

A DAY AT CHURCH

BY

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“Let the church say Amen, Amen again, and Amen one more time. One time for the Father, one time for the Son and one more time for the Holy Ghost,” said Rev. Joseph.

Earlier this morning my girlfriends and I pulled straws on which church we would attend. Of course, I wanted to go to *Divine Unity* but my straw was not long enough. Crystal drew the longest straw and as you can see, ***The Holy Tabernacle Trinity Zion Temple of Fellowship & Faith Baptist Church*** wins. She told me that she just couldn’t get into the whole Christian Science thing like I have.

“Why, because they don’t hoop and holler or roll down the aisle,” I asked.

“You were not raised in *Divine Unity*. I think this thing is just a fad anyway. Haven’t you read about all those mixed up celebrities attending Scientology churches,” she questioned.

“First of all, my place of worship is not a Scientology church. Not that there is anything wrong with Scientology, I don’t think. *Divine Unity* focuses on The New Thought Principle. I’ve found what I believe to be the truth for me. I can’t continue to worship in a place just because it is familiar or because it is where I grew up. I would be living a lie if I did this,” I firmly stated.

There was silence after that because the big manly usher at the door had given us the, you better shut your mouth look. We knew then, from childhood experience, that we better not utter another word.

I had to give Rev. Joseph his props though. The brotha knows how to put on a good show. Like the old folks say, “Rev. Joseph show can preach!”

I wanted to reply every time I heard one of them say that, “Please tell me what you’ve learned from the message?”

Of course I knew to stay in my place and just nod my head in agreement. Where I am

from, you don't go toe to toe with your elders no matter what. Even if I had chosen to, I knew it wouldn't be a pretty sight.

Momma used to say, "Nia, you talk too damn much! You really need to think before you say anything. And most of the time, it is not what you say chile that gets you in trouble. Most of the time, it is how you say what you say, that gets your butt whapped. Ain't none of ya'll churin' big and bad enough to whupp me, so I advise you to keep your mouth closed."

Oh, she would go on and on and on. "Yes, ma'am," was all I could and would say. If I chose to not say anything, she would accuse me of ignoring her. It was a no win situation.

Rev. Joseph brought me back to the present with the sweet sound of *Amazing Grace*.

Now, another thing is for sure. The man can sang too! He doesn't sing. Honey, he sings! During my child hood, I looked forward to hearing him sing *Amazing Grace*. It always brought tears to my eyes whenever he sang that song.

Kim elbowed me while asking, "Aren't you the one that didn't want to come here?"

I rolled my eyes and continued to appreciate the melodic baritone voice of Rev. Joseph.

As the pastor was preparing to dismiss the church after such a long text on Pharaoh's Army, I began searching through my purse for a few dollars for the building fund, the choir anniversary, the pastor's anniversary and for the under privileged children attending B.T.U.

"I refuse to allow Satan to control my thoughts on all of these collections. Not today," I said to myself. Well, at least I intended to only speak to myself.

“Shush,” the usher that looked like she could be Mike Tyson’s twin sister, interjected.

Dear Lord, Satan got a hold of me any way. I called that woman a Mike Tyson look alike. I couldn’t stop the thought though. Help me Holy Ghost, I pleaded internally.

During my internal spiritual battle, I managed to pull out enough to cover every offering, along with the lottery ticket I purchased earlier this week. I forgot about it. I think it is because I hardly ever buy lottery tickets. This week the pot had reached 250 million dollars and no one had claimed the previous week’s prize. I figured I had just as good of a chance as anyone else. Yesterday was the day to check the numbers.

I’d just check the website or the newspaper tonight, I thought. I placed the lottery ticket in my change purse this time, so that I wouldn’t forget about it. No sooner than I had placed the lottery ticket in my purse, Mother Brown rose from her seat. Mother Brown was still Mother Brown. She could not and would not allow a Sunday to pass by without having to address the congregation.

“Father please give me patience,” I begged.

“Here she goes,” Crystal joked.

I just would like to thank the Lawd for my healt and skrengt. I would like to thank Him fuh you pastor. You’s a blessin’ to this church. You’s a blessin’ to the churin’, cause you sees to it that they attend B.T.U. Thank you and ya’ll continue to pray for me as I pray for ya’ll cause I’s getting ole now. I can’t see with these ole’ eyes like I use too. But, with the Lawd on my side, I

can do all thangs...thank ya...ooh thank ya Lawd. Ya'll don't know like I know. If you did, you would shout too! Hallelujah! Praise His Name! If you did know anything about the Lawd, you wouldn't sit dhere like you don't know who woke you up this moanin'. Pastor I'm a sit down now, but thank ya. If you needs me, just call me any time. It don't matter what time a day or night it is,...uh... cept foe Thuhsdays dough. You know I takes Sistah Moe to her hair 'pointment every Thursday the Lawd wakes me up! Yes Lawd! And, then you know I goes by Ms. Clara's to see how the churin' treatin' huh. They sits Ms. Clara out dhere on that poach, bless Gawd, yes they do, and don't see bout huh until they feels like it, which is bout two to three times, from "can see to can't see". But, Pastor, as long as there is a Gawd in Heabin', I am gone keep seein' bout Ms. Clara. Churin' listen, don't do yoe momma like that you heah me? Yes Lawd, Amen and thank Gawd for you and Mrs. Joseph. Now listen and listen good Pastor, don't ya'll give up on habin' churin'. Sarah was a old woman too. But ya'll is still young folks. We gone continue to lift you up in prayer. If Gawd done it for others, He show will do the same foe you. That's all I got Pastor. Thank ya, for lettin' me spress myself. I can't keep the fie shut up in my bones! Amen Chuch...Amen Saints. I said, Amen Saints!

The congregation quickly responded, "Amen".

Mother Brown was escorted to her seat by her great grandson. He wasn't embarrassed one bit. She had been doing that same thing every since I was a child. So, we always expected it. If she didn't speak, then we'll probably have something to worry about.

"Thank you Mother for your beautiful words and with that said, Sister Hattie Mae Jackson Jones-Smith will give us a selection then I will dismiss church," replied Rev Joseph as he winked at Mother Brown.

He started winking at Mother Brown shortly after her husband died, almost seven years ago. The harmless flirting is just to keep her alive and confident about herself. Folks say that Mother Brown was a fox in her day. She still dresses like one of those jazzy women back in the 1930s or 40s. Thank God for her. The woman is almost a hundred years old.

On another note, everybody from near and far knows that Sister Hattie Mae Jackson Jones-Smith's song is *Precious Lord*. Nobody ever attempts to sing any verse or other version of the song either. Ever! She barely allows the congregation to sing along with her. To ensure that the song is hers and hers alone, she'll render a whole new version each time she is asked to sing. I've always thought that Mahalia died and came back as Sister Jackson Jones-Smith because she sounds and looks just like her.

Mahalia did it again!!!!!!!!!! Sister Hattie Mae received a standing ovation. Everyone then remained standing for dismissal, while trying not to look like they wanted to stretch, yawn or plain run out of the church.

In unison, we all sang, "Praise Father, Son and Ho- l-y Ghost...A-men."