



Pastor's Page

"Beyond the Fringe"

Sometimes there's no conversation at all, just the constant sound of distant hairdryers, but on other occasions, anything from football to fascism may be discussed. On one such occasion I was sitting quietly enduring a short back and sides without any fuss (or anaesthetic!) when Mr Scissors (not his real name, I've changed it due to the fact that I've forgotten his real name!!) began chatting. He commented on something he'd just heard on the radio. "*Ridiculous!*" he said to his colleague who agreed with his succinct analysis. Then, he added "*I bet the church wouldn't allow that!*" (He'd remembered who I was and also my profession. So I tried to look suitably reverent as I said) "*Sorry, I didn't actually catch the story*". He gave me a quick synopsis saying; "*this radio station has just married two people who only met 10 minutes ago!*" "*Right*" I said, "*that is ridiculous*" (I couldn't think of anything more original)

This however was only the beginning; we then went into a three-way debate about marriage and the causes of its decline in this country. Soon we were discussing morals generally and the place that religion should play in this, before we engaged in a dialogue about the difference between the Catholic and Protestant Church. As I tried to share what I believe is at the heart of the Christian faith, Mr Scissors suddenly starting talking about Vineyard Fellowship, which he had obviously visited and found "too much". Then Ms Shampoo & Set (not her real name!) continued on her theme of the shortcomings of the Catholic Church. She then went on to ply me with questions about the Muslim faith and where Muhammad fitted in with Jesus and in which part of the world and at what period in time Abraham and Noah lived! I was longing for the "Notices" just to give me a moment to "regroup" but there was no let up! Then just as we seemed to be in danger of sinking into a theological/political quagmire Mr Scissors came out with a classic question; "*Right*" he said "*who killed Jesus?*" What an opportunity. "*OK*" I said, but before I could answer he had already put the blame on the Jews. So I had to respond quickly reminding him that Jesus too was a Jew and that it was the Jewish authorities, jealous of Jesus, who plotted to have him arrested and subsequently crucified. At that moment, as I was about to expound the doctrine of Penal Substitution, a young lad came into the hairdressers wanting a David Beckham retro cut so I thought I ought to lighten the conversation a little and made some jolly comment, but Mr Scissors was keen to continue. He asked me if I'd seen ***The Passion of the Christ***, and what I thought of it. Soon this young customer was contributing to the conversation too! However, my time was up, so having paid for the damage, I grabbed my jacket and invited them all warmly to Selly Park Baptist Church before disappearing into a cloud of hair conditioner!

This Barbershop banter reminded me of the fact that many people are happy to talk about Jesus given the opportunity. And an opportunity may well present itself very soon as BBC 1 broadcasts a new production about the last week of Jesus' life called *The Passion*. Beginning next Sunday (16 March) it runs right through Holy Week and concludes on Easter Sunday. With an estimated 10 million viewers tuning in to this drama we could have a golden opportunity not only to discuss the film but also to introduce people to the real Jesus. Let's pray for courage to seize the moment.

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