

Why Sage Christianity? *Because Church Feels Like Such a Risk*

[modified transcript]

Whenever I sit in a church like this, I can't help but think of my own family life. Growing up, so many of my family members walked away from church or from God and had a long journey with that question in their lives.

I think also of my own wounds, my own suspicions, my own cynicisms about the whole thing with God and church.

The Pain of Church

All of this makes me think about an interaction that a poet once had with the monk Thomas Merton. The poet was expressing some guilt because he was keeping his kids out of church. The monk asked "why are you keeping your kids from church?" The poet answered, "I'm afraid the church will make atheists out of my kids."

I remember the first time I read that I thought, "I get that. I understand that feeling." There's this piece of wisdom in the Bible that says watch out if you go to church there might be fools there (Ecclesiastes 5:1ff).

It's not that there aren't fools everywhere. It's not that there isn't folly within each of our hearts. It's not that people who aren't Christians can't still hurt us or be hypocrites. That stuff is everywhere. But when the pain comes from someone who is identifying themselves with God or especially with Jesus, that kind of wound is harder to bear.

It's no wonder that many of us are fed up with church or stung by it; grieved, wore out or sickened by it.

Two Dreams

In that light, I have two dreams.

First, I'm dreaming because even when we leave church, most of us are still more anxious than we want to be. We still have those questions and doubts. We still need practical wisdom to get through the day. We still need to understand this shame and guilt within our inner being and I guess my dream is if that's you that you'd be able to locate Jesus. I hope that he would find you and you would find him and that you would be able to ask and seek and knock with him.

Second, I guess I'm dreaming something else too.

What would it be like if a church was a community in which your real questions, you're honest and even miserable doubts, your anxieties and depression, even

the anxieties and sorrows you don't even understand and can't explain, were welcome, and you could travel with Jesus like those earliest Christians did?

They traveled with him for three years trying to sort it out. What if a church could be a place like that? Then it seems like the church would be something more like Jesus when he invites us to ask, to seek, and to knock. I don't know. That might be a crazy dream. But I'm still dreaming it and that's a part of what our community is about

Questions for Further Reflection

1. What encouraged you or surprised you in a positive way that you don't want to forget?
2. What bothered you or didn't set right with you in your first impression?
3. What did you notice about how Jesus was described? What about this description sounded attractive or inviting to you?
4. Did anything in these hints about Jesus raise a question for you or not sit right?
5. What follow up question would you like to ask?