

I Want More

Part 3: Why I don't want to go to church anymore.

Amos 5:21-24; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-13

INTRO:

Consumerism has made life hollow... artificial... disposable... can't enjoy and live in the "now" b/c always looking for better (me and the radio as teen)

Consumerism affects every part of our lives. Keep looking for more/newer/better... only to never be satisfied.

Maybe what we need is something else. Something we can't consume... but something we can be.

There is one thing that can really offer what we really need... The Church

Crazy right? Don't believe me? Let's talk about it... together.

WE:

In last 2 episodes said that the way to find true life/escape consumerism is to seek the Kingdom of God, deny our SELF and follow Jesus.

In ep. 1 We said the Kingdom of God is only realized and lived out in a community.

But where is that community? The Church? We pretend it is but is it? Doesn't seem like it...

For the last century we have made church into another product to individually consume

Often the church "we go to" isn't based on belonging to a community but personal preferences of the quality of religious products being offered...

We become consumers critiquing a product... how was the sermon/music/kids program/distance/facilities/etc.

The church has been made into something disposable, temporary, upgradeable... and individualistic

Might be why you left... want to leave... not interested in trying it out.

You're not alone... most church services at about 30-40% attendance from pre-pandemic levels.

Some people are hurt/angry... but most simply realized the product being offered wasn't worth their time/effort.

Not against Jesus, even Xianity, just indifferent to the product the Church is offering

Many people have realized that the product the Church is offering isn't delivering on its promises.

"If true, Jon, why are you a pastor? Still a part of this thing? Devoting life too? Trying to lead a church?"

Great question... I'll answer it in a bit..

But, I don't blame anyone and neither does God... in fact he has some thoughts on individualistic consumerism in religion too... take a look at what he said about it...

We'll find the truth that started this earth changing movement... The Church.

The Church isn't a product to individually consume... but a purposeful community to join.

GOD:

According to Jewish scriptures God created the nation/people of Israel to bless the whole world. To be God's representatives to humanity of his existence, love, power, care. And usher in his ultimate plan to save humanity and bring his kingdom to earth.

There were a lot of ups and downs as each generation either embraced this role or ignored it...

And around 760 BC many of the people had become comfortable and wealthy (b/c of trade routes)... Commerce thrived, an upper class emerged, built expensive homes, rich enjoyed an easy and indulgent life while the poor were exploited and overlooked.

They still observed their traditional religious festivals and sacrifices but their hearts and motivation had changed...

Instead of seeing themselves as God's way to bless the earth they started seeing everything including their role as God's representatives as a product for them to consume for themselves...

So God sent a man named Amos to shed light on where they went wrong... and in this account I think there is something very important/interesting for us in the moment we find ourselves.

Amos 5:21-24

Hate your show and pretense...

- Ouch that's harsh
- In their mind they are singing to/for God... they are worshiping God.. really feeling his presence.
- They are being good and sacrificing to God

But they are fooling themselves...

YOUR show. YOUR festivals/offerings/noisy hymns/harps etc. Who are they actually doing these things for?

- Themselves. They said it was for God but it was really for them.. Made them feel good.
- Nothing wrong with religious expression... problem comes when we do it for ourselves ***pretending*** it's all for God. And it makes us somehow holy, and on his good side.
- God doesn't need our worship... he's fine without it... but he knows we can only find true life/happiness when our lives are devoted to his kingdom and following him...

Religious expression often becomes a way to indulge self instead of deny self.

They had made a sham/show of its original intent

Israel wasn't created to observe festivals and create music and offer sacrifices... those were designed to be a picture/expression of their real purpose... pointing to God's love for all of humanity... preparing the world to experience and accept what was coming... God himself coming to earth, ushering in his kingdom where he would live in, guide, and begin restoring his people to himself.

God didn't hate the fact that they had festivals and sacrifices... he had actually told them to do them (through Moses)... he hated them b/c the people hadn't transformed their hearts... they weren't living as God's chosen community.

V. 24 See **if religious observance isn't accompanied by a community committed to justice and love, it's all an empty sham.**

To which we say... "Yeah those crazy Israelites... what the heck was wrong with them."

Let me read to you how this might have been written today... **Eugene Peterson's The Message Version-**

"I can't stand your religious meetings. I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions. I want nothing to do with your religion projects, your pretentious slogans and goals. I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes, your public relations and image making. I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music. When was the last time you sang to me? Do you know what I want? I want justice—oceans of it. I want fairness—rivers of it. That's what I want. That's all I want."

Nothing wrong with church services. Heart behind them? Be honest... who's it for?

