

Seekers Church Talk

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Third Sunday in Epiphany

So I haven't given too many talks like this. And I tend to not want to do it reading. And so what's going to come out? I'm not entirely sure, but there's a lot of kind of different things floating around.

I have very present that we're having an inauguration tomorrow. And incidentally, I spoke for Eighth Day, the day just before the election. So it seems like I've had the opportunity to be in a little bit of a crucible when giving these talks, and from a certain point of view, I could say that there's a lot of complexity, there's a lot of different things that I want to say, but in a certain way, it feels like that complexity is a little bit of an illusion, in the sense that ... I had an experience last night like, I'm like waiting for it to sort of click right? "What am I going to talk about?" And I'm not even sure how I'm going to put it into words. But the experience was: it was simple. There was a kind of a deep love which I recognized that has always been there. A lot of dreams were coming back to me that I realized I had had. And it was almost like, you know, a lock. When you put a key into a lock, there's a lot of different gears—right?—in the lock sometimes, and it's just sort of a matter of turning it and it opens. That is kind of what happened to me last night. And I guess, you know, now I'll sort of get into some particular details and so see where we go with this.

Yesterday, I and Robin, who's in the audience, we were at the Pamunkey Reservation in Virginia, and I was called into the kitchen with the Elders, and I was kind of a little bit surprised that they asked me to go in there, but they wanted to have a little prayer before we started with the ceremony. And somebody read something that was very disturbing that they had received from a good source about what's about to happen. And so she was feeling a lot of fear. And an Elder spoke there, named A'lice Myers Hall, who's a Lenape Elder. She said something that really got to me, which was, "We've been here for 40,000 years. You know, we know what to do. We're the protectors of this place."

And so, you know, words like that help me to put things into perspective. How long have people doing things a certain way been here on this continent? Not very long, like, I'm thinking of a certain group of people, like groups of people that came over about 500 years ago, right? There's a particular approach that was brought here that I don't think was here before. We're still experiencing the effects of that. And from a certain point of view, it's like a little blip on the radar. It could seem like the end of the world, but, the end of the world for who, you know? As one of us mentioned this morning, well, to put it in my own words: I can feel like the world is, like, cracking out from under me and like I don't have anywhere to stand. But there have been people here for a very long time who have just been kind of waiting for all the structures that have been imposed here to crack, you know, because they're not sustainable. So, again, I don't know how coherent this is, but the fact that, at least for me, that we're entering into a time where I would say, like, all these top-down structures are being shown to, like, not work ... it's like, "Okay, I'm not surprised. What are we going to do about it?"

I think that as human beings, we have the capability of living in a good way with the Earth. Now, one of the things, one of the scriptural passages from Isaiah was about marrying the land. At least that's what I picked up from it. And this is actually a very ancient tradition also in Europe. My understanding is that kings were considered the spouses of the land. My own background does come from some Egyptian initiatic traditions also kind of hybridized with the knightly orders of Europe, very tied to the Arthurian traditions. And the legend of King Arthur has a lot to do with this. I don't know how familiar you all are with this, but apparently (this is relevant because I work at Wellspring), there were wells where Faeries lived. And when travelers would come upon a well, they would ask the Faeries at the wells for the food that they needed, and they received it, and it was generously given, and

things were working pretty okay, right? Along comes a king who decides that he's going to take what the Faeries are offering by force—including the Faeries. So this is a kind of a rape of the land. It's a rape of the feminine. It's a rape of what is freely given. They're going to take it by force. After that time, the land starts to decline precipitously and a wasteland period is experienced. And the knightly tradition of King Arthur, a lot of it, you know, with the gallantry and the chivalry, has to do with having an appropriate relationship with the feminine, having an appropriate relationship with the land.

So this is an old tradition in Europe, and yet people who came over here to this continent, you know, like 400, 500 years ago, really didn't seem to be taking a very respectful approach to land. So I guess, where am I going with this? If I'm thinking about what are we going to do coming up, as we have an administration that seems to want to push everything off the cliff, how are we going to live as human beings? I feel a certain kind of confidence that we're going to be able to figure it out, but it's not going to be in the way that we've been doing it for the last 400 or 500 years here. There are other ways of living that are kind of to me, they're like, obvious.

