

Faith is an interesting thing. Sometimes we have the most of it when we have the least reason. I've always been amazed at the ways in which the disciples disbelieve Jesus when he tells them truth and shows them wonders. They say they believe in him, and that they believe in what he has done to transform them, but truthfully? Not so much. But today's story is different. In today's story, the disciples seem to be annoyed with folx they are journeying near for wanting to spend time with Jesus. And their solution, which feels as though it is suggested with a certain glee, is to have the heavens open up and burn people, who may have – may have – offended Jesus. This, of all things, the disciples seem confident they have the power to do.

If we're honest, lots of church folx seem pretty convinced of their abilities to condemn. If we're honest, the face of church folx is syrupy sweet suburbans who offer 'free hugs from Jesus' at parks, or play Christian stations loud songs of a watered down Christ from their open car windows while scowling at kids listening to Kendrick Lamar, as he weaves beats with U2 to call out systemic injustice. 'Church folx' has come to mean narrow minded, judgement wielding, regressive people who built a world that works for them and now demand that Jesus justify their choices by being a good boy and staying inside and out of trouble.

Church, this place where we feel so safe, so righteous, has not been good news for people. It has not been 'home.'

A homeless man finds out that he has come in to a small inheritance. It isn't huge, but he can find himself a place to live, maybe go back to making and selling things like he used to...before. He needs something safe, simple, warm and dry. Not overwhelming, nor demeaningly sparse. Someplace he could grow into a little

bit, keep some treasures. Maybe a little outdoor space to remind you that there are good ways to be outside, not just scary ones? A garage to use as a workshop.

Now imagine that all he is shown are terrible hovels, filled with vermin and palatial homes with big lawns, extra bathrooms, and fancy fixtures. One he couldn't bear and the other he can't afford. They have nothing to do with him – the hovels make terrible assumptions about him, and the mansions are gross in their waste. But the real estate agent keeps asking the man what is wrong with him that he is never satisfied. If only he would leverage his new wealth he might have anything and everything. Otherwise, why not take the not-quite-condemned house – clearly he lacks the vision of the agent to be his best, so that's where he will end up anyway.

Beloved, people outside of church view church as the real estate agent, selling something that is utterly irrelevant and unliveable to people who know they need something, aren't sure what, but know it certainly, absolutely is NOT that. Condemnation on one side and ostentation on the other. That is what church has come to mean in America. Those who fit in to the narrow perceptions of what they have decided is God's ideal are welcome. Everyone else? You're on your own.

Church hasn't been home for most people for a long, long time. And most of us who have found a home within the walls of a church and the arms of a faith community have learned how to make ourselves small and quiet to avoid the judgement and domination of the church pushing us into narrowly defined spaces where we just don't belong. It seems an okay sacrifice for the sake of being in community and getting closer to Jesus. So we make it.

But Jesus had no home. In fact, Jesus sought no home. Jesus didn't invite people over after he had tidied up and planned the menu. He just went out and met people where and how they were.

I always read this passage as a sort of lamentation, but I think I've changed my mind. I don't think Jesus is sad when he says foxes have holes and birds have nests, but I have nowhere to lay my head. I think he is pointing out for his judgmental disciples a key component to what makes Jesus Jesus. With no place to rest, Jesus is, of course, rest-less. He pauses, but he does not stop. He is always curious, always moving and changing, he is never, ever content with the status quo. After all, he has nothing invested in it.

Once you have built the church the way you like it, why would you want to have it changed by a bunch of johnny-come-latelies and their new ideas? Why, when you have a retirement plan, a mortgage mostly paid off, and the last kid through college would you want to hear about the death of the economic system? Why, when the church, the house of God, has been telling you for several hundred years that you earned your place in the kingdom of God and shall be among the elect would you be super excited to hear about the kin-dom of God, that all things are to be held in common, and that you should drop everything and follow a homeless vagabond into near certain death. It is easy enough to see the appeal of a neatly tamed and domesticated Jesus. Which is exactly why Jesus refused to be that guy. Or that God.

The only people who consistently talk loudly about their churches and work to grow them are Christians who believe in a tame, domesticated Jesus, which says a lot. They have a lot of reason to spread this Jesus: if they gain converts, they sustain the system. And if they alienate others they create a demilitarized

zone around their own understanding. A moat, if you will, to keep the palatial mansion imagery going.

Do we believe in a tame and domesticated Jesus? _____ Good Lord, I hope the answer is No!!!!

So. How do we live rest-less lives, walking with Christ, going to the people? How do we reclaim, renew and reimagine an evangelical stance? We have good news to share!!! Jesus just broke out of the jail called church and he's coming to do a Ted Talk with Kedrick and Bono! This is the real deal, y'all! This is how we change the world!!!

Here's what's at stake: liberated Christ tells us that we cannot just wince when people justify children in cages and families ripped apart. Liberated Jesus tells us that we have a responsibility to the future to move from kingdom to kingdom, making space for everyone at the table. Jesus is asking us, not to smite anyone who doesn't fit, but to be better real estate agents, finding and if need be building a safe place for all.

Evangelizing on behalf of the liberated Christ is not a nice idea. It is a Christian imperative. Jesus is being held hostage by Rome, dressed like Christians. The way to break the chains is to show people all of the places Christ lives – loud and proud. We need a faith that spends every day like it's pride parade day: out, proud, and full of glory and joy, vision and determination.

Literally, the future is at stake. And ask the kids: it is worth evangelizing for. Amen.