What is the motivation? Consume more religious products/experiences for ourselves...

"Get me through our week/feed me up/feed me"... OR for us to be equipped to bring the kingdom of God to earth now?

To bring justice and righteousness... show the world the love of God... or simply experience a religious show?

The Church wasn't created to be a product to individually consume but to be a purposeful community to join.

Not a product to buy but a new life in a new family... now and forever... together.

Purpose: **Matt 28:18-20, Eph. 4:11-13.**

Instead of fulfilling our purpose... as **Dallas Willard- "We have generated a body of people who consume Christian services and think that this is Christian faith... We have trained Christians to be demanding consumers, not disciples."**

So you asked earlier... why am I still part of/devoting my life to/helping lead a church in the 21st century?

- Because I truly believe Jesus won't leave his Church in this consumeristic stupor.
- He loves the people of this world, of this city too much to let us stay on the path of individualistic consumeristic religion.
- What the world needs is exactly what the Church was created to be...
- A community accepted, united, and loved by Jesus on a mission to bring that same acceptance, unity and love to their neighbors.

The world doesn't need another product to consume. We need a community that invites us to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers... together.

What are we all longing for/need? Entertainment? Self-help lectures? A spiritual high that lasts until the kids start fighting in the car?

Or a community that exemplifies love, peace, unity... encourages/accepts/supports us... teaches/proves that we are loved not b/c of what we produce/consume but b/c God himself died and rose again for us. That we have eternal worth b/c the eternal God chose to love us?

All trying to get through life, raise/support family... but as we do we can have a deeper meaning/purpose that infuses all of it.

Jesus is real. His kingdom is real. And we are invited to a real life of purpose and love through Jesus.

How are we trying to do this together? What are you invited into? Next episode.

YOU:

But before we get there...

Read: Ephesians 4:11-16

Dream: What would it look like for me to purposely join this type of community?

- What role/special work might you contribute?
- How would life change for you/family/circle of friends and acquaintances.

WE:

Together we can be something different.

Different than what we see now... but it's what was always intended for us.

Jesus didn't die and rise again so we can individually consume as much or as little as we want of our preferred religious products.

Jesus gave himself so that we can have eternal/true/full life together now and forever.

This life isn't found/experienced in a product we consume... but in a community we are invited to join.

The life Jesus offers is only realized and lived out within a community.

Summary:

Consumerism has made life hollow... artificial... disposable... We can't enjoy and live in the "now" because we are always looking for more, newer, or better. This cycle of dissatisfaction affects every part of our lives. Maybe we need something else. Something we can't consume... but something we can be.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you seen God's love this week?
2. Read Amos 5:21-24 again. How would you describe Religious Consumerism? Where/how have you seen Religious Consumerism in your experience?
3. What would be different if we all saw the Church as a community to join instead of another product to consume?
4. Read Ephesians 4:16. What role or special work do you feel you could bring to a Jesus Following Community right now?
5. How can your group pray for you?

Episode Breakdown:

00:00 Looking for something better

01:40 Feeling disinterested and indifferent

04:00 Individualistic consumerism

05:30 Not the first time...

08:00 Nothing wrong with...

10:00 Needed ingredients.

12:15 A purpose

14:20 What are we longing for?

16:05 A little prep work

18:00 Qs and updates

Main Points:

- For the last century we have made church into another product to individually consume.
- Many people have realized that the product the Church is offering isn't delivering on its promises.
- The Church isn't a product to individually consume... but a purposeful community to join.
- Religious expression often becomes a way to indulge self instead of deny self.
- If religious observance isn't accompanied by a community committed to justice and love, it's all an empty sham.
- The world doesn't need another product to consume.
- We need a community that invites us to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers... together.
- Jesus is real. His kingdom is real. And we are invited to a real life of purpose and love through Jesus.
- The life Jesus offers is only realized and lived out within a community.

Challenge this week:

- Read: Eph 4:11-16
- Dream: What would it look like for me to purposely join this type of community?

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SHOW NOTES

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 | TRANSCRIPT → <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/media/2022-03-20.pdf>

 | SAY HI → <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/welcome/>

 | EPISODE BIBLE VERSES → Amos 5:21-24

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Amos%205%3A21-24&version=msg>

AND Matthew 28:18-20 and Ephesians 4:11-16

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+28%3A18-20%2C+Eph.+4%3A11-16&version=nl>

 | RESOURCES

→ Fear Isn't Keeping them Home, It's Indifference (Why Church Attendance Has Plummeted)

<https://careynieuwhof.com/fear-isnt-keeping-them-home-its-indifference-why-church-attendance-has-plummeted/>

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