

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

Brothers and sisters, 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 that you are hearing voices your new dorm mates 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 over 50 years and I am thankful for the Holy Spirit's guidance to a strong willed young lady."

This is 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 they complemented each other in ministry and the way that specifically touched people's lives and because of the kind of church experience it 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 addiction, 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 worshiping 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 Brothers and sisters as we mark Pentecost this Sunday and celebrate how Jesus' ascension allowed him to make good on His promise to send the Holy Spirit – we do so in order to become more open and expectant of the direct, front and center work of the Holy Spirit in our day to day life and in our church.

And as some of you may know – at Valleyview, we call our experience of the revelation and work of the Holy Spirit in this direct and up front and center way “Blue Spirituality.”

We find this to be a helpful way to summarize all that is involved in how the Triune God reveals himself in this way, and also how we can distinguish it from how the Triune God reveals himself in other ways.

And this is an important part of actually knowing who God really is, or rather whom He has revealed himself to be...

And the witness of the scriptures is that God has revealed himself to be Three-in-one and One-in-three.

In fact for as much as I've said that the story of the scripture is about how God moves things along from one covenant administration to the next – you can also see that scripture is the story of how God reveals himself as three in one, and highlights the different roles and work that each person of the trinity has.

In beginning God reveals himself as the Creator - the Spirit and the Word both play a role in the creation – but the focus is on God revealed as Creator.

And what God reveals about himself through the creation revelation we call Green spiritually.

But when Adam and Eve failed the test of the Covenant of Creation, God then determined He would reveal himself as a

saving God – and that revelation came to its ultimate expression in the Word becoming flesh – Jesus Christ.

And in God's saving revelation – God as Father and the Holy Spirit play a part – but the focus is on Jesus Christ.

And what God reveals about Himself in salvation revelation we call Red Spirituality.

But now that Christ's work is finished, and He has ascended to heaven – now it's the Holy Spirit's turn to shine and take front and center in the Trinity.

Yes, God the Father, and Christ the Son both play a role in sending the Spirit and the Spirit points back to them... but in the story of the scripture we are now in the age of the Holy Spirit.

Now is the time where the front and center work of the Holy Spirit is featured as all that has been accomplished in Christ, and the assured hope of the new heavens and earth are being

made a reality in our lives, as a deposit, a foretaste of what will come.

So, at Pentecost – the story of the Triune God shifts from featuring God's saving revelation to God's transforming revelation as Jesus makes good on His promise and sends the Holy Spirit.

And what an amazing turn of events we see as the Holy Spirit is poured out – a violent wind fills the house... the disciples 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...

This is the shift of the Holy Spirit moving from being in the background to becoming the direct, front and center revelation and work of the Triune God – God the transformer.

The Holy Spirit takes center stage in God's redemptive plan because it's the next necessary step...

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*...

And 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.

But the only way that we can have that kind of life Brothers and sisters is if we are transformed from our current state, where as the scriptures reveal to us that we are “*dead in our sins and transgressions.*” (Eph 2:1)

So transformation where the Holy Spirit is front and center is the essential next part of the plan – the essential next part of experiencing how God wants us to know him.

Because Brothers and sisters, God as Trinity – as 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 the One 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.

Brothers and sisters 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 Brothers and sisters 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 Brothers and sisters – 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 Brothers and sisters, 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, we are always right...

But that hesitancy doesn't last once 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)* We must fan into flame the gift of God Brothers and sisters.

And I think this has a lot to do with our 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, and 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!

He cast out demons, restored people to their right mind, calmed storms, and told them their sins were forgiven and then went all the way to cross and the grave to pay 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 to happen on a Sunday morning...

We expect to be able to attend, to arrive sometime around 10am or quarter past ten... get our bulletin our coffee find our favorite seat, do some singing, pray, listen to a sermon and hope to be done in an hour and fifteen minutes and if we like what we experienced, or we're not busy the following weekend – we'll come again next Sunday...

Brothers and sisters, the truth is that it's pretty easy for us to slip into mediocre expectations in our worship and in our Christian lives...

And this morning as we celebrate the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit it's a reminder to us, a wake-up call that we need to

raise our expectations of what we expect the Holy Spirit to do when He has gathered us together in worship!

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?

Not because we are chasing the spectacular – but because of what it means in the reality of people's lives being transformed!

So let's do it – let's expect the Holy Spirit to work His transformation in us - 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 Brothers and sisters, as we expect the Holy Spirit to transform us; we should definitely expect to hear Him speak to us - audibly!

Because immediately after the scripture tells us not to put out the Spirit's fire, it warns us "*Do not treat prophecy with contempt*" (1 Thess 5:20)

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 Brothers and sisters, 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?

Brothers and sisters, 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. It was time for transformation!

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.

Brothers and sisters, 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 Brothers and sisters, this morning as we celebrate the out pouring of the Holy Spirit and His transforming work in our lives why don't we take some time, right now to be expectant!

So please, let's 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.

Brothers and sisters, 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...

Brothers and sisters, 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.