

"WHO WANTS TO BE A CHRISTIAN HEIR"

a play by Pastor Paul Holte

First performed as Sermon / Skit for "Holy Hilarity Sunday," April 30, 2000, at Grace Lutheran Church, Ripon, Wisconsin.
Original cast included Jonathan Stansfield, Paul Holte, Jolene Meyer, and Jane Redman.

Setting: Game Show

Time: Present

Props: 2 chairs and reading stands, banner featuring show's title, applause sign, telephone

Cast: HOST (Regis Fillbrain), CONTESTANT (Thomas Hemmenhaw), MOM (Mrs. Hemmenhaw), SOUND (Musician)

HOST: *[Enters]* Hello, everybody, and welcome to "Who Wants To Be A Christian Heir" -- *[holds up "Applause" sign]* --- the show that allows our contestants to become rich beyond their wildest dreams! I'm Regis Fillbrain, your host for "Who Wants To Be A Christian Heir," right here on the ELCA Network.

SOUND: *[plays "Network identification" --- opening notes of "A Mighty Fortress"]*

HOST: Today's contestants will have a chance to inherit one magnificent God, and the riches of his kingdom, by correctly answering the right questions, and becoming a follower of Christ! Folks, are we ready to play? *[holds up "Applause" sign]* Yes! Then let's get started! Our first contestant will be the one person from our studio audience who can most quickly put the following events in their proper chronological order: a) the creation of the world; b) the birth of Jesus; c) now.

CONTESTANT: *[from audience]* Um, a, b, c.

HOST: "A, b, c" is correct! Come on up! Audience, let's meet our next contestant on "Who Wants To Be A Christian Heir." What is your name, sir?

CONTESTANT: *[Enters; shakes hands; sits]* My name is Thomas Hemmenhaw.

HOST: Mr. Hemmenhaw --- may I call you Thomas? Tell us a little about yourself. Your name, "Hemmenhaw." That is a most unusual name.

CONTESTANT: Yes, it's German. Or, um, English. Or, maybe not. You know, Regis, I'm not really sure.

HOST: Do you work?

CONTESTANT: Yes. *[Long pause]* Uh, yes, I work.

HOST: Would you care to enlighten the rest of us?

CONTESTANT: What's that?

HOST: Where do you work, Thomas? Am I going too fast for you? These questions are going to get harder, you know.

CONTESTANT: No; that's okay. I guess I'm just a little nervous. I mean, I'm not sure I will still have a job after this thing is over.

HOST: Are you planning to quit your job if you win big?

CONTESTANT: Well, no, um; my boss might fire me if he finds out I'm too dumb to answer the questions.

HOST: Let's find out, shall we? You know how the game is played. Now, Thomas, if you want to be a church member, you must successfully answer our first question. Are you ready?

CONTESTANT: I'm ready, Regis.

HOST: "Who was Martin Luther?' a) a 16th century church reformer; b) a 20th century civil rights leader; c) the ghost of Confirmands Long Past; or d) the Pope's Rottweiler.

SOUND: *[plays "theme music" under next three lines]*

CONTESTANT: Oh, gosh, that's a tough one.

HOST: That's a tough one, eh?

CONTESTANT: Eh?

HOST: "A" is absolutely correct! Congratulations! You have advanced to a church membership!"

SOUND: *[plays "fanfare music"]*

CONTESTANT: But I wasn't even really sure if--

HOST: You've advanced to "church membership!" It's simple! Don't question it!

CONTESTANT: Oh, okay.

HOST: Now, we're going to skip a bunch of questions here, because they're not really all that important, and besides, we're running out of time! So, for all the marbles! If you answer the next question correctly, you will be --- a Christian heir! Are you ready?

CONTESTANT: I guess so. I mean, yes!

HOST: Here's the final question: "Who was Jesus Christ?" a) a really nice guy; b) a liar; c) a lunatic; d) the Lord.

SOUND: *[plays "theme music" under next six lines]*

CONTESTANT: Jesus?

HOST: Jesus Christ. Who do you say he was?

CONTESTANT: Well, I know he was a really nice guy...

HOST: Is that your final answer?

CONTESTANT: Um, I'm not sure. Can I use one of my lifelines?

HOST: All right.

CONTESTANT: I'd like to "Poll The Audience."

HOST: Okay, let's "Poll The Audience." Audience members, it's time to vote. You each have the answers in front of you. Please decide now. Is Jesus:

- a) a really nice guy;
- b) a liar;
- c) a lunatic;
- d) the Lord.

"Survey says --- !" No, that's from another game show, isn't it? Heh, heh. We've polled the studio audience, and 85% of them say that Jesus was a really nice guy. What do you say?

SOUND: *[plays "theme music" under next seven lines]*

CONTESTANT: I guess I'll go along with that, then.

HOST: Is that your final answer?

CONTESTANT: Um, Rege, you know, I've been thinking...

HOST: Glad to hear it! This is a good place to do that!

CONTESTANT: Since this is my final question, can I use another of my lifelines?

HOST: We want to give you every chance to get this right.

CONTESTANT: Good. Then I'd like to use the "50-50."

HOST: Mr. Hemmenhaw is using the "50-50." That means we will eliminate two of the wrong answers. Here we go. Was Jesus:

- a) a really nice guy;
- b) a liar;
- c) a lunatic;
- d) the Lord.

We know he wasn't a liar, because he always told the truth. In fact, he was the Truth! And we know he wasn't a lunatic, because he was for real. Some of the people around him were crazy, but not Jesus! So that eliminates answers b) and c). You're left with:

- a) He was a really nice guy; or
- d) Jesus is Lord.

