

## Let's Have An Epiphany Awakening Now!

Mark 1:4-11      Acts 19: 1-7

Let's Have An Epiphany Awakening Now!

Let's keep living the Epiphany story!

Epiphany is not just one day!

Epiphany is more than a single worship service.

Epiphany is an entire holy season—between Christmas and Lent—

Dedicated to –

Signs and appearances!

Awe and Wonders!

Realizations and Revelations!

Of spreading, inward speeding light

Which may awaken all seeking souls!

Did not Jesus have an awakening when he was baptized by John in the Jordan River?

*“You are my beloved Son. With You I am well pleased.”*

Emerging from beneath the waters—Jesus awakened to who he was!

Jesus realized what his work would be.

This God event!—was Jesus' very own, personal epiphany!

Let's all commit now to our own Epiphany awakening.

Too often....aren't we asleep?

We need to wake up!

Sometimes our minds and hearts are awake and open!

But other times our hearts and minds are closed....sealed off...the door is shut.

When we are tired and focused solely on our own burdens—we are not awake.

When we are too busy being busy—we are not awake.

When I am a captive of my worries....

....when I am a prisoner of my fears....without my own awareness, I have fallen asleep.

When we are self-preoccupied—we are sleeping.

When we are living in the absence of wonder—we are sound asleep.

Waking up does not have to do with our physical condition!

Waking up has to do with our spiritual condition!

When the Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree—which was a fig tree, the kind that often drew Jesus' attention—and after a long time, the Buddha was asked what had come of this experience, he replied. "I am awake."

He was referring to his spiritual condition.....

Are you awake?

Do you want to awaken?

Then you have inner work to do.

“What is that work?” you want to know.

Your work is to climb to a higher consciousness.

Our work as a human race is to ascend to a higher consciousness.

The current catastrophic pandemic and the nightmarish riot and insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, which I will come to later in this message, are teaching us painful lessons about our need to awaken through attaining a higher consciousness.

What, you ask, does a higher consciousness mean?

First, you begin thinking of yourself, not as a physical being having temporary spiritual experiences.

Instead, you begin thinking of yourself as a spiritual being, having a temporary physical experience.

Remind yourself often of that spiritual self identification.

It is the beginning of your Epiphany.

Your own private revelation.

You realize who and what you really are.

And you begin to realize who and what other people really are.

This can be a humbling experience.

And it should be a humbling experience.

Our culture conditions us to live almost completely in the exterior, physical, material world.

Our faith instead calls us to live more fully in the interior, non-physical, spiritual world.

The idea of baptism is that we go under, in the water, to die to our focus on exterior living—and we are reborn to our fundamental spiritual, inner nature.

You awaken to the truth that your soul has always existed

And there will never be a time when you will cease to be.

That is a powerful message for the living of your life every single day.

So wake up! To the joy of being completely alive within the scope of the total physical and spirituality reality of the infinite universe.

Now, when you wake up, you also realize your true relationship with Creation.

You realize that you are not a being living **on** the earth and **in** the universe.

No, you are **of** the earth and you are **of** the universe.

The first light of the billions year old, ever emerging universe moves within you.

The most profound living being that we are personally acquainted with—the Earth itself—is your loving mother.

You are a unique expression of the creative love of Mothering Earth.

In the hierarchy of priorities, our Mothering Earth is of deeper significance than any of us as individuals and even all of us together as a human species.

Right now, because of the danger the earth is in— due to the ways in which we have polluted and harmed it, the earth as a living being is more important than we are as living beings.

We need to take Jesus' teaching, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."

And apply that teaching daily as “Love the Mothering Earth with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

You have an opportunity now to join with others here at Westport Presby to engage in this kind of thinking and work through the Earth Care Team that is in the process of forming.

We are meeting again later this month to formalize our application to be designated an earth care/creation care congregation based on commitments we have already made.

And we will be discussing future initiatives, including messaging in our community and supporting earth friendly policy measures in our city and region.

Recall the Great Awakening thoughts of Iroquois/Haudenosaunee Chief Oren Lyons at the United Nations:

We can still alter our course. It is *NOT* too late.

We still have options.

We need the courage to change our values  
to the regeneration of our families,  
the life that surrounds us.

