

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, May 4, 2021
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“BUMPER STICKER RELIGION”

READING: Acts 17:22-26a, 29-30 - Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth...Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by man’s design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”

Last week I was driving behind the car of a young woman who obviously loved to wear her philosophy and ideals on the back of her car in the form of bumper stickers – dozens of bumper stickers. Most of them were very liberal and very “woke” and a little “in your face.” Two of them in particular caught my eye and my attention. They were “NATURE IS MY RELIGION” and “WE SEE HUMANS BUT NOT HUMANITY”. As I contemplated those two slogans, I realized that as usual, both of them indicated more flash than true enlightenment and more emotion than thought. Those two stickers made her *feel* smart without *being* smart. Let me show you what I mean.

The first one – NATURE IS MY RELIGION – is her statement that there is no God, the Creator, but that nature is an entity in itself, designed and developed by natural forces, especially Evolution. She doesn’t wrap herself up in “magical thinking” and the “illusionary mythology” that religious people are sadly holding on to. She sees the natural world and her place in it as satisfactory, peace-loving, and benign.

The second one – WE SEE HUMANS BUT NOT HUMANITY – indicates that she has a broad-minded view that encompasses all people, whatever their race, nationality, or orientation. She holds that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. We should live in a world that is tolerant, non-judgmental, with equity and justice for all of humanity. Why, who could deny her altruistic viewpoint or argue with her wisdom? Well, I could!

Her view of nature is totally ignorant of the realities. It was Darwin himself who coined the phrase, “Survival of the Fittest”. A famous poet wrote, “Nature, red in fang and claw.” The truth is that nature is filled with violence, sudden death, cruelty, and fear, thus the phrase, “Eat or be eaten!” Human beings in their “natural state” would do without cars, electricity, homes, medical care, education, computers, or any other “unnatural” innovation, including bumper stickers!

When she tells us that WE SEE HUMANS BUT NOT HUMANITY she wants us to treat all with compassion, but I have to ask her, “Why?” If there is no God but nature, then there are no commandments, no natural laws, no one to hold us accountable, no one to see to ultimate justice. If humans were to deal with other humans based on the RELIGION OF NATURE, then the man with the most guns and gunmen would “naturally” dictate the terms of life and living in whatever area he controls. The closest we come to a completely “natural state” is when we make war. Every single war I’ve ever read about was ghastly in its affect on both the violence makers and on the violence receivers. Slowly but surely both reverted to an animalistic state of preying upon the weak or hiding and moving only by night to avoid the predators.

That young woman undoubtedly has tender feelings and well-intentioned attitudes, but without the Creator, his laws, his Gospel, his Son, his Sacrifice, his Word, the Resurrection, and the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment – her vision of the world is built on wishful thinking and unfounded confidence in the “goodness of man”. I think she faces a life of frustration and dashed hopes. Only the knowledge of God and trust in HIS goodness and HIS justice can give real hope and real life.

Paul knew such people. He met and spoke to many in our text who were “in the know” and wise by worldly standards, and yet they worshiped scores of gods who looked like, acted like, and were just as fickle as human beings. Why, they even reserved an idol for THE UNKNOWN GOD just in case they had missed one, not wanting to give offense! Foolish! Silly! And, sad fact: such are still among us to this day. NATURE IS MY RELIGION indeed! Christ, and him crucified is my religion! No bumper sticker needed! Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

1) CONFIRMATION REQUEST: Our Junior Confirmands are well into their preparations for Confessional Sunday and Confirmation Day, May 16 and 23 respectively. They have been working on their Personal Statements and now the answers to questions I will put to them on Confessional Sunday. So, I would ask you to remember them in your prayers. Ask the Lord to pour his Holy Spirit upon them to clarify all they’ve been taught and to bring to mind the knowledge that they’ll need in a few weeks. More than that, ask the Lord to hold them steadfast and sure through the coming years so that their gifts of baptism and their desire for communion will not desert them.