

Green Spirituality: Connecting to God the Creator
Gen 1:1, 1 Colossians 1:15-17, Psalm 19:1-4

On the corner of Pike Place and Pike Street, in the city of Seattle there is a tourist attraction which draws approximately 10,000 visitors per day, and no it's not the site of the first Starbucks, believe it or not this tourist attraction is a fish market, the World Famous Pike Place Fish Market.

What in the world would make thousands of people each day want to visit a Fish Market?

Well people are drawn to the passion and enthusiasm which characterize the people who work there.

They don't just take your order and hand you your fish – the employees at Pike Place Fish Market sing your order back to you while they work, they throw your fish around, they juggle with your fish, and do all sorts of crazy interactive antics with you as you shop there.

Why, because they are passionate about what they are doing and they let it show through in these fun and crazy ways – and

it draws people. It sounds amazing and I certainly would want to visit them if I ever end up going to Seattle.

It wasn't always this way though, back in 1986 the fish market was on the brink of bankruptcy – but it was this infusion of passion which turned things around and made it a viable, world famous tourist destination.

Now this made me think... if it's possible for people to be passionate about something as mundane as selling fish – it's got to be possible for people to become passionate about having an experience of God!

Because that's what **passionate spirituality is about – experiencing God in your day to day life.**

Now you would think that having a connection with the all powerful deity who has always existed and knows everything and created you would generate some pretty exciting, intense, amazing experiences right?

And you would think that we would be enthusiastic about that and want to talk about it with others? Right?

But more often than not when we gather together we're not talking about what we've experienced God doing in our lives instead we're engaging in polite conversation about how busy we are, what our week-end plans might be, the weather, etc...

Friend - could it be that our relationship with God has plateaued? Gone stale? No longer excites us as it once did, if it ever did – and worse yet that we've become accustomed to that and comfortable with this?

Perhaps our relationship with God is on the brink of being stuck in a rut – it can feel like shopping for fish would be more interesting or exciting than what we are experiencing God doing in our lives.

Friends the good news is that there are so many ways to become passionate and excited about our relationship with God.

The goal of this series is to help us discover those ways and challenge us to go deeper into them.

And if we are seeking a deeper spiritual experience of God or if we feel as though our spiritual growth has plateaued, or when we find it difficult to become excited and passionate about experiencing God... or if we're just not experiencing God...

Perhaps it's due, in part, to the fact that **we don't have the full picture of who God really is?**

It's like when you hook up a computer monitor to a computer, or when you connect a projector to a video source – it's usually a component type input that delivers the video signal, and if you don't have all of the components hooked up – you don't get the full picture or you end up with a distorted picture...

It works the same way with our experience of God. If we don't know God in the fullness of who He is – as the Triune God, we can end up with a distorted picture of God and we don't receive the full experience of Himself that He wants us to have.

And the fullness of God in Trinity means experiencing Him as Creator, Savior and Transformer

So friends, Green Spirituality is not about taking care of the environment – instead it's about **experiencing God in and through the creation.**

We heard Psalm 19 describe to us that the creation communicates to us about God. It says that the heavens declare, the skies proclaim, they pour forth speech, they reveal knowledge, and their voice goes out into all the earth...

And in the New Testament the apostle Paul says that "*God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made*" (Romans 1:20)

So what this means friends is that the creation that we live in and interact with everyday is producing massive amounts of communication about God.

In other words every minute of every day we are bombarded by opportunities to experience God through all that He has made.

Friends this gives us the chance to get to know God in all sorts of new and exciting ways! Let's just talk about that for a moment.

So when the Bible talks about God as the Creator the majority of its references are about how He made and rules over the natural world – oceans, mountains, rivers, animals, plants, the sun and moon and stars

So for starters you can **experience God by simply appreciating** the beauty, the majesty, the intricacy and power of that natural world.

Spending time hiking or going skiing in the mountains, being out on the golf course, camping beside a lake, or working in your garden can allow you to **marvel at God's world, and to enjoy it and give you the opportunity to thank him for it.**

I like how the Tragically Hip explained this in one of their songs *“I had my hands in the river, my feet back up on the banks, Looked up to the lord above and said, Hey, man, thanks! Sometimes I feel so good I got to scream, she said Gordie baby I know exactly what you mean”*

Ever felt like that? Maybe you didn’t know it, but that is part of experiencing God.

I don’t know of a better way to grasp God’s love and care and fondness for me than to feel the warm sunlight soaking into me on a quiet morning in my kitchen. You can tell me how much God loves me – and I need to hear that, but I feel it when I’m sitting in my kitchen basking in a sunbeam.

