

LENT II 2010
SERMON-CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
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I THESSALONIANS 4.1



IF I WERE YOU, I'D TURN AROUND...THE MESSAGE OF LENT...ON A BUMPER STICKER...!

If ever I have wished for the capacity to deliver an illustrated homily, this is it. Lacking that capability let me draw a word picture ...

Visualize a 'well experienced' black pickup truck appearing held together with the largest collection of random religious bumper stickers imaginable...driven by a man who could well qualify as a winner of the Moses Look Alike Competition...

A CONVENIENT 'MADE UP' URBAN LEGEND FROM THE INTERNET...? NO. REAL LIFE...I see the truck regularly and say hello to the driver who looks like he just came down from Mount Sinai. Prominent amongst the collection of stickers, my personal favorite ...

IF I WERE YOU, I'D TURN AROUND

The bumper sticker makes me pause every time I see it...once again, I share it with you. Lent is the collectively opportune moment...a profound package...

- LENT
- ONGOING STRESS AND DISTRESS
- THE BUMPER STICKER

Lent is about reminding us to turn things around...why...?

- Our own lives will be better
- Lives around us will be better
- The World will be a better place

It's no more complex than that. It fits perfectly with today's Epistle...

St Paul wrote to the Church in Thessalonica...**BEHAVIORS SUCH AS YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN ARE DESTRUCTIVE TO YOURSELVES AND TO OTHERS...STOP...TURN AROUND FROM WHAT YOU ARE DOING...STAY ON COURSE WITH WHAT I TAUGHT YOU.**

Who were these Thessalonians...? They lived in the city of Macedonia in what we used to call Yugoslavia...scene of much strife in our own time...much of it still grounded in religious disputes...ALL based on hatred, the ultimate assurance of failure. Saint Paul, along with co-workers Timothy and Silas lived there for some period of time to establish the Church...Paul moved to other work. Timothy watched with dismay as behavior among Christians deteriorated ...strange practices became "normalized" and accepted

Sound familiar...? I suspect so...!

Timothy called on Paul for help..."These people are making a mess...they are out of control..."

Paul responded...

He did NOT give a new set of instructions or water down those already established...he left nothing to imagination... "God does not call you to live in immorality, but in holiness...according to His Law...not those you have made up on your own...rejecting this teaching is rejecting God."

God calls ALL people always to love and 'civilized' behavior...NEVER to hatred. Hatred brings death, never life. Christianity is about love and sustaining life, not hatred, destruction and death

Frequently I've shared with you a pointed challenge ~ nearly 20 years ago ABC News commentator Ted Koppel...told graduates of Duke University to order their lives in conformity with the fact that God gave **10 COMMANDMENTS...NOT 10 SUGGESTIONS!**

Christianity IS called to speak out against rejection of God...but NOT with arrogance. There is a fine line, easily blurred, between calling out unacceptable behavior in others or being a quiet example of what should be.

Lent is a very good time to kindly put the counsel of the bumper sticker into practice...it starts by looking in the mirror and saying...

IF I WERE YOU, I'D TURN AROUND

