

Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul: A Message of Re-Awakening UBC 10/23

Today I'd like to explore a foundational notion with you that invites a re-awakening of a consciousness ...
a truth that we hold deep within us...
that at the very core of our being is God...
God who is the sacred essence of all life on this earth and beyond.

Perhaps at the root of our current state of toxic polarization and disconnection... abounding on so many levels and in every sector: political, social, economic, religious ...
is a collective **forgetting** that all of life is sacred and we are but a part of a web of interconnectedness and interdependence ...
from the smallest molecules in our bodies to the expanse of the cosmos...
each with its particular and critical interaction...
each reliant in some way on something else.
Everything needs something else to exist!

It's curious that despite all the advances in science, communication and technology which provides clear evidence of inter-connectedness that we somehow lose sight of that or perhaps, simply forget.

We suffer from what John Phillip Newell describes as:
"soul forgetfulness."

John Phillip Newell is an internationally acclaimed theologian, spiritual teacher and author of some 15 books on Celtic Spirituality.

Earlier this year my husband and I had the privilege of going on a pilgrimage led by John Phillip on the Isle of Iona, Scotland...
a very holy place where Celtic Christianity was first nurtured.

The pilgrimage was based on his most recent book:
Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul: Celtic wisdom for reawakening to what our souls know and healing the world.

John Phillip's premise, rooted in ancient Celtic Christianity, is:
at the very core of our being, we have a "knowing"...
not necessarily taught and may be even at odds with what society or religion has tried to teach us:
The belief is that deep within, we *hold* an awareness of the sacred essence of all life.

Our grandson Jackson, my special sweetheart, has Autism:
a neuro-diverse syndrome, (as you may know).
It causes Jackson to have difficulty engaging with the world - "our world".

Jackson is non-verbal but...he has learned to communicate by spelling through a method called RPM. In fact, he has become a great speller!
I was with him recently in one of his spelling trainings.
His instructor read him the Emily Dickenson poem, "*I am Nobody*".
She asked Jackson what he thought, *was he a nobody?*
And Jackson spelled, "I am an amazing creation because God made me!"

We hold an awareness deep within...

John Phillip's message is a plea for us to re-awaken to the sacredness of the earth and the sacredness at the heart of every human being and every life form.

Re-awakening to this ancient awareness *profoundly* transforms the ways we choose to live, act and relate to one another.
Imagine!

During our pilgrimage we learned from the wisdom teachings of early Celtic prophets who closely followed Jesus' time and teachings(in the early hundreds): Eurogena, Palegius, Brigit of Kildare, and later the voices of MacCloud, John Muir, de Charin & others who *all* professed the sacred essence of all life and saw the sacred as present on earth as it is in heaven.

"The kingdom of heaven is within you..." as Luke 17:21 says.

Sacred is a word not bound by any religion. It is a word of honor and respect.

It seems though, in about the 4th century, conflicts broke out between Mediterranean Christianity and Celtic Christianity around the belief of sacredness of all life.

The wisdom being spoken by Celtic Christian voices was silenced.
The prophets were excommunicated or incarcerated.

You see, it did not serve Roman Imperialism very well to have the earth and our birthright proclaimed as **sacred** when the Roman Empire was exploiting both the people and the earth's resources.

Sound familiar?

Closer to our time, in our own land, the wisdom of indigenous people who honored each other as relatives... and honored the earth and all its creatures, recognizing the earth as source of everything needed to support their lives... this ancient wisdom was dismissed, disregarded or destroyed by our early settler's conquest of the "new world", in favor of progress or selfish economic ventures.

We have lost so much in our pursuit of what we call **freedom** haven't we?
Greed and the quest for power have cost us **dearly** and we are now paying the price!

As we have fallen out of relationship with the earth and one another
we have increasingly engaged in both individualism and consumerism creating an
"illusion of separateness" that is fostering cataclysmic destruction.

We have wandered away from our deepest knowing of connectedness, inter-being and
the sacredness of **ALL**.

Yet, it is never very far from our consciousness.
Look at how we respond to each other in need...
In times of natural or man-made disasters when we are reduced to our most common
denominator...to our common *humanity*...
we **remember** that we are but a part of the human family.

Consider what it would be like if we *were* to re-awaken to what we deeply and
inherently know...
our deepest knowing of the sacredness of all creation.

Let's go back to the **very** beginning...the Creation Story: Genesis 1, as we just heard:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"...
God **SAID**...let there be...light, water, land, vegetation, living creatures...
"And God saw that it was good!"
God saw that it was **GOOD is** perhaps the most important part to remember.

No matter what spin you put on the story of creation, we're *here* in this place because
we hold a belief in common...
that God is the Source of ALL !

In the beginning...
in the origin of all creation, God **loved** all things into being!
and without Him nothing was made.

Whatever is of God, it *stands to reason*...
can be none other than good!
Sacred Earth...sacred creation!

