

## **What We Are Becoming**

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When I was in seminary, I was obsessed with this one word:  
eschatology.

It drove the people I live with a little crazy, I think

To hear how much I talked about it at the dinner table.

Eschatology, which refers to the study of the end-times

Or more specifically, where it is we think our world is going

Classically pulled from the

apocalyptic visions of the book of Revelations

But also widening the field of study

to secular environmentalist predictions

Of climate chaos

Or perhaps an arc that bends toward justice

Asking: is the Beloved Community beyond our efforts, even beyond our  
vision,

Or is it already around us, here and now,

And our work is to make sure that it is equally accessible to all?

Plus, it is just fun to say: eschatology

And I was obsessed with this word, this concept,

Because what we think will happen in the future affects how we behave  
now

Fuels our reactions to the biggest questions of our time

And where we think we are going

Affects the road we lay down before us.

It reminds me of Ralph Waldo Emerson

Unitarian minister, transcendentalist

Who said:

A person will worship something,

have no doubt about that.

We may think our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of our  
hearts,

but it will come out.

That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will

determine our lives,

and our character.

Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship,  
for what we are worshipping,  
we are becoming.

This question: what are we becoming, captured me.  
And still does, to some extent.  
We must be careful what we are worshipping:  
for what we are worshipping, we are becoming.

The etymology of the word worship  
Old English, weorthscipe  
Meaning worth shaping  
To give shape to that which find to be of ultimate worth.  
We gather in worship at this church every week  
To turn our attention to that which we give ultimate worth to  
To hear from one another:  
what do you find of worth, of meaning, in this life?  
In a world that distracts us with so many things  
that it tells us determines our own worth  
Or the worth of others:  
The number of Facebook likes we get  
How many zeros are in our paychecks  
Whether we wear the right kind of clothes or not  
When we set aside time for worth-shaping, worship,  
We set aside time to ask: do those thing actually reflect worth?  
Are those the things to which we assign ultimate worth?

A few month or two ago, with our children in Religious Education  
We made these “mindfulness jars”, as a tool for spiritual practice  
Which I think are just such a perfect metaphor for worship,  
Which, after all, is a spiritual practice.

Can you see my fingers through the liquid?

So it's pretty clear right now? (yes)  
Can you shake it up for me?  
What's happening now? (I can't see through it)  
Why not? (glitter swirling around)

Friends, I think of worship much like this:  
Much of our lives are filled with  
Appointments and long commutes and meals that need to be made  
And fights we've had with loved ones and meetings and Facebook  
And email and schedules and plans.

And worship is a time and space when we set aside  
all those thoughts and expectations and just be.

\_\_\_\_\_, what's happening now to the jar?  
(stopped moving, getting clearer, etc)

The things inside this jar which were previously swirling around  
is slowing down.

For many people, including me, that means this space on Sunday  
morning

But for me has also meant singing with my housemates each week

It has been time at retreats, sitting in circles as a chalice was lit  
and we checked in, or sang, or sat in silence.

It has happened in hiking or joining in song at activist trainings.

In journaling and meditation and reflection.

When I've taken time to let all the "doing" settle

To *be* instead of *do*

Worth shaping.

And I know I need this time, friends.

I know I need this because the person I say I want to be is not always the  
person that I am.

Has that ever felt true for you?

That sacred time, set apart, taken intentionally as a space for worth  
shaping

Has sometimes asked allowed me, sometimes forced me, to ask myself:

What am I becoming? Am I proud of who I am becoming?

Is who I say I want to be actually who I am?

Who here has ever asked yourself that?

Because I know there are times

when I remember to check my bank account

more often than I remember to pray,  
and in that moment I worship money over spiritual grounding.

I know there have been times when I find myself  
advocating stubbornly for what I want, even if it's just a preference,  
and I worship my own ego over the needs of the other people I'm with.

And then there are times  
when I make a decision  
even when it's not good for my own self,  
because in those moments I worship the fear  
of what other people will think of me  
over my own well-being.

And there are times when I feel annoyed  
about clutter in my house more than I extend grace and patience,  
and in those moments I worship cleanliness and predictability  
over compassion and understanding

And there are times when I tell my loved ones  
the ways that they've annoyed me  
more than I tell them what I appreciate about something that they did,  
and I worship self-righteousness over gratitude.

And there are times when I compile my to-do list in my head  
During a conversation instead of really, deeply listening  
to the experience of the person speaking to me,  
and I worship productivity and business over relationship.

Have any of these ever been true for you?

Friends, we show what we love more by our actions than by our words  
And we show what we worship more by our deeds than by our  
professions of faith.

And friends, we fall short of our best selves  
We miss the mark  
Each and every one of us  
All the time.

This weekend I was at an activist movement-building training  
And one of the trainers said something  
About how in times of stress we don't rise to our higher angels  
We don't rise to the people we say we want to be  
But in times of stress we rise to our highest level of training.

And I was like "ah, yes, because training allows us to practice, over and over"  
Which is why we call it "spiritual practice"  
Not "spiritual performance", or "spiritual perfection".

What we claim to love, to worship,  
Is not what we always *act like we love*.  
And we come to church to *practice* being the people we say we want to be  
Loving in the ways we say we want to love.  
In becoming our better selves, in practicing, we need to acknowledge  
when we've missed the mark—  
those measures of our best selves, the people we aspire to be  
Because we *are practicing*  
We are people in process.

A part of that is confession—admitting, in our own hearts  
and to something or someone beyond ourselves,  
the ways in which we've missed those marks  
And I believe that at it's best, a community of faith can help us to be  
assured  
that even when we miss the mark  
we are all worthy of love.  
And I also believe that we need communities and practices of  
discernment  
to hold us accountable to what we say we want to worship,  
help us make amends,  
remind us that we are worthy of trying again.  
We need holy friends  
To help us bridge that gap  
Between who we are and who we say we want to be  
Because none of us can do it alone.

So friends,  
Let our lives become worship  
Let what we love be what we do  
And let what we worship be what we become

For what we are *is* becoming.  
We are people in process  
Laying the road as we walk it  
Calling one another back to our highest values when we have strayed  
from the path  
And although we cannot see the future  
And we have no control over it  
We can lay our path, right here and now,  
With faith and with hope  
That we are worshipping what we know is good.  
For what we are worshipping we are becoming.