

The Test

A Short Story
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Young Thomas Cloud graduated from college with his B.S with a major in Theology and a minor in biology. He graduated from seminary with a well earned Master of Divinity.

The seminary was a prestigious institution that instructed fledgling preachers / pastors in the fine art of preaching.....leading a church. He learned the Old Testament history very well. The history of the Covenant between YHWH and Abram who was called out of Ur right up to the birth of the Messiah,

Thomas learned to appreciate Savior's life, teachings, the signs (miracles), crucifixion and His resurrection. Thomas learned how the Master would give his life as a ransom to take away the sins of the world.

Whoever would believe into Christ.

Thomas admired Jesus' bravery when He prayed in the garden and made the decision to obey the Father and go to the cross.

Thomas's scholastic achievements were par excellence! The seminary was amazed at how this young Native had changed academically from the time he left his village on through Bible college and seminary.

He came from a small Indian community where there was much hardship and poverty. Fortunately, he had been awarded a scholarship that paid his way through all his education.

Thomas grew up the hard way. He was a tough young man and excelled in the game of lacrosse, hunting and trapping and working in saw mills

He learned the traditions, ceremonies and language of his People. From his elders he learned to give of himself to others and to consider others first before himself.

During the years in college and seminary, he had a roommate named Robert who came from a well heeled family who gave him all the material things a boy could ask for.

Thomas was impressed. In fact, he was so greatly impressed with Robert's upbringing, fine clothes and lavish lifestyle that he made it his goal to eventually pastor a large church in the city that would furnish him the things he thought would bring the satisfaction of his wants and needs.

After graduation in the spring, Thomas remained in the city to take more classes in philosophy, logic and apologetics.

Soon after a brief fall, an early winter set in and the temperatures began to rapidly plummet. The senior pastor of the largest church in the city had volunteered to take Thomas under his wing. The prominent pastor gave Thomas his first preaching assignment.

He was sent to the small village where he was raised. It was perhaps forty miles from the city out in the forest perhaps three hundred yards from a beautiful lake. It was still pretty rough country.

Thomas decided to take a snow mobile out to the little church. He arrived early and rang the bell to alert the People it was time for service. He chatted with the people around the barrel stove ...mostly older people...until there were twenty or thirty folks finding their way to their favorite pew.

Thomas stood behind the sacred desk, opened his bible to Hebrews 12:2 ".....let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him ENDURED the cross , scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Father". Thomas began to preach an eloquent sermon about how Jesus came to be the propitiation for our sins and how Jesus put people before himself.

He told the People how Jesus gave up His life not only in acts of service, as in washing the disciple's feet, but gave up his life on the cross.

The Village People were amazed at his articulate presentation. His theology and doctrine were unflawed. He showed the potential to be a fine preacher. The People seemed very impressed with his crisply ironed white shirt and conservative tie and suit.

A meal was served and everyone had a good visit with the young preacher. The hour was still early afternoon but he decided to depart in order to return to the city before it was too dark.

Thomas decided to take what he thought would be a short cut.

As he maneuvered his snow machine along an old logging road, he came alongside a smaller lake. It had already frozen over in the high altitude. Thomas

stopped the snow machine to look at the little lake and think over his sermon and how Jesus gave up His life for us.

Suddenly, the quietness of the forest was broken by a voice crying out for help! Help, help, cried a man's voice. Thomas turned towards the direction of the voice. It was a young Indian from his home village, a younger man than himself whom he knew when they were boys.

It was Aaron Wright. He was struggling to inch his way from a crack in the ice. His fishing pole and fish basket were lying on the ice beside him.

Thomas heard a slight cracking sound and saw the little gap in the ice widen.

He called out for Aaron to lie down on the ice to broaden the area on the ice. Thomas instructed Aaron to slowly move toward him.

Meanwhile, Thomas took a rope from the snow machine and stepped carefully onto the frozen lake.

He walked slowly toward Aaron. As he did, there was another cracking sound and the gap widened. He was now about thirty feet from Aaron.

A louder crack and Aaron was in the icy water from his waist down. He cried out for help again as he sank out deeper. Thomas moved as quickly and smoothly as he could toward Aaron.

He figured the weight of Aaron's clothing and boots would prevent him from remaining above water. Then....Aaron slipped out of sight.

Thomas stood there for a few minutes and heard nor saw any sign of Aaron. He figured Aaron was gone.

Thomas began to feel chilled. He looked at his pant legs, they were wet, but, the thermals he was wearing prevented his legs from being too cold. But, since he didn't see Aaron, he decided to leave or he would suffer a similar fate. He returned to the snow machine, mounted the seat, started the engine and began to drive away....

Giving a furtive glance toward the lake and a quick look at his surroundings, He wondered if anyone had watched this situation. Thomas saw mud on the cuff of his goose down jacket. This annoyed him, for the jacket was new and a gift from his mentor who sent him on this first preaching assignment.

He tried it rub off the mud with an old rag from the storage compartment. But, it had oil on it. He didn't want to mar his image before the senior pastor.

As Thomas drove away, he didn't hear one last gurgling, sputtering, chattering cry for help....