The Serviceberry: Life Code

WEEK FIVE - THE SACRED ECONOMY

What do we truly value, and what kind of life are our values creating?

Reading: The Serviceberry by Robin Wall Kimmerer

1. WHAT MAKES SOMETHING VALUABLE?

We live in a world that knows how to put a price on almost everything. But price and value are not the same. Some of life's greatest treasures - love, beauty, well-being, trust, and meaningful relationships - can't be priced.

Even the things we own may hold value far beyond their monetary worth. A simple object can become priceless because of the memories, experiences, or love associated with it. Yet sometimes, in our efforts to preserve what we treasure, we can lose sight of what made it precious in the first place.

Imagine a grandmother who has a cherished doll display safely behind glass. Her granddaughter would love nothing more than to hold one and play with it. The grandmother treasures the doll collection. But the granddaughter sees something different.

Where does the greatest value lie? In preserving the object, honoring its value, or creating a new memory together? There isn't a right or wrong answer. The invitation is to look more deeply at how we assign value, what makes something precious to us, what we choose to withhold or protect, and how those values influence the choices we make.

And perhaps the deeper question is not simply *What do I treasure?* but *What does the way I treasure something reveal about me?*

DISCUSSION

- Have you ever been so focused on acquiring, protecting, or achieving something that you lost sight of what made it meaningful in the first place?

2. OUR VALUES REVEAL OUR CONSCIOUSNESS

In The Serviceberry, Kimmerer shares the story of a hunter who, when asked where he stored his meat, replied, “I store my meat in the belly of my brother.” His understanding of wealth influences how he lives. And how he lives helps create the very conditions that support his understanding of wealth.

Many of us have been taught that security comes from what we accumulate, preserve, and control. From that perspective, sharing resources might seem to diminish security. But the hunter understood wealth differently: his well-being rested not solely on what he stored for himself, but also on the relationships and shared practices sustaining his community.

Does our understanding of security simply reflect the world we live in, or does it help *create that world*? Imagine two people. One believes security comes primarily from possessing enough to remain independent. That belief may lead toward accumulation, control, and self-protection. Another understands that security also exists in trust, cooperation, and mutual care. That belief may lead toward relationships, sharing, and community support.

Neither view eliminates uncertainty nor guarantees well-being. Both people can plan responsibly, yet their values cultivate different qualities of consciousness, different ways of being, and different possibilities for their lives.

Our consciousness influences what we value. What we value influences how we live. And how we live helps shape the reality we experience and create together.

Jesus taught, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21) . Our treasure is not only our money; it is wherever we invest our *self*. As consciousness awakens, what we regard as most valuable may be transformed.

DISCUSSION

- Am I building a life around what I need to protect? If so, what might become possible if I were guided less by fear of losing what I have and more by the desire to express who I truly am?
- Have you experienced a season of life or spiritual awakening that changed what you valued? What did you begin to see differently?

3. WHAT WE VALUE, WE CULTIVATE

Consciousness shapes our values. But the movement works in the other direction, too: the values we practice help shape our consciousness. We are formed, in part, by what we repeatedly attend to, choose, and embody.

We can say we value peace while continually feeding conflict. We can value authenticity while organizing our lives around others' approval. We can profess gratitude while habitually noticing only what is missing. The difference between admiring a value and living it is *practice*.

Practicing compassion can deepen our capacity to genuinely be compassionate. Practicing gratitude can expand our awareness of gifts and potential already present. Practicing integrity can bring our outer lives into closer alignment with our inner knowing. None of these practices makes us more Divine. They make us more conscious expressions of the Divine nature that is already ours.

We create a life through our choices, but what is the life we are creating *making of us*?
What we repeatedly choose becomes a practice; and what we practice cultivates our way of being.

DISCUSSION

- Is there a value you sincerely affirm that is not yet consistently expressed in your choices? What gets in the way?

- When facing a decision, how might it change things to ask not only, "What will I lose or gain?" but also, "Who will I become through this choice?"

4. THE HIDDEN COST OF OUR CHOICES

What in your life is receiving more of you than it deserves, and what truly matters to you that isn't receiving enough?

In an ordinary economy, we ask what something costs in dollars. In the sacred economy, perhaps we should also ask what it costs in life energy. Every commitment, pursuit, and worry consumes some of our finite attention and energy. Some enrich us; others diminish our experience of living.

Consider the energy we give to worry, others' expectations, old resentments, hollow achievements, unquestioned responsibilities, and what may happen. We can be spending our lives without consciously choosing *what we are spending them on.*

DISCUSSION

- Where is your life energy going almost automatically, without your consciously choosing to give it?
- What important part of your life keeps receiving the leftovers of your attention rather than the fullness of your presence?

CLOSING GROUP PRACTICE - THE SACRED THINGS WE'VE BEEN POSTPONING

Sometimes what matters most to us is precisely what we keep postponing. Take turns completing one of the following statements. Make as many rounds as time allows.

- *When things settle down, I'll …*
- *When I have more money, I'll pursue …*
- *When I finish everything I need to do, I'll make time for …*
- *When I feel more confident, I'll begin …*

Weekly Practice - DEEPER REFLECTION

Sometimes spiritual transformation begins when we recognize that our lives are organized around something other than what we know to be most meaningful and sacred. *When you look back over your life, what do you want to have given your life to? And is "it" receiving the best of you now?*