

June 5, 2011 “Did You Steal That Car?” 1 Peter 4&5

I've recently seen some new advertisements on T.V. to visit New Orleans. They show some conservatively dressed guy coming to New Orleans and unzipping his old body from head to toe and becoming a cool, party animal. Another shows a modestly dressed young lady unzipping her old self from head to toe to become a swinging babe. The theme is to encourage you to visit New Orleans; You're different here! Are you a different person while on vacation? Are you a different person at church than at home, or work, or a ball game, or maybe while driving your car?

The story is told of a woman in a hurry tail-gating a guy up to a light that turned yellow. She sped up, thinking the guy in front will do the same. Surprise; he put on the brakes, forcing her to slam them on and skid within a few inches of his car. With this, she leaned out the window, honked her horn and begins cussing this guy out with dirty words and gestures. A police car pulled up, and the officer asked her for her registration and license. She wondered why the officer questioned her instead of the jerk in front of her. The officer told her that as he pulled up and heard her honking and cursing this guy, he read her bumper stickers; “Jesus loves you and so do I” “Honk if you love Jesus” “My boss is a Jewish Carpenter” and a fish symbol on her trunk.. “After hearing you and reading these, I figured that you had stolen the car,” the officer replied.

At first we react with a “serves her right” then we might think about it and in reality, we have been her, haven't we? We've had bad thoughts about people while driving or standing in line at a store or drive-thru. Maybe we've honked or said something under our breath about women drivers or old people drivers or kids on cell phones. Because of our sinful nature, we've all led others to think that we've stolen the car by the way we act or speak. The old line about “if you were taken to court and accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” can accuse each of us.

It's easy to find fault with others before we look at ourselves. Max Lucado tells the story of his wife bringing home a monkey one day. “Where will it eat?” he asked. “At the table with us” she replied. “Where will it sleep?” he asked. “In our bed with us” she replied. “What about the smell?” he asked. “He'll get used to you. I did” she answered. Oooohh!

Perfect love is seen only in Jesus. He always hated the sin but loved the sinner. He loved the unlovable at His time just as He does today. You and I, because of our many sins are the thorns in His head, yet He loves us. We are the cords on His back, yet He loves us. We are the spear in His side, yet He loves us. We are the nails in His hands, yet He loves us. We gave Him pain, yet He gladly died for us and rose for our sins so through faith we could be with Him in heaven. In John 14 Jesus tells us that He is the Way to heaven and this also means that He is the Way on earth too.

To be more like Jesus takes lots of prayer and Bible Study each day. C. S. Lewis is quoted as saying, “Prayer doesn't change God; it changes me.” Because God is Good.. .All The Time, He wants us to follow in His Son's footsteps with love and patience, and forgiveness. It's time for each of us to step up in our sin-filled

world and show that we are God's children so that no one will ever think that we stole the car. Amen. . . pastor matthews