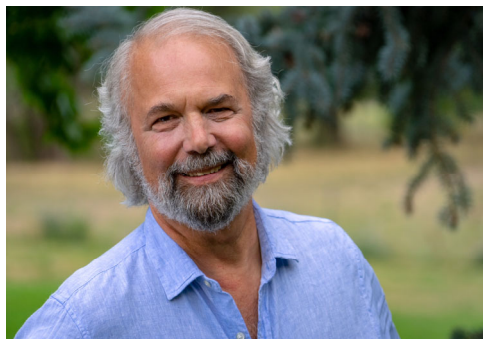


# A MYSTIC OF TODAY

PULSE OF SPIRIT  
APRIL 19, 2023



**DAVID KARCHERE** is a speaker and workshop leader who assists people to renew their *Primal Spirituality*—an experience that virtually all human beings know at birth, and that ideally grows as they mature.

In Matthew Fox's epic book on contemporary spirituality, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, he speaks of *Twenty-one Running, Working, Experiential Definitions of Mysticism*. Mysticism is the realm of experience beyond religious or spiritual teaching or ritual.

One of the experiences he speaks about is self-criticism. He says a mystic is self-critical.

Self-criticism is honest reflection on one's own life, and the spiritual path one is on. It is *letting go of projection onto others but also avoids the internalization of self-hatred*.

So, we are not talking about self-hatred when we are talking about self-criticism. We are speaking of the corrective mechanisms that are natural to a creative life. For Matthew Fox, his self-criticism extended to the Catholic Church that he was a part of. He was a Catholic priest until the Vatican dismissed him. He is now an Episcopal priest.

My point is that practitioners of any faith, any spiritual path, ought to be self-reflective for themselves individually and for that path. There ought to be self-correcting mechanisms in a human life and also in the life of a spiritual community.

In last week's *Pulse of Spirit*, I spoke about *Original Faith* and how the messages that come to us from the experience of the founder of any faith can be like the game of Telephone. There is the original message. But then it is passed down from person to person and age to age. And by the time we get the message, it might hardly be recognizable to the one who originated the faith or spiritual teaching—to the Buddha, Mohammed, Jesus, or Moses.

If you can imagine having a profound awakening experience, you would want to share it. And so, you begin to talk to people about it. And what was an experience becomes a message. But just telling people

about a profound experience doesn't mean they'll understand or share it. So a message becomes a teaching. As the teaching is passed on from person to person, it can become a doctrine. Over centuries, a doctrine becomes a dogma and perhaps a ritual that doesn't include the original experience.

What an experience gets passed on over the centuries, and by the time it gets to us here today, you can barely feel the original faith, the authentic experience that was had, unless you take great care to tune in to it. And yet, it is still available to us because the experience is timeless. It doesn't decay or morph over the centuries.

In the case of Christianity and Jesus' original experience, you can find it in the red-letter words in the Gospels. Amazing! The record of it is there, the feeling of it, the vibrancy of what he was experiencing. His ecstasy is there. His passion is there. Amazing!

Speaking about Christianity, as Jesus' original experience became a message, a teaching, a doctrine, and a dogma, the Roman Empire, which had crucified him, played a central role. So, their agenda as an empire motivated them to distort the portrayal of Jesus.

I offered a workshop in England ten years ago now. It was hosted by an abbey run by friars of the Catholic Church. As we ate lunch, I looked up at a statue of Jesus on the cross on the wall directly above our table. It was painted in vivid color.

*Why did they hang that here?*

I can't know what was on the minds of the friars or the abbot. But I couldn't help myself

from reflecting on the fact that the Roman Catholic Church was once part of the Roman Empire and played a major role in the development of culture in Europe and worldwide. And it was the Roman Empire that crucified the man. The church authorities would never say it like this. But isn't this the not-so-subtle message? *We did it to him, and this is what will happen to you, too, if you don't behave according to our directions.*

The portrayal in the Gospels is of a virile, courageous, powerful man. And yet he is seldom portrayed that way by the Church. Yes, he was soft and loving, so that is true too. I wouldn't take that away from him. But he was also a man who didn't back down in the face of the corruption of the world around him. He brought a message that was a challenge to the authorities of the day and his own followers.

I affectionately call Chapter 23 in the Book of Matthew *Jesus' Rant*. And it is a rant. For the whole chapter, he goes off on the religious authorities of the day. This is not a portrayal of a meek and timid man. He carried a powerful personal authority, and his words ring with that authority in this chapter.

Jesus was born to a Jewish family and raised in the Jewish culture of his day. His disciples were Jewish, and he taught in Jewish synagogues. So when Jesus criticized the religious culture of his day, he was being self-critical—critical of the spiritual path he was born into and within which he taught and led. It is clear today that what he shared transcended his culture. It was relevant for the whole world. But still, it was offered in the context of the culture he was born into.

In this chapter, he goes off on that culture and the erosion of original faith that it embodied. The game of Telephone had gone on since the time of Moses, and Moses' original experience was hard to find. There were reasons why that had happened, given the history of his people. And yet, it happened.

