

## What happened to the Age of Aquarius?

*Easter 4C—April 17, 2016*

*[This transcript was meant for a spoken performance. It is not optimized for a reading experience.]*

*Judeans surrounded Jesus, asking, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Anointed, just say so."*

*[Play "Aquarius" by The Fifth Dimension]*

*Harmony and understanding  
Sympathy and trust abounding  
No more falsehoods or derisions  
Golden living dreams of vision*

It was the seventies—the early 1970s—and the mood, the excitement was that it was a time of great change. The world, my world, your world if you were living in that time, was going to be a place of harmony, understanding, sympathy. Oh, it was the age of hope and great possibilities. It was the age of golden dreams and visions.

We were told that we were on the edge of great leisure and that we wouldn't need to work more than twenty hours a week. We thought that this new age arriving was going to be a time of play and creative expression. It was the ongoing revolution of the machine that would give us access to incredible leisure.

The question you need to think about is... How's that working out for you?

How many of you are enjoying your leisure time? How many of you are working no more than 20 hours a week?

Now don't get me wrong, we have experienced great changes. By the '70s, North America experienced at a political level that the rights of minorities emerged. There was a growing consensus that any and all human forms desired dignity.

The seventies became a decade of independence and autonomy. You would have heard and maybe you even said, "I want to be free."

The seventies gave way to the eighties and then the '90s. What developed was a technological society. The machine was put on a pedestal. Some sociologists label what emerged as a narcissistic society.

If you were born after the '70s, you most likely experienced strong pressure of successful parents who wanted you, their children, to be like them. We know now that your parents, my generation had immense privilege, power and wealth. We walked the planet like we were gods. As a child of a god you were not to make mistakes. Children of God do not screw up. That generation grew up with the illusion of being, on the one hand, exceptional and, on the other, they were bluffing.

If you were born between 1970 and onward, think about this and ask yourself if it is true:

*You are of a generation that grew up in a period of great migratory movements. Many of you moved from one place to another, from one city to another, from one country to another. In so doing, many people were unable to rely on the intergenerational tradition for support and a sense of rootedness.*

—Spangnuolo Lobb, 2011

What has happened in the most recent decades is that traditions have been lost. At one point, everyone knew how to grow food. Everyone here was, at some point in their family tree, deeply connected to the earth, to the dirt. They lived on and grew food off the land. For some of you that is way, way back. Closer to the seventies, city families often had backyard gardens and grew food. Neighbours would share their bounties with one another.

Those traditions have slipped away. How many of your children know how to grow food or are even interested in digging in the dirt and in working and caring with the soil?

Most communities used to have town squares. They had places to physically gather and connect. Town squares have disappeared and have been replaced by virtual squares of social networks ... the Internet.

Surfing the Net is exciting. Back in the '70s we had no real understanding of the impact that a computer would have on individual lives. Most of us had no concept of what a computer was, let alone that we would carry one in our pocket.

Once again do you remember the dawning of the Age of Aquarius? How has it worked out for you, for one another?

We never got the leisure time. We never got the 20-hour work week. What we got was that, instead of slowing down, we are more and more being held hostage by a speed demon. Time has become equated with money and more money with speed.

*We are losing or we have lost a sense of sweet wonderful leisure and the graceful rhythms of personal time.*

—Sam Keen

Only you can answer this. Have you become addicted to a speedy and demanding lifestyle? Do you have enough downtime? Do you have enough time when you can disconnect from gadgets and doodads and be fully present with the moment that you are in and the people in your life?

When we can slow down and unplug we have the possibility of experiencing something new, something different, something ancient, something familiar that we might have forgotten.

This coming Friday is Earth Day 2016. In our hurry up, give me now, give me more and then some more, lifestyle we have not only disconnected from one another, we have disconnected from our planet. That disconnection has dire consequences.

How can I say this with a sharper impact? You and I are on a trajectory of annihilating our own species. You do not have to worry about North Korea or Iraq detonating a nuclear attack. The longer you, the longer we, the longer our children remain disconnected from the natural rhythms of the earth, the closer we move towards annihilation.

