

Blue Spirituality: Connecting to God the Transformer
Acts 2:1-13, Galatians 5:16-25

Friends, on the first day of College or University – you might expect to feel excited, probably a bit nervous, and maybe somewhat anxious as you start a new phase of your life.

And for most students the first day is usually spent getting yourself oriented to the campus, finding classes, tracking down textbooks, meeting new people, moving into your residence, meeting your roommate... googling your room mate to make sure they are not psychotic...

But how's this for a first day of college experience...

How about going into the cafeteria with a friend to get something to eat, looking around for a place to sit, finding a space next to some guys from your friend's high school, sitting down next to one of these guys, saying grace for the food, and then hearing a loud voice say

“this is the man you are going to marry!”

My mother was a wee bit shaken up by this... and slightly embarrassed! But as she looked around it became apparent that no one else heard this voice. Everyone was eating and interacting normally, including my dad...

My mom didn't say anything about this, because she had been getting teased that she was only going to Dordt College to get her M-r-s degree, and sharing with your new dorm mates that you are hearing voices on your first day of college doesn't exactly help you fit in with them. You know it's that whole psychotic room-mate thing.

But, as you can tell by my standing here and telling you this story – my mom eventually did end up dating and then marrying my dad, and when my Mom talks about it now she says...

“During our three year long distance courtship there were times when I thought about ending our relationship but each time that happened God gave me the “loud voice memory” front and center and I knew then that that the voice was from the Holy Spirit. We are now married 43 years and I am

thankful for the Holy Spirit's guidance to a strong willed young lady."

An amazing story about how the Holy Spirit sometimes takes front and center stage in someone's life – and I for one am personally grateful that He did, otherwise I would not be here.

And I know there are many other people who are grateful for the Holy Spirit's direct involvement in pairing up my mother and father because of how complemented each other in ministry and the way that specifically touched people's lives and because of the kind of church experience that generated for them.

And I would describe that ministry and that church experience as "real."

Doing ministry and going to church wasn't just communicating information from the bible, it wasn't just about attending a service on Sunday where you pray, stand - sing a hymn, sit - listen to the sermon, stand – sing another hymn, sit - get dismissed and then have coffee afterwards... stuff happened!

People who were suffering the effects of abuse, broken families, divorce, and a host of other personal issues found their church to be a place where they could be honest about their struggles in life and be accepted and find healing... in the worship service.

Non-Christians were becoming believers in Jesus Christ, Christians who had plateaued in their faith experienced renewal and excitement and passion about worshipping Christ and growing in their relationship with him...in the service.

Church and Faith wasn't just stuff you knew about Jesus and God and habitual Sunday attendance – it was real. Spiritual things happened...

Not so much because of any particular ministry techniques my parents used, but because they were open to, and expected the direct, front and center work of the Holy Spirit.

And friends that's what Blue Spirituality is all about – expecting the direct, front and center work of the Holy Spirit in your day to day life and in your church.

Two weeks ago we learned about the background role which the Holy Spirit plays as life giving Spirit, when its God Almighty is front and center in the Trinity - Green Spirituality.

Last week we discovered the behind the scenes role that Holy Spirit undertakes to convict us of our sin and highlight the ultimate saving work of Jesus Christ – when Christ is front and center in the Trinity - Red Spirituality

But this week – it’s the Holy Spirit’s turn to shine and take front and center in the Trinity, and I don’t believe that it’s a coincidence that this series worked out the way it did so that we’re learning about Blue Spirituality on Pentecost Sunday – it’s the Holy Spirit at work.

What an amazing turn of events we see on Pentecost as the Holy Spirit is poured out – a violent wind fills the house... they see what looks like flames that separate and come to rest on each of them... and suddenly they are all able to speak different languages... the direct, front and center work of the Holy Spirit – God the transformer.

You see friends, the Holy Spirit takes center stage now because God as Creator, Green Spirituality - so loved the creation that He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ – God as Savior, Red Spirituality, - so that whoever believes in him will not perish but have *eternal life*...

Eternal life is not about quantity – life with no end, it’s about quality – the kind of life that has no reason to end, a life that has overcome the consequence of sin – death.

