

Beyond Belief – Session 5  
“An Emerging Way”

Marianne

Marcus was speaking to those for whom literalism was no longer tenable  
-make possible a reengagement with faith  
“There’s no right way to be a Christian; there may be wrong ways...!”

Marcus

Task of contemporary church to help people move from pre-critical naivety through critical thinking to post-critical naivety

Being a Christian is about living within the Christian tradition as a sacrament of the Sacred and letting it do its work

Purpose of a sacrament is to mediate the Holy

With a sacrament, something finite becomes a mediator of the Sacred  
Christ crucified is a challenge to us:  
-an early Christian paradox  
-metaphorical embodiment of the path (Paul)

Many ways of being Christian

Two ways of seeing Christianity: an older, familiar way (believing), an emerging way (relational-sacramental)

Chapter 2

“Faith” has come to mean “belief” - which is relatively impotent  
“You can believe all kinds of things and still be untransformed; the emphasis on belief is modern and mistaken, and also very divisive”  
Being a Christian is really about one’s relationship with God

Chapter 3

Moralistic - centered on dynamic of sin, guilt, forgiveness  
“To be clear, the human dilemma is very serious, and we need deliverance in lots of ways, but talking about it as sin and needing absolution is kind of strange!”

“When Christianity becomes primarily concerned with the virtue of individuals, it tacitly legitimates whatever social system is in place”

Systemic justice is a result-oriented justice  
There is a spiritual dimension to justice which is always needed - consciousness-raising about our relationship to God and our relationship to the world is needed

Fruits of the spirit - compassion  
The way of Jesus leads beyond convention

“For Paul, life under the law is life under conventional wisdom...life of rewards and requirements. Radical grace is the alternative wisdom of Paul.”

Jesus: a life full of God, the decisive revelation of what a life full of God is like

What was most central to Jesus?  
-spirit (life was radically centered in spirit of God; invited his followers into same relationship with God)  
-compassion (in the world of the everyday, womb-like: life-giving, nourishing, embracing, inclusive)

Spirituality: becoming conscious of and intentional about a deepening relationship to God

Luke 6:36 “be compassionate as God is compassionate”  
- justice, equitable distribution of God’s earth

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What do you suppose some of the differences are between a “believing understanding” and a “relational-Sacramental” understanding of Christianity?

Why is the “belief-based” understanding of Christianity problematic for modern sensibilities?

Share how your relationship with the Divine has transcended beliefs of the tradition in which you grew up.

If we took seriously Jesus’ call to be passionate about both compassion and justice, how might that be reflected in our lives?