Revelations, Chapter 5

"...He showed a little thing, the size of a hazel nut in the palm of my hand, and it was as round as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: 'What can this be?' And it was generally answered thus: 'It is all that is made.'

I marveled how it could continue, because it seemed to me it could suddenly have sunk into nothingness because of its littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: 'It continueth and always shall, because God loves it; and in this way everything hath its being by the love of God!'

In this little thing I saw three characteristics: the first is that God made it, the second is that God loves it, the third, that God keeps it."

God the Maker, Lover, Keeper

If you know nothing else of Julian's theology, hold onto that last line of her hazelnut vision. Julian understands God to be the "Maker," and has an intimate understanding of the created world. God has made everything, and is in everything. With that, she believes everything created is good. (We'd now call this panentheism.)

God is the "Love," that is, God loves all that God has created. Julian struggles with this, as it contradicts the teachings of the church of her day. A church aligned with imperial power, needing to keep the people in order, needs God to be more about wrath than love. Julian isn’t trying to argue with the church. She wrestles with the incongruities. But in the end, her visions reveal love wins.

God is the "Keeper." This too Julian struggles with. There feels to be a paradox between God’s love, and the darkness of the world around her. She acknowledges sin as our experience of pain, but not as something that God uses for judgement. Sin has no substance. God has no wrath. We, the created and beloved, are "kept" by our God.
Practice: Mindful Eating

Now, Julian had a vision of a hazelnut, and she wasn't eating it. Nevertheless, her vision didn't pop out of obscurity. Historical excavations of the Globe Theater that would have existed during her time revealed hundreds of hazelnut shells. Imagine hazelnuts the medieval version of popcorn.

We'll use Julian's vision of a hazelnut with the mindful eating practices of Thich Nhat Hanh, the modern Buddhist monk who shares Julian's theology of the interconnectedness of nature. This pandemic has made food delivery easier than ever. Convenience and speed are priorities in our eating patterns. And yet, if we stop and think about all that has transpired before food ends up at our homes, it’s a bit overwhelming. That’s all this practice is about. Considering the connections as we eat, slowly.

Prepare:
Try this with your bag of hazelnuts first, but then try it over a regular meal too.

Practice:
- Silently give thanks for what you’re about to eat.
- Chew each bite at least 30 times.
- As you chew, consider the earth. Where did this come from? What part of the planet gave birth to this food? How much rain was required to grow it?
- Consider the people. Who planted the seeds for this? Who harvested it? Was machinery used, or was it plucked by hand?
- Consider the journey. How was this food packaged? Did it travel by boat, plane, truck? Who was it that carried it, delivered it to the place I received it?
- Always end by giving thanks again.

Pause:
Don’t jump up as soon as you’re done. Wait just a minute longer. What do you notice? How does the food taste? How do you feel?