

### **Red Spirituality: Connecting to God as Savior**

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. “An 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 that’s what Red Spirituality is all about... experiencing God in your day to day life as Savior and passionately expressing the gratitude which flows out of that experience.

And I’ve heard countless stories from other people 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...

We’re bombarded by all the items on our to-do list with an already busy schedule, we’re under pressure at work, we’re dodging insults and ducking criticisms thrown at us by others, we’re nagged by issues that won’t go away,

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

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 experience God stepping in and giving us the strength to endure when we didn't think we could endure any longer, resolving issues that we didn't think could be resolved,

Providing 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?

And if we have had our own experiences of that, what is it that prevents us from being more passionate in our response to these experiences?

Quick question – in the scripture passage that we read this morning, could you relate more to the discomfort of the Pharisee and disciples when they 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 generated in witnessing this lavish and emotional display of passionate spirituality.

And friends our NCD Survey results reveal that indeed we're only average in this area – but I ask you how is it possible to be “averagely passionate?” That's an oxymoron!

You see friends one of the things that prevents us from being more passionate about experiencing God as Savior is that we don't truly understand the “Why?” We've not fully experiencing the “Why?”

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

Because that's what God does? He's like our divine life guard who jumps in to rescue us when we've gotten ourselves in over our heads?

Because we think God should be a good god – and when he helps us out its proof that He is...

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

Friends, that's 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 give us a full of Himself as Savior – So we can experience God as Trinity, three in one.

So what does that mean?

It means that experiencing God's 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 – the Messiah comes and receives John's baptism of repentance, the Holy Spirit is sent upon him to empower him, and the Father blesses him and confirms him.

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 Jesus isn't repenting for himself here – Jesus is repenting on our behalf, on behalf of the things we've done wrong – for us...

So friends – 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...

And think about all the times we ask for God's help because of the consequences of something someone else has done wrong.

Drunk driving, second-hand smoke, stealing people's investments....

And 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.

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.

The fact that we often find ourselves in situations where we cry out to God for help, is because of sin, and its meant to prepare us to understand the truth revealed in the bible....that its Sin that is fundamentally wrong with this world, and that we can not over come 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 guilt, the shame, the suffering...

But also because Sin ultimately leads to spiritual death and that means an eternal separation from God – Hell.

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...

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.”

I think we’re “averagely passionate” about experiencing Jesus’ salvation and forgiveness because we don’t fully realize how much Sin has affected us... and we don’t fully appreciate that we been saved from *an eternity in Hell!*

So I have some strange good news for you this morning

We can gain a fuller experience of the Triune God as Savior and increase our passion in Red Spirituality by contemplating the background roles which the Father and the Spirit play in our salvation from Sin.

When circumstances and situations occur in life where we find ourselves praying to Jesus for help us, to come and save us – 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 God 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 the Holy Spirit as well...

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 the Holy Spirit will work in a mysterious way in your heart and in your mind to bring to light the way in which sin is affecting you and then He will help you to experience the way in which Christ’s death and resurrection forgive your sin and free you from it.

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 express it passionately and enthusiastically!

And if I sound passionate about Red Spirituality this morning friends its 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.

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 loose 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 the eventually stand before God; they believe He will judge them and accept them based on their own merits.

Just like I was so certain that my passport was valid, after all I made it all the 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.

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 get them into an eternity with God.

Now I was shocked I was 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 when you stand before God 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 world!

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

I believe the bible uses the phrase "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"

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 through it I have rediscovered the passion I once had for 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 this experience has

Friends last week we learned how we can experience God as our Creator in and through the creation – that this will open up

all sorts of new ways to become passionate about our spirituality and experiences of God.

But Green Spirituality can't stand on its own – you need Red Spirituality also – you need to experience the saving work of Jesus Christ forgiving you for your sin...

Friends I'm not one to ask people to come forward to accept Jesus – 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...

Friends our God is a God who saves – may you experience God fully in this way and may you respond passionately to our Savior! Amen.

Let's pray.