

**Red Spirituality: Connecting to God as Savior**  
**Matt 3:13-17, Luke 7:36-48**

It was a dark and stormy night and the car cautiously made its way down the highway, its occupants peering out through the driving rain as the wipers struggled to clear it from the windshield.

It was nine in evening and it had been a long day and this rain had made an already tiring drive into an exhausting one. They had planned on stopping and spending the night at the first motel they came across in Minot, North Dakota, but the spring flooding in the area had displaced so many people that there were simply no more rooms available.

There was no choice but to continue to drive on and hope the next hotel had room.

So they drove until they saw the neon lights of another motel flickering in the midst of the downpour; perhaps they might find a room there? Hope flickered like the neon sign in the rain.

The sign said “no vacancy” but they pulled in anyways, hoping that somehow the sign might be wrong.

She stayed in the car while her husband went in to ask

“Jesus” she prayed “Please let them have a room for us, we’re so tired and we can’t keep driving, we need to rest”

About ten minutes later her husband emerged from the office. “I think we’re in” he exclaimed.

“What do you mean you THINK we’re in?” Lois Wallace inquired hesitantly. “I don’t know, just come on” Kent insisted.

To Lois’ amazement and relief the desk clerk was waiting for them with a key in hand when they entered the foyer.

She found out later that the desk clerk had attempted to help them find them a room by phoning all the other motels in the area, but there were no vacancies anywhere.

But just as the clerk hung up after his last call, a man just came up to the desk and said “You can have my room. I have to leave early in the morning and I can sleep anywhere- here take my key!”

*“He wouldn’t take any reimbursement for the room, and we didn’t see him again after that – he just sort of disappeared. He must have been an angel!”*

That’s what Lois said when she first shared this story with me. *“And angel sent by God to help us out. Just like something out of the bible.”*

And friends that’s an amazing story of how God answered a prayer for help, and the bible is full of stories like this as well - stories about how God intervened in a miraculous way to help people, to save people...

Sending an angel to the apostle Peter to free him from jail, protecting Daniel from the lions, keeping Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo from burning up in the fiery furnace...

Giving Samson superhuman strength to bring down the temple of the oppressive Philistines, parting the waters of the Red Sea to allow the people of Israel to escape from the Egyptian army....

And I’ve heard these kinds of stories from other people as well, about how they’ve experienced God in this way, helping them, rescuing them, saving them - in a time of need.

Because our life is full of pressures and challenges and demands... especially at this time of year when we are transitioning back into our regular routines and looking to reconnect with church and God after the summer break.

As soon as Labor Day is over it seems like we’re suddenly bombarded by all the items on our to-do list and our schedule is already full...

We’re under pressure at work, we’re looking for work, we’re dodging insults and ducking criticisms thrown at us by others, we’re nagged by issues that won’t go away...

Or we might be threatened by a terminal illness or a relationship breakdown or a financial disaster...

There are many pressures and challenges and demands...

And these things can build up to a certain point where we just can't cope on our own anymore and so we turn to God and cry out – HELP! Please Help!

And we are getting back into our fall routine, friends it's time to reconnect with the triune God as our savior, to refresh ourselves on what Red Spirituality is all about.

It's time to how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit step in and give us the strength to endure when we didn't think we could endure any longer, resolve issues that we didn't think could be resolved...

Provide for us when we didn't know where the resources were going to come from... making a hotel room available when there weren't any...

Friends **our God is a God who saves...** Amen?

But brothers and sisters, why is it that we are so readily willing to receive saving help from God, but we are so reluctant to be the ambassadors of this good news to others?

If we have experienced God as Savior in some way in our own lives, **what prevents** us from being more passionate in our response to these experiences and sharing these experiences?

Well, there may be any number of reasons you might list but let's take a closer look at our scripture passages and experience the Holy Spirit using the Word of God to reveal those obstructions to us.

So – a quick question for you to consider, in the reading from Luke 7, did you relate more to the discomfort of the Pharisee felt when he saw the woman anoint Jesus feet, cry and dry his feet with her hair?

