

Behold I Stand at The Door and Knock-Knock Who's There?

Cuyler Black has come up with a line of humorous Christian-themed greeting cards. "Inherit the Mirth" products include the Holy Family trumping their neighbor's "Our son is an honor student" with a sticker (affixed to their camel's backside) which reads, "Our Son is God." It reminded me of an exchange I once encountered on a Christian web site: if Jesus owned a car, what would the bumper-sticker say? My favorite candidates were, "Thank Me It's Friday," and "W. I. D.—What Would I Do?"

What struck me about the article detailing Black's work was a remark from a devout Muslim. He explained that this sort of thing would not go in his faith because, "Religion is a serious business." Of humor and faith he said, "We just don't mix the two."

The subject of humor and faith may mark a line of distinction between Muslims and Christians in general; still, many believers disbelieve in humor. When I was at seminary there was always someone who sprayed Ephesians 5.4 like scriptural pesticide over any effort at levity. But nobody ever took those guys seriously—except themselves.

Actually, the Bible is a pretty funny book. Elton Trueblood wrote a whole treatise on The Humor of Christ. He argued that the parable of the unjust steward is best understood as a gag about an intern who gets the best of Donald Trump before the big boss can snap, "You're fired!" Pointing out the grim results of missing Jesus' jokes, Trueblood notes, "Such is the peril of uncritical solemnity."

I don't mean to critique Islam, a faith I understand insufficiently for such a task. I want to warn believers: our faith was meant to be a lot of fun; failure to get the joke is more than a social gaff; it's a sin. Luther found laughing at the devil far more effective than fighting him.

So have a good laugh; if not at Jesus, then at least at yourself. You'll last longer and, more importantly, you'll make the faith more winsome. As C. S. Lewis once noted regarding Our Lord's sense of humor, "Donne points out that we are never told He laughed; it is difficult in reading the Gospels not to believe, and to tremble in believing, that He smiled."

Waiting for the Punch-Line,
Doug