‘I Just Stood There With My Mouth Open’: Pastor Shocked After Catching Alleged Thief’s Act on Security Footage During Church’s Charity Garage Sale

Jun. 10, 2016 3:08pm Billy Hallowell
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After hosting a charity tag sale on Saturday aimed at raising money to help rescue human trafficking victims in Cambodia, Pastor Charlie Restivo of Calvary Chapel of Westchester in Crompond, New York, noticed that something was missing — the church’s brand new thermostat.

The next day, Restivo informed parishioners during service about what had unfolded. He told TheBlaze, “I said to the congregation … ‘Whoever took the thermostat, please return it.” And while church members initially thought the oft-times comical Restivo was quipping, he let them know that the $200 unit truly was missing, and that he was on a mission to figure out its whereabouts.

Just a month before the unit mysteriously went missing, Restivo started testing out a new security system, placing a single camera inside of the church in an effort to asses its efficiency. So, on Wednesday, he started going through the footage to see if he could find anything.

“I went to the video and sure enough I see this guy taking the thermostat off the wall in our hallway,” he said, later adding, “I just stood there with my mouth open.”

Listen to Restivo explain what happened below:

https://soundcloud.com/thechurchboys/freefall-qa-pastor-charlie-restivo

Restivo and the church community were shocked that the robbery unfolded during Calvary Chapel’s annual tag sale, which is the main fundraising drive to help the House of Refuge, a ministry in Cambodia that is actively engaged in helping save young women.

“We let everybody know upon arrival [at the tag sale that] … every dime that is sold … is going to a ministry in Cambodia,” he said, going on to describe how the House of Refuge helps sex trafficking victims. “This home provides a place for them to have a new life. We get them medicine, we get them food and then, for some of them, they’re able to actually go to high school and then to college.”

Restivo said that he just couldn’t wrap his head around the fact that people would callously come into a church and steal a thermostat as well as a box filled with what appear to be items from the tag sale — items that the man and his female companion allegedly also didn’t pay for.

“The words of Jesus are really ringing true to me, you know, in the last days that the love of many will wax cold,” the pastor said. “What Jesus was saying was that, in the last days, the natural affection of people will get cold.”

Watch News 12 Westchester reporter Scott McGee sound off on the theft, explaining that, though it's a small crime, it represents a bigger problem:

https://www.facebook.com/ScottMcGeeNews12/videos/766892060077855/

Restivo said that most people — regardless of whether or not they are Christians — understand that "it's good to do good and to help people," but that "Jesus said in the last days that's going to fade away." That's a sentiment that he said he could see happening with this flagrant act.

Despite being saddened by the incident and hoping that those responsible will be apologetic and have remorse, Restivo said that he's more than willing to forgive.

"I'm hoping that their hearts are genuinely convicted so that they can come to the truth," he said. "They're welcome to come to church. I want them to sit right next to me. There's no malice toward them at all."

The police have reportedly located a suspect, but additional information is not yet available.

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