

God looked in the mirror one morning. He saw the wrinkles in his forehead, the tired look in his eyes, a mouth that turned too easily into a frown. "You," he said to the mirror, "have an image problem."

He resolved to consult his closest friends, those who stayed with Jesus when he died. "It's not the way I look," God explained, "it's the way I seem. People have the wrong impression about me. Do you know what they call it when a house is destroyed by a tornado, earthquake, or flood? They call it an 'act of God'. And if someone dies in a car accident or of some awful disease, people say, 'It's God's will.'" With tears in his eyes, God continued, "I don't will tornadoes and earthquakes, and I certainly don't will death and diseased people. The world isn't perfect and that's a long story, but I don't will bad things to happen to my beloved people. If people could only see how well I treat them, I really think they'd treat each other better."

St. John said, "Surely, people give you credit when good things happen." "Sometimes," God replied, "but most of the time they just say they were 'lucky'."

Mary Magdalene asked, "What happened when your son did so many nice things for people, even raising some from the dead?" God said, "Some did understand that I am a good and loving God, but remember, Mary, many people called him a law-breaker when he healed on the sabbath and others called him Beelzebub when he cured an epileptic. His own relatives called him crazy. It's like you can't win sometimes."

The group of friends brainstormed for hours on how to change God's image. They thought up some creative ideas: Cloud formations in the shape of a smile, brighter rainbows, prettier windows in churches, more daylight. Each idea sounded good, but nothing really grabbed God.

Finally, one who had kept quiet the whole meeting spoke up, Dismas, the good thief. "You know, God, if you want people to change their image of you, you must first change them. You must change their minds and hearts. In my trade, God, this is what we call an inside job."

"An inside job is when you gain peoples' trust and enter their home. Once in the home, I took whatever I could fit in my two pockets. It took years before I could clean them out, but by stealing a little bit at a time, they never become suspicious. That's an inside job."

"God, here's your new image: Become a thief. Get people to trust you and then get into their hearts and minds. That's where their treasure lies. Each time, fill your pockets with a little of their selfishness one time, a little pride the next time, a little greed the next. It may take you a lifetime, but eventually you'll clean them out. Then they can see you as you really are." And God agreed.

My brothers and sisters, you will imitate God when you see him in prayer, in another person, in the mirror, and you will see God not as a ruler in glory, but as a thief in the night, who step by step in life and in death silently steals you away.

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