Or could you relate more to the passion this woman needed to express because God she had experienced being saved?

If we're honest it's probably relating to the awkwardness that was experience by those witnessing this lavish and emotional display in response to being saved.

And what this tells us brothers and sisters is we are prevented from responding passionately, enthusiastically, evangelistically when we experience God as Savior is that we don't truly understand or experience the depth of the "Why?"

So, **Why** does God step into our lives and help us out?

Maybe we think *"Because that's just what God does? It's kind of His job. He's like our divine life guard who's supposed to come to our rescue when we've gotten in over our heads?"*

Or maybe we think that God should be a good god – and when he helps us and saves us it's the proof that He is good.

Or maybe it's because we're good people, and we think that God doesn't mind occasionally stepping in to help those who help themselves or better yet who have helped others...

But brothers and sisters, this is not why God helps us...,

You see the bible reveals to us that God helps us in order to initiate a relationship with us, so that He can show us the root of all our problems, and in addressing the root of all our problems reveal himself to us as a Three-in-one God, a triune God who saves.

So what does that mean?

It means that experiencing God's saving help in our day to day lives in little or big ways opens us up to experiencing God as Father, God as Son and God as the Holy Spirit – all working together to save us from the root problem of SIN.

And we see this unity of purpose when Jesus was baptized in Matt 3.

Jesus the Messiah comes to receive John's baptism of repentance, then the Holy Spirit is sent upon him to empower him, and the Father blesses him and confirms him. Trinity.

Now a baptism of repentance implies that something is wrong – of course this confused John the Baptist because He couldn't comprehend that Jesus, the Messiah would have done anything that was wrong.

But friends - Jesus isn't repenting for himself here – Jesus is repenting on our behalf, on behalf of the things we've done wrong – for our self-interest riddled repentance.

Think about all the times we need God's help because it's the consequence of something that we've done wrong... stretching the truth, gossip, acting out of anger... or just because we got caught.

Or think about all the times we need to ask for God's help because of the consequences of something someone else has

done wrong; drunk driving, second-hand smoke, corruption in government and business, stealing a child's innocence.

Brothers and sisters, experiencing consequences from the actions of other people can be traced back all the way to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And as a result life is hard, work can be meaningless, childbearing is painful, our purposes frustrated, there is sickness, disease, suffering, and death in our world today - because of Sin – Adam and Eve's and ours, and everyone else's.

And the fact that we often find ourselves in situations where we cry out to God for help, is because of the curse our world is under from Sin, and this prepares us to understand and be able to see the truth revealed in the bible...

That what is fundamentally wrong with this world is a result of Sin and that we can not overcome it with our own abilities.

We need God's help for that – as we do in so many things...

We need to experience God's saving work... not only in helping us find a job, or keeping us safe from potential disaster, or helping you figure out what to do when you find yourself stranded in Uruguay with an expired passport... but ultimately in saving us from Sin!

Our sin...everyone else's sin... Adam and Eve's Sin... and not only because we need deliverance from the immediate consequences of sin – the pain, the suffering, the shame, the guilt...

But also because Sin means spiritual death – Eph 2:1 says “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...” and if this condition is not remedied friends... listen to the warning in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 “He [Jesus] will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They

*will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord...”*

Whatever misery we experience in life now, which makes us cry out to God for help – that's just a foretaste of the Hell that Sin ultimately leads to for each person...

So consider the words we heard Jesus speak this morning in light of what our ultimate destiny could be if it were not for the God who saves: “I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” (Luke 7:47)

Brothers and sisters is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about our reluctance to share the good news of salvation in Christ because we don't fully realize how much Sin has affected us??

And we don't fully appreciate and comprehend that we been saved from ***an eternity apart from God in Hell?***

Those who understand what they have received and what is at stake are not hesitant at all to share the good news friends.