And that’s not just wishful thinking on my part, or using nature in a metaphorical sense to explain a spiritual reality – the bible teaches us that God is present in the through His Creation – it is encountering God.

Now this is a good starting point as we develop our Green Spirituality – but we can go further, we need to go further if we are to experience God as Trinity.

We can’t limit our knowledge of God to one of three – it must be three in one.

So **Green Spirituality can’t stand on its own** – it needs Red Spirituality and Blue Spirituality as well.

Friends, limiting our understanding of God to only what we can experience in the creation produces false religions and false beliefs, which do not have a full experience of God.

This is because God’s presence, His immanence in creation - is overemphasized and confused with God’s person and some part of the creation is worshiped instead – the belief system behind Yoga is a good example of this, and much of Liberal Christianity has makes this mistake as well, that’s why they will say all roads lead to God.

Or, God is overemphasized as the Ruler over Creation and our relationship with Him becomes all about obeying his rules and laws – Islam for example, the very name means submission.

But having a Trinitarian experience of God means that we learn to recognize the work of the other two persons of God in Creation as well.

Of course in order to do this we must be familiar with them in their main roles – we must experience God as Savior – Jesus Christ who forgives our sin, and God as Transformer - the Holy Spirit who gives a new life.

Then Creation becomes a source of truth and knowledge about God for us in a way similar to the Scriptures – it also reveals the Word of God

We commonly understand that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and the scriptures reveal that Creation can also reveal the Word of God because it was created by the Word and the Word currently continues to hold it all together.

1 Colossians 1:15 “*For in him all things were created*” and vs. 16 “*in him all things hold together.*” That’s deep!

So when we engage in the study of the creation in disciplines like physics, biology, philosophy, math, music, photography etc... we will experience the Word of God. (*Sorry teens, but doing your homework and learning in your studies is experiencing God.*)

2 + 2 = 4, Pi is always 3.14, Force = mass x acceleration, DNA is DNA, all creational truth is God’s truth in this way because the Word of God is upholding the creation in an orderly fashion - allowing us to discover and delight in how the creation works and then work with it – as God intended for us to do by making us in His image.

And friends **the Spirit of God was involved in Creation too.**

Gen 1:1 says the Spirit was hovering over the waters at the beginning – A depiction of the Spirit as an artist musing over His material, contemplating what He will create as a work of art.

And when God instructed Moses to create space and items for worshipping Him, the scriptures make specific mention that Bezalel, the artist chosen for the task of making the Ark of the Covenant and the other furnishings for the Tabernacle was filled and skilled by the Spirit to create. (Exodus 31:2)

This is the same Spirit which Jesus also said “*will guide us into all truth*” (John 16:13)

So Friends we can experience the Spirit of God do what Jesus said by speaking to us in through the creation, and especially as He works through people who are being creative with the creation and reflecting that His role of muse, artist and creator.

We can experience God by engaging with Art – poetry, music, painting, sculpture, dance, writing, theatre, movies, photography etc...

A colleague of mine, Rev. Lonnie Atkinson who is a Presbyterian minister in Ontario once shared with me that the Spirit moved him and spoke to him as he said the lines “*if there be any other way, take this cup from me – yet not my will*

but yours be done” when He was playing the role of Jesus in a production of Jesus Christ Superstar as a young man.

It was this experience of God, through the arts that resulted in Lonnie becoming a believer in Jesus Christ and following Him into the ministry.

And I have also personally experienced the Spirit speaking to me through movies – the most memorable occurrence was while I was in the theatre watching the final installment of Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King.

There’s a point in the movie when the Elrond confronts Aragorn, the Heir of the Throne of Gondor, and tells him to stop running away from his destiny to become the King – “put away the Ranger, and become who you were meant to be!” He says as He hands him the symbol of his Kingship – the sword of his Ancestors.

In those words I heard the Holy Spirit telling me that it was time to leave behind my own personal ministry efforts and embrace my calling to become a leader with-in the Church as

an ordained minister which I had been rather reluctant to do up to that point.

And that's partly why I am where I am this morning, here – preaching at Valleyview as an ordained minister – because I experienced the Spirit of God speaking through the creation.

And I want you to know that you can experience God in creation in all these ways as well and I want to encourage you to go out and give a try – and see what you experience this week.

Well Friends – this morning God wants us to get down to business and deal with our passionate spirituality that much is clear.

And it's also clear that without a Triune experience of God – you won't have the full range of experiences that generate the kind of passion which draws people in and spreads to others.

And I don't know if there is some issue that perhaps is holding you back from embracing God as fully as you could as Creator – as Ruler, Word, and Life giving Spirit but God does.

So let go to him prayer so that we can respond to what God wants to work in our hearts and minds and in our spirits this morning. Let's Pray.