tom...what did we miss?

THOMAS: Nothing much, except we're having church Sunday.

OLD MAN: Oh noooo.

THOMAS: What is it?

OLD MAN: I was planning to sleep really late. This bar-be-blue work really stress me out.

JONES: *(shakes his head)* Hopeless I tell you.

THOMAS: Sooooo, we're going to need someone to bring the word.

JONES: You mean a preacher?

THOMAS: Yeah.

JONES: Wow....*(pause)*...good luck finding one.

Jones exits.

OLD MAN *(smiling)*: Not exactly the answer you were looking for right?

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Thomas sighs.

LIGHTS OUT

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SCENE 6

LIGHTS UP

Thomas and Jessica are busy tidying and fixing up the place after the Bar-Be-Que.

Pastor Jones and Old Man are sitting to one side sipping their usual 'juice'

OLD MAN (*takes a gulp*): Ah...this ru...(*Jones jabs him in his side*)...Ahem...sprite taste good.

JONES: I just add a tip of pepsi and lime. Makes all the difference.

OLD MAN: I feel the spirit moving.

THOMAS: You two need some serious help.

OLD MAN: We're good to go. Never felt this young in my life.

THOMAS: You're walking in darkness. You need to see the light.

OLD MAN: Brother, one sip of this and you will be begging God to turn down the light.

Old Man and Jones click glasses.

JONES: Amen.

JESSICA: Can you at least come and help us clean this place up?

OLD MAN: We're not the ones who created the mess.

JONES: Eh, eh. Maybe you should keep a Bar-Be-Clean-Up now.

Thomas goes over to them and grabs the glasses out of their hand.

JONES AND OLD MAN: Heeey.

THOMAS: I will give these back to you, after you help.

JONES: Don't be like that, man.

Jones and Old Man get up.

They each take a piece of garbage off the ground and drop it in the waste basket.

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OLD MAN: Whoi, that was hard work. I'm super tired.

Old Man goes back to sitting.

Thomas and Jessica look at him, then at each other, then shakes their heads.

THOMAS & JESSICA: Hopeless.

JONES: I told you.

THOMAS: I want to talk to you guys about something.

JONES: Oh oh. Here it comes.

JESSICA: What?

THOMAS: I'm not here by accident. God sent me.

JONES: Did He appear to you in a burning bush?

THOMAS: No. It was a dream.

JONES: Right! So God sent you to deliver us.

THOMAS: Jesus is the true deliverer. I am just an instrument.

JONES: Uhm, uhm. So Moses, I mean Thomas...do we look like people who need deliverance?

THOMAS: God sees and knows all things. I'm just going where He leads me, and saying what He wants me to say.

JONES: I remember the days I used to talk like that.

JESSICA: You mean, before you backslid?

JONES: You're the backslider. I just took a break.

OLD MAN: A very long, extended break.

THOMAS: Hey, I need to know the truth, okay. What caused this church to fall?

JESSICA: Bad leadership.

JONES: Hey Tom Tom, please to warn your girlfriend. She's picking on me, and I don't take kindly to being picked on.

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THOMAS: My girlfrie...??? (*Jessica and Thomas eyes meet*)

JESSICA: Somebody's jealous.

THOMAS: Can we talk about this like adults? You two sound like children.

OLD MAN: Good luck with that.

THOMAS: I'm trying to accomplish something here. Are you with me or not?

JONES: I'm with you, but I'm not talking to your girlfriend.

JESSICA: I'm not talking to you either.

THOMAS: So now you're going to malice each other...in church?

Silence.

THOMAS: If we can't compromise on simple things like this, what will happen when the big things come?

OLD MAN: I think you saw firsthand what happens. Empty church on Sunday mornings and a sprite drinking ex-pastor.

THOMAS: We need to identify who the real enemy is. Do we even know?

JONES: The devil.

THOMAS: Exactly. So why are we fighting each other, and not him?

JESSICA: It's not just petty arguments. There's gossip and those who pretend to be what they are not.

THOMAS: That exist everywhere, but we don't give up our secular jobs for it. We don't give up school for it. Why do we give up God for it? Truth is, we don't want to serve God. It's un-natural to serve Him. We serve our jobs because we want the money, but God promises us things more valuable than money. So the problem with us is, we want immediate benefits and God rarely offers that. So when we are faced with a choice to give up something, He gets kicked to the curb.

OLD MAN: What about the hypocrites?

THOMAS: We're all hypocrites. You two have been pretending to drink one thing, when you're drinking something else. You lie about it too.

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JESSICA: If we're all hypocrites, then we don't belong in the church.

THOMAS: That's where you're wrong. The church is made up of sinners. Our only righteousness is Jesus Christ. Because of him we're all declared worthy...the hypocrites, the prostitutes, the drunkards...we're the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ. But it's like a garment, and we can choose not to wear it.

JONES: I remember when I used to preach like that.

