

One Sunday morning I walked out of the sanctuary and into the narthex, and as I was saying good-bye to people and wishing them well for their week ahead, a gentleman walked into the East side and set down on one of the pews. Once I'd finished my conversation I walked over and said hello and introduced myself and he asked me about the service. "Oh, it just ended. It's traditional with hymns and choir and those kinds of things. He said, "Oh great. Is it alright if I come sometime?" I told him it would be wonderful. "Well what about what I'm wearing? Would that be OK?" asked the man. I assured him that his jeans and tee shirt and baseball hat would be just fine; that we have all kinds of folks in our congregation.

That conversation got me to thinking about worship. Sometime, we think it's all about the external things we do - we sing, we stand up, we sit down, we read the scripture, we hear it read, we sing this hymn but only these verses - we script it, a lot of it. Worship though is really not so much about what we do. What we do is a vehicle for worship. What worship is really all about is the disposition of the soul, the heart; the interior of the mind engaging all of us in a way that helps us connect with God more powerfully.

Now for some of us that means we want some emotional piece because that's where we connect with God; others want a more cerebral connection with God; some people want to stand and sit and feel things. There are so many variations on that. But whatever we do with worship in terms of the way we do it, what we're really trying to do is get people connected deeper with God. And that's where one of the pieces of our Vision Pathway comes in. When we talk about *Authentic Reverence* as a missional piece of the Vision it is really about connecting the real authentic experience of life with reverence of the Divine. So, it's not just 'I'm going to go to worship to be myself' in some sort of a free-spirited way that is just sort of open-ended. No - that's not what this means at all. Instead *Authentic Reverence* is about being absolutely true to who we are in the light of God's grace. We see ourselves not only in our strengths and the grace and the gifts that we've been given, but also in the places where we've failed in what God calls us to do, where we've sinned, where we've come short. But it's all seen in the very grace of Jesus Christ and the reverence of the holy, all powerful God who is our creator, redeemer and sustainer.

*Authentic Reverence* then is this sort of disposition of the heart and mind where we're fully ourselves and fully honest and engaged with God in worship. And so, everything we do in worship, hopefully, has some way to connect on those levels. When we sing a hymn the words, the lyrics of a hymn are meant to engage us - both cognitively in what we sing and emotionally in what we feel. The music that's done takes different textures of music and puts them together for us - and sometimes that's about joy and sometimes it's about sadness and sometimes it's about confession or lamentation; all of those elements have a place in worship. Part of the contemporary worship music scene is about Praise Worship; but not everything is praise, folks. We all know that. Sometimes our experience of life, the authentic experience of being a person of faith, is grief. Can we also see that in worship? Of course, we can because God's grace helps us see grief in a way through faith. So everything, every emotion, every experience we have is a part of worship when we present it before the Holy.

If you've been to Central you know sometimes I'll bring a guitar in and I'll play it and I'll sing. Folks, I'm not the world's greatest guitar player nor am I the greatest singer of all times; in fact, I'm a pretty terrible singer. The reason I do that though is because I want to present something as a gift; it's the only kind of thing I can give. Part of my experience of working out my own faith is to do that through music. So that offering may not be much, but it's something that speaks authentically to who I am, my experience of faith and something that I'd like to offer the congregation. It's also about taking a bit of a risk and, for me, it seems that *Authentic Reverence* has some risk involved. To be ourselves and honest before God to believe and accept and have faith that no matter what God loves us; takes a bit of a risk.

I hope you've enjoyed watching this little video in this month's newsletter. We talked a little bit about *Authentic Reverence*. The next time you're in worship with us I hope that somehow the Holy Spirit speaks to you about God's great love for you, about how you are accepted in God's sight and that your experience of your life can be seen most significantly through that lens. Until next time, remember that *Authentic Reverence* is Central to Life.