However, if you are wrestling to come to that place of greater and deeper appreciation and understanding of what you have been given – especially if you experienced that salvation a loooong time ago and its dulled and lost its edge since then.

Contemplating God as a Triune God who saves, and especially paying closer attention to the work of the Father and the Holy Spirit in saving can help us come to a new and deeper perhaps more significant appreciation of our salvation from Sin and death and hell.

When circumstances and situations occur in life where we find ourselves praying to Jesus to help us, to come and save us – then remember these two verses about God the Father...

*1) Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? (Heb 12:7)*

*2) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

Whatever you are experiencing friends, know that in it and through it the Father is working and wants to help you come to a deeper understanding of how sin affects us and a greater experience of being saved.

And remember these verses about God the Holy Spirit also...

*3) When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin (John 16:8)*

*4) He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. (John 16:14)*

In other words we can count on the Holy Spirit to work in a mysterious way in our hearts and minds to bring to light the way in which sin is affecting you, and help us to experience a new and deeper experience of the way in which Christ's death

and resurrection forgive your sin and free you from it and bring you to new life.

And the result will be an experience like the woman in the scripture passage experienced – we'll be overwhelmed at the love Christ shows us in forgiving our many sins – and our gratitude and thankfulness we feel from being saved from an eternity apart from our Creator will grow and grow until we can no longer hold it in and we have to respond to it, express it and share it with others!

And if I sound passionate about salvation and evangelism; a.k.a Red Spirituality this morning friends – I am.

In part because of how I've experienced exactly what I've been speaking about when it was discovered my passport was expired and I was not allowed to get on the plane to fly back home from my trip to Uruguay.

My first thought was *"in all things God works for the good of those who love him"* and as I waited over the next week to see

how God the Father would work through that experience the Holy Spirit convicted me that my sinfulness had made me lose the sense of urgency of needing to tell people they need to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

So many people are so certain that they have nothing to be worried about when they eventually stand before God; they believe He will judge them and accept them on their own efforts at being good - because He's an understanding God.

Just like I was so certain that my passport was valid, after all I made it all the way through Calgary check in, past US customs, past Uruguayan customs, and I had even glanced at it myself prior to the trip... I was certain that everything was ok.

Brothers and sisters... so many people go through their whole life with this false sense of security, and nothing ever causes them to wonder if their collection of good deeds and good intentions will be sufficient to see them through the final judgement and into an eternity with God in the new heavens and the new earth.

And I was shocked... to discover that my passport was actually expired – and it was a bit distressing – but it wasn't the end of the world, I had options.

But if you are standing before God with your life behind you - only to find out that your good efforts and intentions are actually invalid and expired - and that you needed Christ's forgiveness in order to spend an eternity with God – well friends - that is the end of the end.

Shocked doesn't even begin to describe what someone will be feeling at that point and time...

I believe the Jesus uses the phrase *"there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matt 13:42)

Friends God the Father and the Holy Spirit worked in my experience of being stranded with an expired passport to drive home the horrible reality that people will face if they stand before God without Jesus' forgiveness and Jesus' good works.

And when I reflect on this experience it re-ignites the important of urging people to acknowledge their sin and turn to Jesus and put their faith and trust in Him – and assure them that in Jesus they can be confident of standing before God and being refined, not destroyed, in the final judgement!

Now brothers and sisters, It's not my practice to ask people to come forward to accept Jesus at the end of every service – but every once in a while as a minister I need to challenge you to check your passport.

Make sure that you are putting your faith and trust in Jesus' death and resurrection and His forgiveness which delivers us from Sin – and not in your own efforts to please God through being a nice person...

And friends, I'm not a hell-fire and brimstone preacher by any stretch – but every once in a while we need to be reminded of what awaits all those people we interact with in our day to day life – as we transition back in our normal fall routine – if they are outside of Christ.

They need to know the Triune God who saves – the Father,  
the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ.

And if we know and have experienced God as Savior, then  
brothers and sisters it's time to let people know that God is a  
God who saves through Jesus Christ.

That's good news! Amen.