You see once Jesus had completed his work of dying for the forgiveness of our sins, he returned to God the Father’s presence and sent the Holy Spirit to take center stage in the next part of the Triune God’s plan... Transformation – where the Holy Spirit is front and center!

You see friends – God as Trinity, three-in-one is not something which we need to try and grasp conceptually... “*How can God be one and yet three distinct persons???*”

It’s something we need to experience relationally.

We need to know God in all three of His persons and their work. Otherwise we don't truly know God, we don't have the full picture of God.

We need to know God as Creator – but we can't limit ourselves to that, we need to know God as our Savior in Jesus as well – but we can't stop there either.

We need to experience Blue Spirituality; we need to experience the direct, front and center work of the Holy Spirit transforming us.

If we only experience Green and Red Spirituality we will inevitably become exclusive, legalistic, traditionalists... just like the Pharisees of Jesus' day.

They knew God as creator, they had Genesis... they knew God as Savior, God had delivered Israel from Egypt... but look at how the Pharisees ended up – exclusive, legalistic, traditionalists who ended up fighting against the God they claimed to know.

Friends we don't want to repeat their mistake! We need Blue Spirituality, without it our experience of God is not Triune – it's not complete.

So we are warned in the scriptures “*Do not put out the Spirit's Fire*” (1 Thess 5:19)

Because friends whenever the Holy Spirit takes front and center stage and starts His work of transformation there is always resistance, right? Even on Pentecost – verse 13 says “*however, some made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine”*”

Why friends – because deep down we want center stage, and in Green Spirituality, and Red Spirituality it's still possible to experience God and still feel like we're the center of attention.

God made this Creation for us to enjoy! Christ saved us from our sins!

But Blue Spirituality is where the Holy Spirit shows up in our midst, does unexpected things, doesn't always follow the laws of nature, changes direction on us, interrupts our plans,

Blue Spirituality is where the Holy Spirit does things in our lives because it's about **Him**, about what **He** wants for **His** church for **His** people... *"this is the man you will marry."*

And friends, Blue Spirituality is perhaps the hardest kind of spirituality for us to be passionate about – because we're so conditioned by our consumer society that life is all about us and our wants – the customer is always right...

But that hesitancy only lasts until you've witnessed the Holy Spirit transforming people according to His plans and experienced it yourself. Once you've experienced it there's no going back – you're passionate about it and you want others to experience it!

You're no longer satisfied with Church just being a place to attend a service and help out every once in a while, and

worship services are the time where you expect the Holy Spirit to do stuff,

If the same people are doing the same thing a year from now and nothing has changed in their lives – something is wrong!
The Spirit's Fire has been put out!

And so our question ought to be: How do we reignite that fire?
How do we fan the embers back into flame? How do we put the passion back into passionate spirituality?

While the Holy Spirit may have started the fire, we have a responsibility to tend it and keep it going.

This is why the Apostle Paul says *"I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God... (2 Tim 1:6)*

Fan into flame the gift of God friends.

You know I think it's all about expectations. Consider the contrast between who God is and what we expect...

We worship a God who created the entire universe by speaking it into existence, he gave us the breath of life, he continues to uphold our existence at this very moment.

We worship a God who spoke from a burning bush, parted the Red Sea, sent Manna from heaven, caused the walls of Jericho to fall down, sent fire from heaven to burn up Elijah's offering on Mt. Carmel, who stopped the sun for a day to give Israel more daylight to defeat their enemies...

We worship a God who became human in Jesus Christ, who healed people from disease, comforted them, fed 4000 men plus woman and children – twice! Cast out demons, restored people to their right mind, calmed storms, told them their sins were forgiven and then went all the way to cross and the grave to paid the price of forgiveness.

We worship a God who has poured out His Spirit of Power on His people...

Contrast that with what our actions show that we expect from a Sunday morning.

We expect to be able to attend, to arrive sometime around 10am or quarter past ten, get our bulletin, sit down, sing, pray, listen to a sermon and hope to be done in an hour and fifteen minutes and if we don't have plans for next week Sunday – we'll come again.

I know, it's not a very flattering analysis of our expectations but it's true...

One of the questions on the NCD survey was "I can easily explain why I come to the worship service" and most people answered "hardly" In other words there are lots of people who don't really know why they are here on a Sunday morning!

