**EcoFaith Institute, 2017**

**Reflection on Power**

**(following Practice #1: Accessing Spiritual Power through**

**the “Our Biosphere, Ourselves” Meditation)**

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I want to lose with a few thoughts about power. We don’t talk about power much, which is, I think, part of our problem. These Practices for Awakening Leadership are all about the right use of power. And they are necessary because of the destruction and imbalance wrought by the organized and systemic *wrong* use of power — using power-over others for one’s own gain. The Practices, on the contrary, are about accessing Spiritual Power, which, when used rightly, looks like power-within and power-among, not power-over.

As humans, and especially as humans in developed countries, we CAN’T OT participate in destructive powers every day. How do we participate in destructive powers every day? (responses) Can we eliminate destructive power or temptation to wield power over others? No.

But, it’s also true that indigenous peoples all over the world over literally thousands of years developed cultures that minimized and balanced the destructive forces within them so that those powers of destruction were kept in check and would not escalate into the kind of catastrophic destruction we are experiencing today.

Did you know that THIS indigenous wisdom is at the center of our own scriptures and faith tradition? Where? (responses)

SABBATH — one of the top ten commandments, to rest and let the rest of creation rest too! And what reason do the scriptures give for why practicing Sabbath is so important? Sabbath is part of the very rhythms of creation as expressed in the creation story of Genesis 1, AND we are to practice Sabbath because when our ancestors were slaves in Egypt they were FORBIDDEN to practice Sabbath. It is a sign, a memory, a cautionary reminder about enslavement to and liberation from destructive empires!

And there is also then THE GREAT SABBATH – YEAR OF JUBILEE in Leviticus 25. At the Jubilee year, any economic imbalances that were created over the course of 49 years were put back into balance. People who had to sell their land or their labor as indentured servants would go free and get their land back. Surprise, surprise, Leviticus 25 doesn’t get much play in American Christianity because it undoes every American myth there is about unlimited accumulation of wealth and prosperity! Jubilee is heresy to American Christianity!

But despite how American Christianity marginalizes restoring economic and social balance, JUBILEE WAS RIGHT AT THE CENTER of JESUS’ MINISTRY: In Luke 4, right when Jesus returns from his forty days in the wilderness, he goes straight to the temple and proclaims what? From Isaiah 61:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, [can we say Practice #1: “I have accessed the POWER of God and that power is now in me]    
    because the Lord has anointed me  
    to proclaim good news to the poor.  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
    to proclaim freedom for the captives  
    and release from darkness for the prisoners,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2061#fen-NIV-18845a)]  
**2**to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

Do you know what the Year of the Lord’s Favor is? The year of Jubilee! The year of economic redistribution to keep destructive and oppressive powers in check. Not eliminate them. Not destroy them. Keep them in check. In balance. In their place so that all creatures might live in safety, in Shalom.

Does anyone remember what part Jesus left off? He stopped quoting Isaiah right in the middle of a couplet in verse 2 of chapter 61. Do you remember what the next line of verse 2 says? It’s supposed to say, “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God.”

But Jesus doesn’t proclaim the day of vengeance of our God. He stops at the year of Jubilee. Because the right use of God’s power of love is not for vengeance. The right use of God’s power of love is to restore balance, to create a culture in which … basking in our connections through time and space, or being blown away by the miracle of a grape’s umbilical cord of a stem … is not limited to a Saturday morning on a retreat far away from home, it’s just what we do because we see the sacredness of all life and know that we — all of us — are part of God’s evolving creation, and that we — all of us — can access the Power of God’s love for our collective call of creating a world of Shalom. This is the right use of power.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us today, my friends. We’ve been breathing it in this whole time. What we do with that power is up to us. The Practices for Awakening Leadership can help us claim this spiritual power by teaching us the right use of power. May we find our collective courage to use it.