Where I'm coming from on this is we can grow food. We can forage. You don't have to answer this, but how many people in this audience grow food and eat it, and that's basically how they live? I don't. I barely know how to do that. Some of us do. Like, where did we go wrong? Why did we get to a point where we're buying all of our food from like Walmart or the supermarket? You know, to me, it doesn't make sense. So I, you know, I feel like it's relatively simple. What has to come next? It's living in an appropriate way with the Earth again. It may actually sound sort of simplistic, but it's possible. You know, some people have been doing that for a very long time. Others, I guess we've gotten out of the habit. As far as

I'm concerned, that's what I want to be doing.

So, I was also asked, again, I'm sorry, this is a little bit rambling, but I was asked to give an update as to what's going on at Wellspring right now. And that's a little hard to talk about for me. Frankly, I think that there's kind of a lack of vision right now about what should be going on up there. There's 200 acres of land up there in the middle of, like, I think, the second most diverse, ethnically diverse, community in the United States. In light of the situation that we're in—like, I'll probably just be shot for this, but—it's irresponsible not to be inviting people in to have a relationship with that land. I believe that Silent Retreat is a beautiful thing, and we need to have that. But we need to learn again how to live in an appropriate way with the Earth, and the land at Dayspring, Wellspring, it's held in common by all of the churches of the Church of the Saviour. So it's a common responsibility. How are we all going to approach this? Is it going to be a place where, maybe occasionally we go and, like, connect ourselves, you know, and, excuse me for saying this, but a mostly White church, you know, are we going to use that land just for ourselves? Like, that doesn't feel good to me. And in fact, you know, I've been saying this for the last two years, but nothing's changing, as far as I can tell. Not very quickly. So, I feel like, I'm going to be a lot more effective, not in the position that I am. I think that there are other people and places that are doing something in a much more embodied way. So that's, that's what I want to do. And the reason that I work so much with Indigenous people is not because I'm trying to help Indigenous people. It's not about helping. It's because I think that they're the ones that understand how we can live, like, in a way that's good. And I feel like I am Indigenous to the Earth, like, my ancestors are not from this continent, but they are from the Earth. And I have ways of being that are appropriate, that my ancestors knew about that I'm able to reawaken in myself. So, you know, I want to be in relationship with the Indigenous people of

this land. I want to create situations where we can potentially learn from them, like “we”—you know, I don’t want to make assumptions about what our ancestry is in this room, but—that’s why I’ve done the programs that I’ve done at Wellspring, inviting Native people to lead. I think it’s time for the Native people to be allowed—that’s a bad way of saying it. We need their *leadership*. I need their leadership. And it is possible for, for a person who is not Native to this continent to help to create a situation where Indigenous people can finally be listened to. You know, that’s my take on it.

So that’s been a lot of what I’ve been doing up at Wellspring, aside from, like, booking outside retreat groups to come in. It’s like, that’s a nice thing to be able to have outside retreat groups come in. People need a contemplative space. But this problem that we have is not going to be solved through contemplation, okay? I say this as a person that lived for 25 years in a spiritual community. I’m done. I’m done with that. I’m done with contemplation and doing like nothing of a transformative nature. I’m not saying that none of us are doing anything of a transformative nature, but I’m done with that, you know?

So I wasn’t expecting to say most of this stuff.

I can’t wait, okay? We have, from my point of view, we have tremendous resources we have available. It’s time to move. It’s time to not hold on to those resources for ourselves. That’s my point of view.

So what I’m going to be doing from here on is probably going to put me at significant personal risk. I don’t plan to stand by as the Gestapo rounds up displaced Indigenous folks from Central and South America who are here because of our policies of crushing the governments in South and Central America. I’m not going to stand by as people are rounded up into concentration camps and deported. So what that means for me,

you know, maybe that's going to be different from what it means for you, but I'm going to be out there doing stuff, and hopefully I'm going to be out visiting Indigenous people all over this continent and doing whatever I can as a person in this body to support them, and to start to set up a situation where this country can give back everything that has been taken from these people. That's what I want to do.

