

BUMPER STICKER SERMON XVIII

Psalm 29
I Corinthians 1: 26-31

Faith Community
July 15, 2001

This is the 18th annual bumper sticker sermon. A lot has changed since we started doing these in 1983. One great thing is that now people bring me bumper stickers they've seen. Many of them we have already used, but some are brand new and interesting.

People will hand them to me on Sunday morning, mail them, or e-mail them to me. There is one former member who lives in the UP who at least once a year mails me bumper stickers she has seen. My thanks to all of you who offered your contributions to this annual effort.

Well this year we have the usual areas that bumper stickers deal with: money, aging, driving, work and leisure, politics, and the relationship between men and women. In addition to these there are a particularly high number of bumper stickers dealing with religion.

So, here goes...

Since bumper stickers are on the backs of cars, it makes sense that some of them have to do with driving. A couple from this year - This bumper sticker had to be on the bumper of a mathematician: **"Alcohol and calculus don't mix; never drink and derive."**

Or a strange one: **"I brake for insects."** Think about that one for a second! You don't want to be behind that guy! Speaking of insects, here was a nice bumper sticker: **"Starve mosquitoes, Give your blood to people."** It was sponsored by the American Red Cross.

Several bumper stickers had to do with working and leisure time. I liked this one: **"Work is for people who don't know how to golf."** Or, **"Hard work has a future payoff, Laziness pays off now."** Some bumper stickers just belong together. Put that last one next to this one: **"Boldly going nowhere."** Here's a great one if you ever get caught not doing anything: **"Of course I don't look busy... I did it right the first time."**

There are always some that have to do with our bodies and their degree of fitness. I liked this one: **"I have the body of a God – Buddha!"** At the other extreme is the bumper sticker saying, **Body by Nautilus, brain by Mattel.** Here's one way to get your exercise: **"I get enough exercise just pushing my luck."**

Aging has a lot to do with the shape of our bodies and our minds. One bumper sticker said: **"The face is familiar, but I can't quite remember my name."** I liked this one: **"Old age comes at a bad time."**

Sometimes as we age we have a sense that we are losing something. This bumper sticker said: **"I used to have a handle on life, but it broke."** But we don't want to complain too much...or do we? This bumper sticker says: **"The more you complain, the longer God makes you live."** Talk about mixed blessings!

Another bumper sticker said: **"Age is a very high price to pay for maturity."** But then not everybody has it, witness this bumper sticker: **"Cleverly disguised as a responsible adult."** I saw this bumper sticker on the back of a car driven by a high school student: **"The more you disapprove, the more fun it is for me."** There's a lot of truth in that brief statement.

Many bumper stickers are good at reminding us of reality. Sometimes we take these things for granted and just need to be reminded. **“Gravity. It’s not just a good idea, it’s the law.”** Or remember what this bumper sticker tells us: **“First things first, but not necessarily in that order.”**

Here’s an old truism with a little different twist: **“Before you criticize someone, walk a mile in his shoes. That way if he gets angry he’ll be a mile away, and barefoot!”** Or remember: **“A closed mouth gathers no feet.”** Maybe you’ve felt this way, one bumper sticker said: **“This would be really funny if it wasn’t happening to me.”**

Some bumper stickers actually have helpful comments to make, like: **“He who angers you, controls you.”** **“Kindness is so hard to give away, because it keeps coming back.”** **“Worry is the darkroom in which “negatives” are developed.”** And remember, **“If you’re too open-minded, your brains will fall out.”**

Some bumper stickers are just mean. One said: **“I refuse to have a battle of wits with an unarmed person.”** I saw another that said: **“Trust your instincts, People really DON’T like you.”**

At the other extreme are bumper stickers that have nothing to do with reality. For example: **“You’re just jealous because the voices are talking to me.”** Or, **“I do whatever my Rice Krispies tell me to.”**

Or, here is a hopeful person: **“I haven’t lost my mind. It’s backed up on disk somewhere.”** We might want to steer clear of this one: **“Warning: I have an attitude and I know how to use it.”**

This one I would file under “Yes, but...” I saw it on the side of a huge truck. It said: **“Demolition means Progress.”** Is that a typically American concept, that tearing down the old is a sign of progress? As I have seen the destruction of the trees beside the church property here, I have certainly question the truth of that bumper sticker.

