

We gave up our TV about 25 years ago, so you can imagine how grateful I was when YouTube was invented. I've been ending my day watching an episode of *Gunsmoke*. There were 635 episodes made of *Gunsmoke*, covering 20 seasons, which makes it the longest-running, prime-time television drama in American history. I started watching it this past winter, and aren't even a quarter of a way through the series. I'm now watching the shows filmed in 1961, the year I was born, so it's given me a sense of what was informing the culture when I was a baby. Mostly what people were learning was that killing people was a great way to solve your problems.

During its 20 year run, Marshal Dillon killed 138 men, and 7 women. I was shocked to learn that. Seven women. I had no idea. Can you imagine the outcry today if a police officer killed 145 people? And he was shot 56 times, and *lived!* In one episode, he was shot four times, twice in the chest, and by the end of the show was sitting in the Long Branch having a beer with Doc, Chester, and Miss Kitty. They healed quickly back in those days.

But we ate it up. In fact, I wanted to be a cowboy when I was a kid. My teacher would ask what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I'd say, "I want to be like Marshal Dillon, and if I can't do that, then maybe a Quaker minister." Since the two jobs were so similar.

But I knew whatever I did, I wanted to carry a gun. In 1966, as part of Indiana's Sesquicentennial, the town of Danville hired Michael Landon, who was starring as Little Joe Cartwright on *Bonanza*, to come give a speech on the courthouse lawn, since Danville had so much in common with the Old West. So I went to see Little Joe and it was just like seeing Jesus, maybe even better since Jesus didn't wear a cowboy hat and do rope tricks.

There was this fascination, bordering on reverence, for the cowboy culture. I thought now wonderful it would have been to live in the olden days, so if someone was giving me trouble, I could pull out my gun and shoot them dead and never be arrested. No one was ever arrested.

"Why'd you shoot him?"

"He looked at my wife."

"Oh, well, I guess you had no choice."

No one was ever arrested. Not even Marshal Dillon, who killed 145 people and was clearly a sociopath, but was never arrested. Because we honored a culture of violence. People in other countries wonder why there are so many gun deaths in America. It's because of our culture. There are 88.8 guns for every 100 residents in America. That's the most of any country in the world. Tunisia has the fewest guns, with 1 gun for every 100 residents. And what's the biggest difference between the United States and Tunisia? Tunisia didn't have *Gunsmoke*. Now we laugh, but keep this in mind—what cultures honor, they become.

What we honor, we become.

Let's think about that. Specifically, let's think about what our nation might be like if our society honored teachers, if we revered educators. We'd become a nation of highly educated people. What we honored, we would become. Teachers who did an exceptionally good job would become our cultural heroes. If our culture venerated education, we'd attend spelling bees and science fairs, instead of high school football games on Friday nights. Not that there's anything wrong with attending football games on Friday nights, though it does reveal what our culture values, which is my point.

Here's another example: If a culture honored compassion, it would admire those people who tended the sick, fed the hungry, forgave their enemies, and assisted the weak. If a culture honored compassion, it would commit its resources to making sure 3 year-old refugees didn't wash up on the beaches of Turkey. It is clear that Syria's Assad regime values personal power above compassion. What we value, we become.

I met a history professor not long ago who teaches down at IU. We were discussing World War II, and I asked him how it was that Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, two highly intelligent, highly civilized, highly religious nations could have descended into such moral depravity prior to World War II. He said it was a question of what they honored.

I asked him what he meant. He said both cultures honored racial purity, military superiority, and national exceptionality, and what they honored, they became. Each of those values became grossly distorted and it spawned great evil.

Jesus said the same thing in a slightly different way. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. So what do we treasure? Because that's what we'll become. That's the direction our heart will incline.

If we treasure military power, we'll become militaristic.

If we treasure peace, we'll become skilled at settling differences.

If we treasure education and learning, we'll become wise.

If we treasure people different from us, we'll become gracious and tolerant.

What we honor, we become.

Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.

You know what happened when I became a Quaker? I had to learn to honor an entirely different set of values. It wasn't easy. I've been a Quaker 37 years, and still catch myself venerating certain things that are incompatible with the Quaker spirit. I anger too easily. When I get in trouble, I lie. I can be self-absorbed. This is all to say that our decision to honor what is good and noble is a decision we have to make and re-make every day.

What do our hearts treasure?

What do we value?

What do we honor?

Because what we honor, we become.