And I guess I'm, again, I'm sorry for all this stuff that's coming out of my mouth, but I would invite you, and I know that you're already doing this, like, there's a committee here who's working with Indigenous issues, right? So I acknowledge that, but I want to invite people to, as I would say, get down below the foundation of the church, to the land on which the church was built. And a lot of the Native people that I know are really not happy with churches, okay? I'm just saying it.

We have an awesome opportunity to really take all this beautiful stuff that we have and ask people who know how to live here and have known how to live here for 40,000 years to teach us. You know, we have that opportunity. That's what is in my heart. That's what I hope that we're going to do as Church of the Saviour in general. I think there's a potential for a coalition to be built among all the churches. And I think what I would recommend is that we start to look at the land up there at Dayspring as not a resource of Church of the Saviour, but something that doesn't even belong to anybody. I feel like there's a responsibility to allow people to have a relationship with that land, which is going to help us to live in a good way going forward. I actually don't see any other way around it.

And I see this kind of approach popping up in places all over the world, you know? You might say intentional communities or agrarian communities. It's eminently possible. People are doing it all over the place. Why aren't we doing it? You know, I don't feel good about that.

So, again, in my incoherent way here, I guess what I'm what I'm offering is like an exhortation, maybe, for us to look at what it is that we have in common as Church of the Saviour. Right now, it seems to me that land is something that we have in common, at Dayspring Church. Let's do something transformative with it. Let's not just sit on it. You know, for the most part, for me, it's not working. And people, this is also kind of going to sound bad, but the church is dying too, right? The median age is like 70 or something. It's time to open. It's time to open. It's time to break open and let, like, the life in and through. And I don't know what that's going to mean as far as church goes, maybe even the concept of what church is is going to need to open a bit. I don't know.

So this was like ... I don't feel like, extraordinarily proud about, like, how I'm saying this, but I guess I just have to say what I think, and I really hope that we recognize that each of us does have the capability of actually responding appropriately to what's about to happen. I don't see any other way except for just leading from our gifts, I suppose, as the scriptural passage says. This is mine, I guess, to maybe offer a somewhat unpopular view, potentially, but at least I'm being honest about what I think. I think that's probably the most important thing for each of us to do.

So I hope that we are able to take some steps as an entire body, as Church of the Saviour.

I guess the last thing I'll say also is, the Trump administration has said that they are going to engage in shock and awe. And this means basically sending ICE in to places in D.C., in particular, in order to give a very strong message to the rest of the country about what their plans are for undocumented folks, Indigenous people from the South. I would encourage us to strongly consider, if we haven't already, to act as a place of refuge for these people. There are ways of doing that. Maybe you've already been engaged in Know Your Rights training. I think Kathy Doan might have offered that

recently. I hope Trump isn't listening, but Dayspring—that land needs to be used for that, in my opinion. Like, let's move, you know; I have no doubt that a number of us are already very active, and probably more so than I am. But let's have the Word be like flesh, right? Let's live in the way that we want things to be like. I don't think just talking about it—not saying that that's how anybody here is, but—just talking about it, it's not going to be enough. It's time now to actually live in the way that we think that we have to live, for things to work. Like, that might be different for everybody, but I would say, you know, let's talk about it. Let's try to be really clear about what that means. Maybe hold discussion, circle discussions or something along those lines.

But ... this is a beautiful place, but it's not going to look like this, right? It's not going to be concrete and asphalt all over the place. That doesn't work. So what are we going to do to get things to a place that works? I don't have all the answers, but I feel like we can do it. You know, we've been here for like thousands and thousands and thousands of years. All this stuff, this is really, really new, and it's not working for the most part.

So I wish that was more coherent. I guess that's what I have to say today. Yeah. Thanks.