It is clear, reading the chapter, that Jesus had reached a point of desperation. His ability to develop the understanding of the people around him and share the original faith he had to share had been severely compromised by people's attitudes. And given the political environment of the day, his life and his teaching were threatened.

To feel the full weight of Jesus' message on that day, read the chapter. And if you read it aloud, you might feel the full measure of his spirit through the words. He was not a timid man.

The clergy of his day included scribes and Pharisees, whom he addresses. This statement is from the 13th verse.

*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

The kingdom of heaven was Jesus' name for an experience of spiritual reality. If leaders of a spiritual faith avoid the experience of it themselves, they don't have it to offer to others. And if anyone around them begins to have that experience for themselves, the leaders object.

Jesus was addressing the specific factors of his day. But the problem is universal. If all that is passed down from the original faith of someone who had a profound experience is dogma and ritual, without experience, it doesn't set people free. It doesn't set the world free.

I am a child of a Judeo-Christian world. My father's parents were from Jewish families in Lithuania and Austria. My mother's parents were from Christian families that had lived in America, mostly since colonial times, and originally from Great Britain and France. So, when I reflect on Jewish or Christian culture, I am talking about *my culture*—the one I was born into. And when I am being critical, I am being self-critical, not projecting my own issues onto others.

I say that every faith leader, and every faith participant, whatever the faith, ought to take on the responsibility of being self-critical. If a blessing has been conferred upon you from your faith, from your spiritual practice, whatever it is, is it not incumbent on you to convey that blessing and pass it on in the clearest way possible? To enter in, yourself, to take in the blessing fully, and then to fully and transparently bring it to others?

If you have never received that blessing, somebody might be critical of you for not passing it on. But how would you pass it on if you had not received it? Maybe we ought to think before we receive the blessing of something like that because, in receiving it, are we not receiving the imperative to share it? Then, if we do not share it, what is up with us? And we can't share it if we do not wholly enter the experience ourselves.

Jesus' way of naming this process was "entering the kingdom of heaven." When we enter that experience, it enters us; there is oneness. And so, we have the opportunity to pass on the invitation to others. But only when we ourselves are transparently having the experience. We do not enter the kingdom of heaven through dogma. We enter it through actual experience. That is what a spiritual teaching is meant to do—communicate experience.

It takes courage to have the experience for oneself and to pass it on. You have to *do* something for it to happen.

Have you noticed this in your life about taking action: when you do not do something that every part of you knows you should be doing, everything gets blocked up in your experience—your energy, your thinking, your emotions? There is an urge within you to act. That is the simplest thing in the world. It is to do what life would have you do. It is to follow the urge of the Creator within you and do the deed, whatever the deed is, large or small. And somehow, we can get ourselves into this position as human beings where we feel the urge to act, but we do not do it. And so we dam up the urge, and then what happens? We have to make excuses as to why we did not do the deed. We have to project our failure to act on other people. *I did not do it because of them.* We have to try to figure out why our world is going wacky. So we analyze and theorize when the only real problem is that we did not do the deed.

All of this dysfunction is created by the simple failure to act. And related to any faith, the deed is to enter the kingdom of heaven and

let it enter you, and then bring it into your world in the actions you take—to say the word, express the feeling, to show up in other people's lives.

Have you had the experience of finally doing the thing that you were being called to do? *Wow, this just got simple.* Spirituality is simple. It gets complicated when we do not do the deed and are trying to figure out *Why is all this happening?* Because you did not do the deed. When you do the deed, you are left with the simplicity of life. You have a free conscience too. The imperative to act is not hanging over you: *I know I should have done it. I didn't do it. But I had a reason not to do it.*

It goes on and on. There are the conscious thoughts about the situation, but then there is the impact on the psyche. How does it impact the human psyche when a person does not do what they are called to do—when everything in them calls them to do the thing, and they do not do it? And it all goes wrong.

This reality is at work for every person on the face of the planet. It is true with every spiritual path.

I am a leader of Emissaries of Divine Light, and this reality is at work for us. And so, I say this to Emissaries of Divine Light, for the sake of the great gift of original faith that is held in this spiritual community:

*Go through the door. Do the deed.  
Enter the kingdom of heaven and let it  
enter you. And have the courage to  
bring it to the world. Stop making  
excuses for not doing it.*

That is no life to live. Bring the teaching because it is hard to share the experience without the teaching. I could just hope you have the experience I do. But the teaching is the medium to share the experience.

We are here to enter the kingdom of heaven and invite others to do the same—to enter

the experience, know the experience, and share the experience—to be a mystic of today.

*David Karchere*

[dkarchere@emnet.org](mailto:dkarchere@emnet.org)

*April 16, 2023*



EMISSARIES  
OF DIVINE LIGHT

*To receive a weekly e-mail with *The Pulse of Spirit*, send an e-mail to [emissaries@emnet.org](mailto:emissaries@emnet.org)*

*Donations to Emissaries of Divine Light are welcome.*

*To make a contribution to assist in our work, please visit [www.emissaries.org](http://www.emissaries.org)*

Copyright © 2023 by Emissaries of Divine Light