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REASONS NOT TO GO TO CHURCH - Part 2 - SHELTERED and AFRAID

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Continuing our series of Reasons Not to Go to Church. Sometimes there's this feeling that the church or Christians can be afraid of something going on in the world. Something about the world that's uneasy. And they'll deal with it by retreating into some sheltered spot on some issue, or life in general, and become kind of fake, living in a plastic shell, over an insecurity that makes them become sheltered.

People on the outside see this and think, "I'm trying to deal with the real world and if the church is sheltered and afraid I don't get it. I don't understand what they're doing."

I had a conversation with a friend, years ago, over their teenage son who was in trouble with the law. It had caused marital problems to the point where the husband wanted a divorce, but the wife didn't. She claimed that she was fine, that God was good. I tried to tell her that her life was coming apart. She replied that yes, but she was a Christian so why wouldn't her life be good? For me, it was a very weird moment. That captures the sense of this.

Or people who use the phrase "Praise the Lord" even in the midst of problems, or have a quotable Bible verse for every occasion. Yes, I like those verses, but they're being used in a way where they're not dealing with reality. They're being used as a cover.

The evangelical church has an increasing obsession with the end times. Sermons on the Book of Revelation. We get wrapped up in this, we get sheltered and afraid, we just want everything to come to an end and we're not dealing with reality.

I can see how someone not involved with church sees this as plastic, and rigid, and not real. They don't want to feel that way.

* When we cover our eyes to the world around us, we end up living in plastic shelters. This is not a good thing. We were meant to live lives with our eyes wide open.

Jesus has some things to say about this that are very applicable, whether we're part of the church or on the outside of it.

He's speaking through John in the Book of Revelation to the church at Laodicea. This was a community that was located near some hot springs, and had built a series of aqueducts to run the water through the city. The church there was a church of hidiers. They were covering their eyes.

REVELATION 3:15-16 - "I know your work, that you are neither cold nor hot, and I wish you were either one or the other. But because you're tepid, neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth."

Everyone in the church in Laodicea got this image. As they brought the water from the hot springs into the city, it would naturally cool off on the way in, and become tepid.

Jesus is saying, "You're not what you think you are."

How many times in our culture, people look at the church or Christians, and would say, "You may think you're like a cool glass of water,. But your eyes are closed and we want to vomit."

What happened? Jesus continues --

VERSE 17 - "You say, 'I am well off. I have prospered and I do not need a thing'"

Jesus is saying, "Here's what you think you are."

VERSE 17 - "But you do not realize you're miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."

He's saying, "You're blind to something in your heart. You're blind to yourself. You're sheltered and afraid."

Why? They're scared. We're scared. The thing that scares us is there's this reality gap that I believe every follower of Christ wrestles with. If we don't it will chase us back into something that is not real.

The reality gap is this. Our God is an utterly amazing, incredible God. So we think - What does a God-believer look like? Every one of us comes up with an iconic image of what a Christian should be. The gap is - what do we do when we see the gap between our image of what a Christian should be, and our own reality?

Life gets hard, we try to commit to God more, pray more, dedicate ourselves more, and we continue to spiral down into a hole of isolation. And we wonder why we experience that when we worship a God like we have,

What does it mean when we pray and pray, "God, make the depression go away." And we think a good Christian should be like this. What does it mean about us when this doesn't go away?