And then God SAID, "Let us make humankind (man) in our image and likeness" ...and
so it was.

"And God saw that it was...**very good!**
Scripture repeatedly affirms the sacredness of every person as a child of God...
adopted sons and daughters, beloved, we are called...
each made in the image and likeness of God!

Sacred soul(s) we are.

It's so easy to forget our own goodness and the goodness of all God's children when we are barraged with messages that suggest otherwise... when we "other" individuals for *any* reason or label according to skin color, sexual orientation or belief systems... when we see diversity as a threat instead of an opportunity.

Our journey toward wholeness
(which I believe is our journey toward holiness)
is about awakening or re-awakening to remember our origin..
it is about *believing* we are made in the image and likeness of God.
But what does that mean?

We can discover what that looks like through the lens of the life of Jesus.
Jesus teaches us the way!

From the second reading, John 1 - 1 & 14:
"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God...
and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."

God spoke himself into existence...
incarnating to show us what it means to live in harmony with all of creation...
what it means to "love one another" through the personhood of His Son, Jesus.

The universe, once created through the Word of God...
is renewed once more through the Word of God made flesh.

Jesus lived honoring the sanctity of all life:
creatures, children, saints and sinners alike.

He loved and healed and embraced and dined with **all**.
Jesus, the WORD of God shows us the way of LOVE.

A Reading from Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul (Pg 39) Pelagious taught:
" it is not so much what you believed **about** Jesus that matters. The important thing is
becoming **like** Jesus, becoming compassionate...
And this compassion is for **all** life...
It is the sacredness of compassion that fuels the holy work of justice.
It is compassion within us and among us that will inspire and sustain the work of
equitably sharing the earth's resources given for the well-being of every people of
every nation, not just for the well-being of some."

That notion clashes with the way of the world...then and now, doesn't it.

Listen again to what ancient wisdom says about sacredness: (Pg 40)

“The sacredness of the human soul: People are not here just to be controlled and used, but should be revered and related to.

The sacredness of nature: We cannot do whatever we wish to the body of the earth, but we are to honor it like our own body.

The sacredness of spiritual practice: Truth is not just dispensed from above by those who are in power, but accessed from the deep within everyone.

The sacredness of wisdom: One nation, or culture, or religion does not have a monopoly on wisdom; it is to be found in all people, all cultures, all religions.

The sacredness of compassion: We are to see and feel and act for others as we see and feel and act for ourselves.”

These were beliefs that not only challenged the *Roman* Empire.
These nuggets of wisdom challenge us NOW!
...perhaps more than ever before!

AND...God is still ***speaking!***

Our depleting planet is speaking to us loud and clear!
Mother Earth is screaming to get our attention!
Can we hear her cries?

Our broken systems are telling us the way we are living is not working or sustainable.
Can we hear the cries for inclusion and healing...
for belonging and sanctuary?

It has been said God has given us two sacred texts to live by.
The Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture.

What is God speaking to us *now* through these two books?

Perhaps it is this:

In the beginning... is NOW!

It's up to US.

In this *very* moment we are being given a chance for a new beginning.
What was once known in the earliest times...is returning to our consciousness NOW.
The tasks seem **so** daunting and we can easily feel powerless and become *disheartened*.

Being dis-heartened however, only serves to disconnect us from our own heart, our own deepest knowing...
and only serves to lull us back to sleep...to forgetting.

The poet, Mary Oliver in her poem *The Summer Day*, asks,

“tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

In place of inaction or soul forgetfulness, we **need** to **re-member** ...
to be mindful of what we **can** do to reclaim the earth as sacred, each soul as sacred.

Re-awakening *profoundly* challenges the way we chose to live doesn't it?

Every action..each step taken (for good or for ill) has an impact.

Every plastic bottle, every act of kindness - it ALL matters.

Everything **is** connected to everything else...

and **we** have the capacity to be a part of the healing.

In the beginning... God spoke everything into existence...and God saw that it was good.

In the beginning... God so loved the world that THE WORD was made flesh in Jesus who dwelt amongst us to show us the way of **LOVE**.

In the beginning... is NOW... and God is still speaking.

Are we listening? ...and... How then shall we live?

Embarking on the sacred journey means a *new way* of living the timeless truth we know deep within our being.

What *new way* is there, for you and for me, to live in harmony honoring our Earth mother?

What *new way* is there, for you and for me, to be in respectful relationship with each other?

The sacred journey is the way of Love...it's countercultural...it's radical...

it's “the power of LOVE...not the love of POWER!” ...

and that my friends is transformative!

I'd like to invite us to ponder for a quiet moment:

What is ***mine*** to do?

to honor the sacredness of the earth? the sacredness of all souls?

to live my journey as a sacred journey?

Think of just one thing you can do and commit to it today! (quiet moment)

together let us live into our answers! May it be so! Amen