

Connor Murphy  
Senior Sermon  
Youth Sunday  
June 3, 2018

Last year, I took a class called AP English Language and Composition. I originally wasn't going to take it, and even after I had switched in, I was puzzled for quite a while as to what the class was. I mean, it was about teaching kids to use and understand language, but on a deeper level, I figured out that it was about teaching kids to think. To think about everyday life around us, and about its meanings, and analyze it, and be able to argue why it matters or doesn't matter. I remember thinking and saying at the end of the year "boy, I shouldn't have taken that class" because it was an immense amount of work. But when I look at it now, as a senior completely done with high school, I'm glad I took it. It's helped me to think a lot more, even when I was already doing a lot of thinking.

And I've done a lot of thinking about church. Whether I liked it or not, this church has always been an important feature of my life. Always. But this fall, I'm going to go off to college, as an adult, and from that point on, I'll always be making a conscious decision when I go to church. It's up to me whether to go or not. I have to make that decision and think about if church really matters to me. Whether it's **worth** going to. And why.

Well, I'm no diehard believer. A lot of the stuff in the bible is pretty far-fetched. And since I'm not a diehard believer, I don't practice blind faith either. I've always tried to think about what I might believe or not, and always came up with justifications and reasons why it matters to me. Because religion is a personal experience, not so much something that can be argued from objective facts. If it could, wouldn't everybody be Christian? It would be insane not to be.

Religion is mystic, and wondrous, and weird, and personal. Christianity more so than almost any other religion, I would say, because there's such a focus on a personal relationship with God. From a young age, you're taught to pray, to talk to God - because it's what he wants. Belief, for me, isn't something that can be hammered into a person. It has to be a down-to-earth conversation, between only God and the believer. And religion should benefit the believer by design - not by wealth or status or anything self-centered like that, of course, but by making them a better person, giving them direction and morals in their life. If it doesn't, well, it's not a very good religion.

Why does this church matter to me? Well, because it does that. And if you ask me, the Big Meaning of religion, or at least this religion - it's community. There are churches within walking distance of my house. Most of my friends from school go to churches more down south. I drive a good 15 minutes every Sunday to come here and serve and experience it. But why do I drive that 15 minutes instead of just walking down the street? Because this church, and not the building, but the actual church, the congregation - is special. When my parents settled down about 2 decades ago, they had to make a conscious decision on which church to attend as a family. I remember them telling me that they walked in, and felt this place, and knew immediately. It's a **very** special church. It's one that provides guidance and support when you need it.

It's hard not to lose some faith when you get older. It can be hard to keep coming every Sunday. But "even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day." To me, that can be applied in both a religious **and** secular context. Don't worry about the

little things. Don't worry about details. Focus on the Big Meaning. Focus on yourself, on being a good person, and on building a good community here, because Jesus Christ is one is us, and we are one in him. By bettering ourselves, we are always serving God, and God is serving us in helping there. By building a community, we are helping each other, and we are strengthening faith. It's all together in the community.

“For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

No matter what happens, I can always come here. When I'm asked what are the most influential parts of my life, I always include this church. Always. I talk about the friends I've made, how close I got them, the solace I feel here. That's why it's important to build such a community, to help out others. Because one day, when you have a problem, when the rain and clouds hit, karma will come around, and others will help you here. There is always this House of God. To me, that's the Big Meaning, that's the point of religion, that's a reason to keep coming here. And that's what strengthens my faith.

*Connor Murphy, June 2018*

*2 Corinthians 4-5*