JESUS AND THE CHURCH

Posted on August 5, 2015 by Eddie

It's not easy being part of the church, but it's all part of the equation when you follow Jesus. Our corporate life together is a living demonstration of the truth of Jesus message, it's not an optional extra.
Category: Observations

Over the last few weeks, a few of my friends have posted the following from John Piper on their Facebook pages:

> *"To walk away from Jesus because His representatives are failures is to make an absurd choice. Jesus is our only hope. The fact that he has bad representatives, including me at times, doesn't make Jesus defective. Jesus is the one person in the universe who has no defects. To walk away from Him is to walk away from the one hope of your life."*

It's short, it's clear and it's essentially true, but it still leaves me a little uneasy.

The underlying problem with this statement is that it drives a wedge between Jesus and his representatives. You don't like the church, that's ok, you should still follow Jesus. The problem is, when you follow Jesus, you get the church whether you like it or not.Â Christianity is a community religion, it's not about individuals following Jesus, it's about a body of people growing together. In fact the Bible uses that word body to talk about the church; it actually says that the church is Jesus' body. If you want to see Jesus on this planet; you have to look at the church. And that's scary.

John Piper seems to be saying that if you are looking for hope in life, you can avoid all the messy stuff with people and latch on to Jesus who is perfect.

However,Â the Scriptures teach is that Jesus came down to us, lived amongst our messiness, identified with it and drew together a community of people in his name. The glory of the Gospel is shown in the cracked lives of Christians living together. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, his people have been reconciled to God and are learning to be reconciled to each other. Yes, we make a mess, but Jesus is not ashamed to call us his siblings.

Yes, Jesus is without defects and he is our only hope; but we come to that hope through living with his representatives, making mistakes, learning to forgive and learning to be forgiven. It's not easy being part of the church, but it's all part of the equation when you follow Jesus. Our corporate life together is a living demonstration of the truth of Jesus message, it's not an optional extra.

John Piper, for all his strengths, is a product of the extreme individualism which dogs the Western Church at this point in history. We need to take a fresh look at Scripture and to learn from the rest of the world to see that Christianity is not about "me and my personal saviour" but it is about a saved and redeemed community growing and learning together.

Edit: A couple of people have been kind enough to point me to the source of the quote, which comes from an interview which you can find here. It is true that my blog post is reacting to a quote out of context, which is not entirely fair - but that's the way the quote has been presented. Had I beenÂ commenting on the full interview, I would have weighted my comments differently, but much of what I said would still stand.