We must join hands with the rest of Creation  
and speak of Common Sense,

Responsibility, Brotherhood, and PEACE.

We love *I hi do' hah* (I-hee-DOE-hah!)  
our Mother Earth.

Now, I have spoken of the higher consciousness we must awaken to with respect to our own souls, our own spiritual nature, and then also the higher consciousness we need to awaken to with respect to the most profound, gorgeous living being we know, the Planet Earth.

We turn now to the need to awaken to the in-our-face emergency of the current crisis in our nation.

We all need to awaken to a higher consciousness with respect to what WEB Dubois called “The Twentieth Century’s Greatest Problem—the color line.

Now it is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and while some progress has been made, in significant ways this problem has festered and become worse.

But Wednesday’s events at the US Capitol and last summer’s Black Lives Matter protests have startled everyone again to return to the hard work of solving those dimensions of the race problem that are worse.

And the reason they are worse is the same reason that a person who is sick physically or disturbed mentally and isn’t seeking or receiving any treatment, only becomes worse.

We have not awakened to our real need, which is to dismantle white supremacy, and more precisely white male supremacy.

Our core identity is not our race anyway.

Our core identity is our soul which we share with all human beings, and then our core identity is the specific self and personality—what Howard Thurman calls “the me-ness” which each one of us is called to explore and generate and celebrate in the course of our life.

Race—Black, White, Asian, Indigenous North Americans, South and Central Americans—is something to celebrate as a beautiful expression of the human species’ diversity, just as you would celebrate the diverse colors and shapes of flowers.

But we have turned it into a false hierarchy that is used to dominate and exploit.

We need to awaken to Black and Brown beauty and power and love and accomplishment.

And on the other side, we need to dismantle the attitudes and laws and policies and practices which sustain white, male domination.

This domination is catastrophic for the Black and Brown people who are dominated, and it actually doesn’t even do the dominators any good. They aren’t any more free or happy

or healthy, nor do they have any more real power for having their knees on the necks of other people. That is a false freedom.

Freedom isn't doing and acting and speaking in whatever way you want.

Freedom is the inner liberty you forge within yourself and the outward actions you take to realize your common and individual humanity in a way that brings satisfaction and joy into your daily living.

Let's wake up before it's too late!

A hangman's noose was hung at the Capitol.

Confederate flags which celebrate racism, were displayed.

A gallows was erected.

Clearly, a major goal of this insurrection and its larger movement is to disenfranchise Black voters.

And, if they are enabled, they won't stop there.

Shirts were worn, declaring *6 million Jews wasn't enough*

A photo of a rioter carrying zip ties as he roamed through the area that elected leaders had just evacuated.

Five deaths!

One, a brave capitol police officer who sacrificed his life for our elected leaders.

A number of them were verbally threatened with death.

There were audible calls to murder both Nancy Pelosi and Mike Pence.

Isn't that enough of a wake up call for all of us?

One thing is sure: On January 20, inauguration day, Washington D.C. needs to be a national security zone so that no one but invited inauguration participants can even move within a substantial, large, impenetrable section of the city.

This is also sure—Just as the people of God realized that the walls of Jericho needed to come down—

—and they marched and sang and worked until the walls did indeed fall—

—we cannot now be satisfied with a few, scattering cracks and crevices in the white supremacy wall.

The whole entire wall must be dismantled and deposited in the trash bin of history.

Remember, in closing, the lesson of the forest fire.

This is a lesson many of us have learned in our personal lives!

We have learned and are still learning this lesson here at Westport in the 2011 fire.

And we have learned it in calamities in our national life.

Sometimes it takes a painful tragedy—the burning down of our fondest expectations, the ringing of the fire bell in the night amidst our sleeping state— to release within us the fertile seeds and creative energy of new life.

Sometimes it is only the destructive power of a crushing calamity which awakens within us generative power to create a new world that does not now exist, yet needs and wants to come into existence.

Given what has just happened, see yourself as a survivor, see yourself as someone emerging from the fire—

—coming up from beneath the waters—

—hearing a voice from heaven, “With you, I am well pleased.”

Let’s Wake up in this season of Epiphany!

We cannot afford to stay asleep!

You are the light of the world!

Turn on your soul light!

Make your soul light shine in the present darkness! Nothing will put it out!