

Anyone Can Honk

**Presented By Scott Walters on 11/10/19
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Most of you are probably not surprised to find out that I'm not a bumper sticker kind of guy. When I was serving a small, Rock County church, the youth group wanted to raise money by selling bumper stickers that said, "I (heart) my United Methodist Church." It was a sweet idea.

Unfortunately, I had to remind them that Footville, while a great church was pretty small and not every member might buy a bumper sticker and there probably are not many Catholics and Baptists that will buy them. The Youth Fellowship decided to have a pancake dinner instead.

The problem with bumper stickers is that they must reduce complex truth (and complete issues) to the simple one-liner. For many years, a popular bumper sticker was, "Honk, if you love Jesus." I saw one of those "Honk if you Love Jesus" stickers on the bumper of a car centered neatly between two other stickers with slogans I cannot repeat in church. I was sorely tempted to honk, but was a little concerned about the response I might get.

How many of you remember the horrible events of September 11? Even to this day, sociologists have debated the attendance surge in churches, synagogues, and mosques throughout this country immediately following September 11, 2001.

Many churches reported that their attendance on September 16 was larger than usual. A Harris poll reported that 82% of Americans either prayed or attended worship during the week following September 11, 2001.

The Reedsburg Church I was serving at the time experienced a 25% increase over our average attendance on the Sunday following the terrorism. But after a month, attendance figures had returned to normal. What does that little jump in attendance say about loving Jesus? I think it says something about the relationship between commitment and faith.

Don't get me wrong! I'm glad the church was here in a time of crisis in our nation. I'm glad people came for reassurance, for comfort, or to express their allegiance to doctrines that they only think about Christmas or Easter. But I'm much more amazed is it that there are people who are here every week, making sure that the church can be here in times of crisis or celebration.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that anyone can honk. It takes very little commitment to honk. God wants us to demonstrate our love, no doubt, but I'm not sure that honking was quite the thing God had in mind!

There are many ways to show our love for Jesus. Many of them, I am convinced, involve commitment. Commitment to the things that Jesus cherished – compassion, justice, mercy, forgiveness, simplicity. Commitment to a life of prayer. Commitment of time and talent to the work that Jesus left behind for us to accomplish – the work of Christ's Church. And yes, also commitment to giving our treasure as a way to promote the Kingdom which we build.

Honking is not commitment. Anyone can honk.

Today, we hear Jesus praising that small offering at the Temple, in comparison with offerings of others. Jesus said, "For all of them contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had."

What kind of faith does it take to be more like that widow? Most of us aren't there yet. We may have come to that point in our walk with God that we know that God has given us everything we have, but not quite to that point where we are willing to place it all back in God's hands. So, we have to decide how and what we will give to God's work through the Crossroads' family.

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As you pray and consider about the kind of commitment step you will take this year, I would offer just a few simple thoughts:

Each of you – unless you are visitors – will receive An Intention of Giving Card in the mail early this week. I hope that you will talk about it together and bring it to worship next Sunday in which we have a time of Celebration & Dedication.

Filling out An Intention of Giving Card helps the Leadership Board be fiscally responsible as we look to 2020. Intentions of Giving are not contracts – “Bruno” is not waiting in the wings – but they help the church to be good stewards in our planning.

It is my prayer that giving your gift brings you not pride and not guilt, but joy.

Also, I hope that you see your giving not as an obligation to the church or to me, but as a part of your journey of faith – your response to God’s love for you.

What you give to Crossroads – just as what Jane and I give to Crossroads is not primarily about offerings and budgets. It is about faith. It is about people helping each other walk with God. The people of this church know that God loves them, and we love God in return, and we love those beyond these walls simply because they too, are God’s children, and are called to be disciples.

Pastor Leroy was leading worship one Sunday and it wasn’t going very well. People weren’t very responsive. It came time to receive the offering and so Pastor Leroy passed the collection plates. They came back empty. So he passed them again. Same thing. Empty.

Pastor Leroy went before the people and said, “How, I know that you all want this church to progress.” Still no response.

Before this congregation can progress, it has to learn to walk! And a couple people in front yelled back at him, “Make it walk, Rev. Make it walk!”

“And after this church has walked, this church has got to get up and run, this church has got to run.” And the people were getting worked up and then hollered back: “Make it run, Rev., make it run!”

And then Pastor Leroy said, “Now, brothers and sisters, in order for this church to run, it’s gonna need money, it’s gonna take money for this church to run!” And the people yelled back, “Let it crawl, Rev. Let it crawl!”

Pastor Leroy had it wrong. It doesn’t just take money for a church to get up and run, It takes faith. Anyone can honk. But it takes faith to be a steward. Pray about our giving this week. Amen.