It's about expectations friends – and right now our expectations are rather low...

We need to raise our expectations of what we expect the Holy Spirit to do when we gather together here!

When the Holy Spirit was first poured out on the disciples and the Church was born there were miracles, healings, speaking in

tongues, people repented of sin and accepted Christ... do we expect any of that on a Sunday?

Why not? – Let's go for broke, order the whole enchilada!
Remember who it is that we Worship!

Let's do it - Even if it pushes us out of our comfort zone because remember... without it we don't have the full Triune experience of God.

And friend most of all we should expect to hear the Holy Spirit speak to us. Audibly!

Because immediately after the scripture tells us not to put out the Spirit fire, it warns us "*Do not treat prophecy with contempt*"

You see we can put out the Spirit's fire by ignoring, minimizing, or absenting ourselves from the voice of the Spirit as He speaks to us through the message on a Sunday morning – you see friends, prophecy is preaching – and we should treat it expectantly, not casually.

That's why I say we should expect to hear the Holy Spirit speak to us audibly.

What do you hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to you in the message? Is He leading you into a new and deeper understanding of the truth, Is He challenging you about some sin, Is He encouraging you or comforting you in a time of trial?

Friends, it was back in my university days when I heard the Spirit speak to me during a sermon. It was at a service held in an old run-down theatre in downtown Hamilton and the preacher was speaking about the crippled man who had lain beside the healing pool of Bethesda for years and couldn't get in to get healed.

Jesus came by and asked him if he wanted to be healed – and the man just offered excuses about how he couldn't get into the pool not realizing with Jesus right in front of him he didn't need his excuses anymore – he could be healed...

Then the preacher started talking about how people offer excuses for why they can't get past their self destructive behaviors like alcoholism and drug abuse...

I remember thinking "well I don't have any problems with those", but no sooner had that thought entered my brain, than I heard the Spirit say ...and emotional bondage...

Now if you had known me in my high school and early university years you would have discovered that— *in spite of knowing Christ as my savior and being convinced that everyone needed his forgiveness* – I carried around a great deal of hurt and anger from being teased and bullied in school that prevented me from having healthy relationships and close friendships.

But in that message, the Spirit was telling me the time had come to for Him to get rid of that hurt and anger and the emotional bondage.

My heart started pounding, I got nervous and shaky because I knew that in order for the Spirit to do His work I was going to

have to go down to the front for prayer time, share what the Spirit was doing in me and that was not in my comfort zone.

But the Holy Spirit was telling me it was time to deal with this – so I went down. Not only to the front, but on to the floor – and I laid there for probably a good 30 minutes, crying, having the prayer team praying over me, while the Holy Spirit did his work in my heart getting rid of all that anger and hurt.

And the result of the Spirit's front and center work was that I experienced transformation in my relationships with others.

Friends, do not put out the Spirit's Fire and do not treat prophecy with contempt – otherwise we miss out on experiencing the transformation the Spirit wants to work in us...

And the other part of raising our expectations is to carve out some time in our services where we wait - expectantly – for the Holy Spirit to act.

Imagine if I had heard that Spirit speaking at that church, but once the message was done – that was it, we sang a song and went home- when would I have experienced the Spirit working in me, how would I have been able to respond to it?

We can show our expectation by making room and time for the Holy Spirit to do the ministry that needs doing in our hearts - in our services.

So friends, this morning as we wrap up this series about connecting to God in these different ways, why don't we take some time, right now to be expectant.

So please, lets bow our heads, close our eyes, clear our heads from distractions and wait expectantly.

Let's pray... Holy Spirit we are here, we are waiting – expecting – we ask you to come upon us.

Friends, this morning maybe you heard the Spirit speak to you – that you need to experience more of His transforming power working in you, maybe just to get to know the Spirit intimately

for the first time, maybe there's an issue that He wants to deal with...

Friends, as a response to the Spirit's work – I invite you to simply stand up where you are and hold your out hands as a gesture that you want to receive what the Spirit wants to do in you this morning.

Spirit we praise you and thank you for the work you are doing in us – help us to fan the flames.

In Christ's name we pray – Amen.