One of those is the correct answer! It's time to make your choice!

SOUND: *[plays "theme music" under next five lines]*

CONTESTANT: Um, well, like I said, I know he was a really nice guy...

HOST: So is that your final answer?

CONTESTANT: You, know, I'm still not really sure. Why is this such a hard question? Could I use my last lifeline?

HOST: This is for all the marbles, you know. If you get this right, you'll become a Christian heir!

CONTESTANT: Yeah, Regis, I'd like to call somebody.

HOST: You'll "Call A Friend." This is your last lifeline. Who ya gonna call?

CONTESTANT: My Mom.

HOST: All right, let's get Mom on the line. Our producers and the wonderful folks at the ELCA Network are putting through that call right now. It's ringing...

MOM: *[enters, picks up phone]* Yello!

HOST: Hello. Mrs. Hemmenhaw?

MOM: That's right, Sonny!

HOST: This is Regis Fillbrain, the host for "Who Wants To Be A Christian Heir," right here on the ELCA Network.

MOM: Go on! Really? Go on! What are you calling me for? Regis --- really? I just love your suits!

HOST: Thank you. Mrs. Hernmenhaw, your son is on the line.

MOM: Oh, my baby boy!

CONTESTANT: Hi, Mom.

MOM: Hello, Sonny! How's my little Sweetie? How come you never call?

CONTESTANT: Mom, we're on national TV.

MOM: No, go on. You're not! 'Cause I'm watching "Lawrence Welk" right now, and you're not on it!

CONTESTANT: Mom, this is "Who Wants To Be A Christian Heir." And I'm running out of time here.

MOM: Don't you be short with me, young man! I didn't raise you to disrespect your elders!

CONTESTANT: Yes, Maam. Sorry, Mom.

MOM: That's all right, then. What does my little Binky-Winky want?

CONTESTANT: I gotta ask you a question. You're my last hope.

MOM: Oh, how sweet! My little man turns to his Mommy for help. Mommy can help. Well, fire away!

CONTESTANT: Who was Jesus?

MOM: Land sakes, child! Didn't you learn anything in Sunday School? I dropped you off for Sunday School at that Methodist Church down the street (most every Sunday we were in town!

CONTESTANT: It was Lutheran, Mom.

MOM: Whatever. Didn't they teach you anything?

CONTESTANT: I suppose.

MOM: All right, then. There you go.

CONTESTANT: But I still don't know. My entire future depends on this one question. It's down to two possible answers. Here it is. Was Jesus: a) a really nice guy; or d) your Lord.

MOM: My lard..) Heavens, child, whatever do you mean by that? Is this a cooking show you're on?

CONTESTANT: Lord, Mom; Lord --- your personal Lord and Savior, that kind of thing.

MOM: Well, how should I know?

CONTESTANT: How should I know either, if you never taught me?

MOM: Now, now.

HOST: Be kind to your Mother, Thomas.

CONTESTANT: That was your job --- you and Dad! You were supposed to teach me all The Important Stuff!

MOM: Hush, Honey; it's all right. Mommy can help. Now what was the question again?

CONTESTANT: Jesus! Jesus! Who was Jesus? Nice guy or Lord and Master?

HOST: Time is running out, Contestant.

MOM: Well, everybody says he was a really nice guy and all that... So it must be true, I guess.

CONTESTANT: You guess? Mom, this is my future on the line!

MOM: That other thing; that Crisco thing, I just don't know about. That sounds so far-fetched.

CONTESTANT: Lord, Mom, not lard! Jesus! Is he your Lord and Savior?

MOM: Oh, my Lord, no; I shouldn't think so. Your father wouldn't stand for that kind of thing, you know.

CONTESTANT: Mom, you don't understand!

MOM: You know, it's time you stopped being so dependent on me and your father for every little-thing. It's time you learned to start working things out for yourself!

HOST: Sorry, Thomas, your time is up!

MOM: Good-bye, Sweet Cakes. I have to get back to my show. Call me sometime! Don't be a stranger! Kiss-kiss!

CONTESTANT: But, Mom! [She hangs up; exits. He shrugs.]

HOST: Well?

CONTESTANT: Mom says she figures he was a really nice guy.

HOST: But who do you say that he is?

SOUND: *[plays "theme music" under next ten lines]*

CONTESTANT: A really nice guy?

HOST: Is that your final answer?

CONTESTANT: Umm...

HOST: We don't have all the time in the world, you know. You and I are going to die one of these days, heh, heh. And I don't want it to happen on this show! You'll have to make your final decision soon.

CONTESTANT: Urn, well, I know he was a really nice guy; everybody says that. But is he my Lord? I'm not sure I about that, because what does that mean, if I say he's the master of my life? But if I say he's just a really nice guy, will I miss out on the big prize, becoming a Christian heir? This is a hard question!

HOST: This could be the hardest question you've ever had to answer in your whole life!

CONTESTANT: Well, it sure seems so! I mean, I know Jesus was a really nice guy, and all. But is he something else? Who is Jesus to me? Okay, let's review what we know for sure: a), Most people think he was a really nice guy...

HOST: So is that your final answer? Thomas Hernmenhaw, we need your decision! So, to the question, "Who is Jesus?" you are saying, "He was a really nice guy."

CONTESTANT: Uh, well, um, uh huh; I guess so.

HOST: Is that your final answer? Remember, there's a lot riding on this. Is that your final answer? Is that your final answer?

SOUND: [*plays "Doom theme"--- Dum Da Dum Dum!*]

[*Fade out.*]