Jessica is about to say something but decide not to.

JONES: Thomas is right. This not our business, this is God's business. It's all about Him. We're here to fulfill His purpose, not to do our own thing. God doesn't need a crowd to make a difference. He only needs a few.

JESSICA: You would say all that holding that cup in your hand.

Jones looks at the cup. He lays it aside.

OLD MAN: Gloryyyy.

THOMAS: This is the true test. I will stand to face the enemy and his deceitful doctrines and it will take a radical move of the Spirit to break up all fallow grounds, but I want to know that when the time comes I won't be standing alone.

Silence.

THOMAS: Jessica...?

JESSICA: (*shrugs*) I don't know Thomas. I'm comfortable doing my own thing.

THOMAS: No, my dear. Not comfortable. Dead. Outside of God, we're already dead. Pastor Jones.

JONES: I'm almost there.

THOMAS: Old Man?

OLD MAN: I don't have anywhere else to go, so I will be here.

THOMAS: Consider this....a tree that does not bear fruit will be cut off and thrown into fire.

Thomas goes back to what he was doing. The others remain their in stone silence, considering all.

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LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE 7

LIGHTS UP

Note: This scene is an actual church service. You can be as creative as you want here or you can just stick to the script. Either way is fine.

Note: If there is a singing group in your church this is the perfect slot for them. They should choose a song that works well at an Altar Call.

After the Special Singing, the group remains humming the tune to the song as Thomas enters and approaches the Podium with bible clutched in his hands. As He approaches he opens the bible...

THOMAS: David said, in Psalm 37:25, I was young and now I'm old, yet I've never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

Note: As Thomas moves from scripture to scripture his tone and confidence should intensify all the way to his final words.

THOMAS: Jesus said, in Luke 12:27, consider the lilies, how they grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothe the grass of the field which is here today and gone tomorrow, how much more will he clothe you. *(pause for effect)* So why do we spend so much of God's time worrying about what to eat and wear. *(pause for effect)* Jesus said that we should cast our cares and burdens on Him because He cares for us. Why should any of us turn our backs on such promise? *(pause)* Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? It is written: For Christ sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. **NO! IN ALL THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US.** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither **HEIGHT NOR DEPTH, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.**

Note: Pray really hard for the actor who delivers these lines as I anticipate in my spirit that by this time the audience should be on their feet cheering and Praising God...

Also have members of the cast, i.e. Pastor Jones, Jessica & Old Man enter from Behind Thomas also cheering him for a message well delivered.

LIGHTS OUT

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FINAL SCENE

LIGHTS UP

Thomas address Jessica, Jones and Old Man.

THOMAS: It is written, there's a way that seems right to a man...but in the end it leads to death. If in this world, only one out of every five people are saved, ensure that you are counted among the one.

JESSICA: But you must admit that the church has changed.

JONES: Aye. Our standards used to be higher, miracles and signs were very prevalent. Now we are reduced to an institution of talk and no power or influence. It's as if our foundation has been destroyed.

THOMAS: It can be restored or rebuilt. The Lord will re-establish His church because He promised the Father that He would present a perfect church without spot or blemish. The Kingdom of God will rule, so we can't afford to spend precious energy in petty arguments, childhood malice and watching those who should know better. We must advance the Kingdom. Every non-Christian that God sends to cross our path is depending on it.

OLD MAN: What about those who can't handle the revolution?

THOMAS: Each man has a responsibility to work out his salvation with fear and trembling.

EVERYONE: Amen.

Pause.

Jessica gets up and hugs Thomas.

OLD MAN: I can see it as clear as day. You two will get married.

JONES: I'm still a Marriage Officer.

Thomas and Jessica laughs.

OLD MAN: I like the fact that they don't deny it.

JESSICA: I will see you crazy people later.

Jessica leaves.

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Pastor Jones shakes Thomas hands.

JONES: You saved my life.

THOMAS: So no more sprite drinking?

JONES: I'm drinking from a different source now.

Thomas smiles, Jones smile back. Jones pats Old Man on the shoulders and exit.

OLD MAN: Mighty man of God, you never gave up on Jesus.

THOMAS: Old Man...Jesus never gave up on me.

OLD MAN: Still, fun and joke aside...do you really think there is anything wrong with drinking just a little bit every now and again?

THOMAS: I heard a preacher say once that if it takes 10 beers to make you drunk and you drink one, then you are one tenth drunk.

OLD MAN: Is that a yes or a no?

THOMAS: I will leave that decision to you.

Thomas exits.

Old man lifts his left palm.

OLD MAN: Jesus in the left hand.

He lifts his right palm.

OLD MAN: Rum in the right hand.

He looks from his left palm, to his right and repeats this a few times.

OLD MAN: *(to audience)* This is hard. Jesus help me. Good thing Rome was not built in a day. *(turns to exit)* What did Jonesy do with that bottle?

Old man exits as...

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.