



THE DAY I MET JESUS

I met Jesus the other day. He was lying in a sleeping bag on the bench outside the church hall, his boots under the bench. Paul was his name – from Cardiff – his only family a sister in Australia. Ex-army – Welsh Guards – fought in the Falklands war. 50 years old now, he told me, so he must have been just a lad then – shattering experiences.

'Foxes have holes; the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head', quoted Paul – ('Yes, I used to go to Sunday school as a kid in South Wales'). Been on the road eleven years. 'Ever go to a hostel?' I ask. 'No thanks; can't stand being shut in'.

'What's the longest psalm?' asks Paul. 'Psalm 119', I tell him. 'And the shortest?' – 'Psalm 117', I reply. 'Good man!' he says. 'And Psalm 23?' I quote the opening verses and he gives me a big (slightly beery) bear hug.

'There was another Paul' says I, 'met Jesus on the road'.

'Yes' replies this Paul, 'and He's with me all the days...

I'm going to Lymington; can you give me the train fare?'

'Sure' I reply, 'but don't spend it all on beer'. He smiles a slightly shame-faced smile.

'You won't see me again', he says, 'but you'll see me 'up there!' ... another bear hug.

'Yes, brother Paul. God loves you. God doesn't look on the outside; He looks on the heart. We'll meet again'.

So Paul stuffs his sleeping bag into his pack, humps it onto one shoulder and moves off – for Lymington? For where? For the Father's home.

Paul will probably never know how much he meant to me. He gave God's grace to me. 'Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me'.

Yes, I met Jesus this morning. I'm so glad I stopped to talk with him.

Anonymous