There are always bumper stickers about politics. This year we’ve only seen a couple. One said: **“In America, anyone can be president; that’s just one of the risks you take to live here.”** Another said: **“If we quit voting will they all go away?”**

A lot of politics has to do with money; and there are always bumper stickers about money. For example: **“The IRS: we’ve got what it takes to take what you’ve got.”** And, **“Taxation WITH representation isn’t so hot either!”**

Too much taxation can lead to this bumper sticker: **“Due to financial difficulties the light at the end of the tunnel has been temporarily turned off.”**

If you have kids in college, or if you have kids, you know about these money concerns. One bumper sticker said: **“My kids think I’m an ATM.”** That bumper sticker can be well matched alongside this one: **“The National Bank of Dad— sorry, closed.”** And here’s another variation on a truism: **“Money isn’t everything, but it sure keeps the kids in touch.”**

Every year we see the battle of the sexes fought out on the back bumpers of cars everywhere. These were from the bumpers of women’s cars - at least that’s what I’m guessing. **“So many men, so few who can afford me.”** Here’s one expressing a woman’s taste: **“Coffee, chocolate, men...some things are just better rich.”** Could this bumper sticker have been on the same car? **“Don’t treat me any differently than you would the queen.”**

But if you run out of money watch for this bumper sticker: **“How can I miss you if you don’t go away?”**

I loved this one: **“If you want breakfast in bed, sleep in the kitchen.”** One of my favorites does a little variation of the “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus” theme. It says: **“Men are from Earth, Women are from Earth, deal with it!”**

Of course, every year there are lots of bumper stickers that deal with religion. Thank goodness, what other excuse would we have for doing this sermon every year? Many of these are very thought provoking, but we won’t have time to spend talking about them so remember the good ones.

“Be fishers of men... you catch ‘em, He’ll clean ‘em.” And this one is particularly true: **“God doesn’t call the qualified, he qualifies the called.”** Some bumper stickers talked about the trouble we can get ourselves in. **“Forbidden fruits create many jams.”** Or I saw this one with an interesting twist: **“Eternity: smoking or non-smoking.”**

A group of bumper stickers had to do with our consciences. **“A clean conscience makes a soft pillow.”** A more cynical variation on that is: **“A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.”** But in the end try this bumper sticker: **“Do your best and then sleep in peace, God is awake.”**

Religious practices make it to the bumper sticker. **“A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing.”** And, speaking of knees: **“God answers Knee-mail.”**

Some even had to do with giving money to the causes of God. So, I get to slip in a stewardship message even in a bumper sticker sermon. **“Give God what’s right, not what’s left.”** **“God doesn’t want shares of your life, he wants controlling interest.”** And, **“God loves everyone, but prefers ‘fruits of the spirit’ over ‘religious nuts.’”**

I liked this one: **“Most people want to serve God, but only in an advisory capacity.”** If it feels a little warm in here, let me assure you that **“this church is prayer conditioned.”**

Garrison Keilor’s comment finally made it to the back bumper. He once said: **“Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more that going to a garage makes you a car.”**

I loved this bumper sticker, which I saw on the back of the car of a little gray-haired lady. It said simply: **“Grace Happens.”** I wondered if she knew about the other bumper sticker that talked about what happens. This was an interesting bumper sticker: **“We set the sail, God provides the wind.”**

Two final bumper stickers that I found particularly meaningful: **“The task ahead of us is never as great as the power behind us.”** And finally: **“God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage.”**

Amen