

Six Shades of Purple by Dean Nadasy

Lent 2: I Tried to Tell Them

For Lent 2, based on Luke 13:31-35

Focus: Jesus loved Jerusalem and its people with a tender, compassionate heart. He looked on its failures with warm loving kindness. Jesus still deals compassionately with us and offers a dream of something better.

Characters:

Old Man - warm and fatherly; touched by what he sees

Girl - about 10 years old; engrossed by her aging visitor

Setting: An inner-city blighted area. A girl skips rope as an old man assesses by.

Old Man: *(enters and stands watching girl skip rope; silent)*

Girl: *(after a while, notices she is being watched; doesn't like it.)* Take a picture, Mister. It lasts longer!

Old Man: No thanks. I have a picture

Girl: *(still skipping rope)* Of me? Really? You've got a picture of me?

Old Man: Of you and many others who have skipped rope here before you.

Girl: Really into rope-skipping, huh? Or is it rope-skippers you like? Maybe I shouldn't be talking to you.

Old Man: As you like it.

Girl: *(skips rope; silence; Old Man continues watching her; she finally stops)* You want to show me your pictures, don't you?

Old Man: I can't

Girl: Why not?

Old Man: *(pointing to his own head)* They're up here... *(pointing to his own heart)* and in here.

Girl: *(dubiously)* Oh. *(Silence; fills silence by taking jump rope and making a circle out of it on the ground.)*

Old Man: A circle marks the spot.

Girl: What spot, Mister?

Old Man: Where you and I and many others have stood, and jumped and dreamt before.

Girl: Do I know you, Mister?

Old Man: No. But I know this place. It's sort of a holy place for me.

Girl: Mister, I know this place, and there ain't nothing holy about it.

Old Man: That's because you don't see it the way I do. *(extends hand to Girl)* Come on, I'll show you.

Girl: Nothing doin'.

Old Man: Will you at least walk behind me?

Girl: *(picks up rope and follows him stage right)* Where are we going?

Old Man: There. That building. What do you see?

Girl: Nothing up there except Old Lady Finnegan. Cops call her a squatter. Buzz says he thinks that building will be the next to burn. What do you see, Mister?

Old Man: I see the Finnegans, the McCalls, the Daytons and the Cunninghams. Good strong, happy families living in that four family flat, cutting out a piece of life and a place they once called home.

Girl: Oh, yeah?

Old Man: *(leads her to stage right)* And there, *(pointing)* what do you see there?

Girl: A parking lot that ain't used much for anything except dumpin' junk.

Old Man: I see old Saint Andrew's, a parish of 1200 strong. Those old church bells used to ring every Sunday morning at 7:30; and if you weren't up then, you got up, 'cause the singing would keep you awake anyway.

Girl: Not much singin' coming from that parking lot.

Old Man: *(caught by the vision of times past)* And there *(points center-backstage)*, what's right there?

Girl: Nothin', Mister, the liquor store moved out of there last month. It's just empty now.

Old Man: Then it was "Stosh's Ice Cream Parlor," the best on the near South Side.

Girl: Then? What do you mean, "then"?

Old Man: When I was your age on this street.

Girl: I never thought about how it used to look. I guess I thought it always looked like this.

Old Man: I tried to tell them.

Girl: Tell them what?

Old Man: That if they moved away, and sold it all, and left the neighborhood behind, it would turn out like this.

Girl: Well, is this so bad, Mister? This is my home you're talking about, you know.

Old Man: And my home, too. It's only bad when you see it with these eyes, little girl. How often I've wanted to bring it all back, the families, the church bells, the sounds of people laughing, and the hope in people's eyes, the look of progress on the face of every building, but it can be no more. There is only we two, and your eyes are too young to see as I see.

Girl: Aw, come on. *(Man begins to exit weeping in his handkerchief.)* It ain't that bad. You wanna watch me jump rope some more? *(Old Man has exited)* Mister? Mister? *(She returns to jumping rope.)*

First published in *Resources for Youth Ministry* 80:1, Spring 1980.

Republished and revised in March 2011 for thESource.

thESource is published on the Web by LCMS District & Congregational Services—Youth Ministry. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 South Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; 1-800-248-1930; www.youthesource.com. Editor: Sherrah Holobaugh Behrens. VOL. 9 NO. 1. January 2012.

www.youthESource.com