The longer you, the longer we remain disconnected from the earth, the further we move from life.

The further you, the further we move from life, the more we become detached, disassociated and disengaged from the sacred.

Last week, I talked about the intimacy of the story of Peter and Jesus. Jesus asks, “Do you love me?” Peter says, “Yes.” Jesus replied, “Feed, take care of my sheep.” Jesus was commissioning the other to be Christ-like, to be Christ. To be Christ is to be in relationship with all that is because all that is, is sacred.

You have heard me talk about interconnectedness. I am connected to you because we are the same species. You are connected to the garden that is just on the other side of that wall because you too come from the earth.

Today’s gospel says,

*So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered, “I have told you, and you do not believe. The works, the actions, the activity that I do in God’s name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.*

You are disconnected.

I love what the writers of John explore. *'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.'*

*If you are, tell us.*

*If you have the answer, give it to us.*

*Hurry up, time is wasting.*

*Give me.*

*I want.*

*Now.*

Jesus answers, 'I have told you, and you do not believe.'

*I have told you.*

*I have shown you.*

*I have let you experience.*

That late first-century community that we call the Johannine community had no inkling of where the movement of Christ followers would go.

Two hundred years after today's gospel came the Council of Nicaea. All questioning was silenced. All questioning was silenced. Through political will, the emperor seized control and demanded a unified movement.

There was no more questioning. Action was swift and complete. If you did not confess that you believed in what the council had decreed, you were dealt with. If you could not say, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty' you would be removed. If the Creed that Constantine demanded was not your yardstick of the sacred, you were annihilated, killed off, dead.

The sacred was institutionalized. The Holy was institutionalized. God was institutionalized. God was contained and, in that containment, God was disconnected from the natural rhythm and from Earth.

Go back to the first chapter of the gospel of John. The writer begins with a beautiful poetic mysterious image: *'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'*

In the beginning was the word. There is our hope. There is where you and I can possibly make a start. There is where you and I can step off the path, step out of this trajectory that we have been travelling.

Stop. Stop. Stop from going where you are headed and begin again. Where do you begin? Listen to the sacred text. In the beginning was the word. In the beginning is the sacred.

What we were so certain of in the '70s didn't happen. You know it didn't happen.

I am inviting you to hear the gospel with fresh ears. If your life is not the life you want to be living, then stop. Stop for just a short period of time and prepare yourself to meet or even rediscover the sacred, the logos, the word, the divine, G-d.

You want to heal this planet. Work on healing yourself.

The American philosopher Sam Keen says<sup>1</sup>,

*Go into the desert, free yourself from the din, wrestle with your devils and come to know your better angels.*

*Wrestle with your devils ... that which scares you and make you feel less then and uncertain of.*

*Come to know your better angels ... that which sustains, supports and challenges you to grow, to grow in relationship.*

*Look squarely at your values and those of your family and your society. Ask yourself these hard questions:*

*Are you motivated more by a quest for profit, power, prestige and possession?*

Are you motivated by profit, power prestige and possession? Or are you motivated by a desire to be kind, to be compassionate and to be service to others?

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<sup>1</sup> Keen, Sam (2010-03-03). In the Absence of God: Dwelling in the Presence of the Sacred (p. 38). Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

If we have the courage to dwell on such questions, they will serve to encourage us or lead us to despair of our condition. They are hard questions. When we can have a heart conversation with ourselves and one another, we will embark on a renewed quest for God that is interconnected and in relationship with all that is.

We are running out of time; the Earth is speaking. The Earth is acting and showing her trauma. If we stop, listen and respond, we have the potential to heal our relationship with ourselves, with one another, and to heal our planet.

Let the hope of years gone by echo again where

*Harmony and understanding  
Sympathy and trust abounding  
No more falsehoods or derisions  
Golden living dreams of visions  
Mystic crystal revelations  
And the mind's true liberation*

Step forward and hear the ancient words "The One who sent me, and I, are one." We are one. Sit with this during the week because this is good news indeed.