

Reflection

2 Samuel 1: 1, 17-27

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Title: Deep Spirituality

Prayer: Holy Spirit, Holy One, guide us as we listen and learn and pray and change. Help us hear what you want us to hear; help us connect to you, and then to each other. Amen.

David is full of lament in this passage. His King and his soul-connected-comrade have died in battle. A brutal battle in which death was slow and respect for the dead was not honoured. Saul, and his three sons who had fought by his side, were all dead.

Scripture says, when David found out he tore his clothes and mourned and wept and fasted ... for Saul, for Jonathan, and for the army of the Lord and for the house of Israel. (2 Samuel 1: 11-12)

Even though David had been anointed by Samuel years ago he chose to respect Saul's reign as king and as God's anointed. Even when Saul turned on him and wanted to murder him, and David had more than one chance to kill him, David didn't. He honoured the relationship dynamic, no matter how complex.

Earlier in the Book of Samuel we are introduced to Jonathan – one of Saul's sons. David has just killed Goliath which was a huge battle victory. Scripture says "when David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." (1 Samuel 18: 1)

That is a tight bond. Soul mates one might say – a Thelma and Louise of their time perhaps. However we choose to interpret the relationship between David and Jonathan one thing is clear – these two were bonded, they were comrades in arms, they loved each other.

So, David's lament is real and it is deep.

He is crying out to God, weeping over what can't be undone. He is sharing the despair for his loss and the ache in his heart. He's offering his pain to God.

And, we do that too. When we've lost a loved one, lost a job, made a bad choice, alienated someone or been shut out. When we've felt utter despair about world events whether wild fires that will forever change the natural landscape or unreliable leaders who will forever change the political landscape.

We lament.

And what for?

God can't change what's already been done.

But, we lament anyway. In our desperation we give it to God.

Somewhere tucked deep in our heart we trust that we can have hope in this offering.

While speaking with friends about this idea of Deep Spirituality, one of the definitions of Spirituality they shared was being open to Spirit at the extremes of life – when we are in our deepest grief and just can't get off the floor or turn on the light; or when we are at our highest joy when we feel every morsel of air pass through our nostrils and we just can't believe we are actually alive and in this moment – at these extremes we are our most vulnerable, and we seem to be the most open to the Spirit.

Okay, so I used the word Spirit. We're moving into the pillar of Deep Spirituality. This has the potential of getting confusing, so let's see if we can't ground ourselves a bit...

We have a few different words: Spirit, Spirits, Spiritual and Spirituality.

The pillar for the United Church is Deep Spirituality.

But what is spirituality without spirit? And, do we have spirituality or do we practice spirituality?

Is spirituality static? Or is it affected by our spiritual growth?

And, is it only when we're practicing spirituality that we are spiritual?

See what I mean? Confusing.

When doing my deep dive into the word Spirituality, one of the places I looked was my Bible Concordance. The words “spirit” and “spirits” can be found in both the Old and New Testaments; but Spiritual and Spiritually are only found in the New Testament; and the word “spirituality” doesn’t appear in the bible at all.

But: the practice of Spirituality does.

We learn about the gifts of the Spirit in Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. (*Galatians 5: 22-23*)

In 1st Peter we are asked to use the gift of the Spirit we’ve received generously.

In Romans 12 we learn of many members of the body each with different gifts.

Again in Galatians we learn a spiritual person is someone who has heard the gospel, believed it, and received the promised Spirit by faith (Gal. 3:14)

In Colossians Paul prays that we be filled with Spiritual Understanding.

Articles have been written about biblical spirituality being a process of divine restoration, the relationship between God and humans, and for Christians Spirituality would be discipleship.

If the essence of the word is in the bible, but the word itself is not, where does the word come from?

The root word of spirituality comes from the Latin word *spiritualitas* which comes from the noun *spiritus* which means “the breath of life” or “breath” or “spirit.”

Apparently, the word became associated with things pertaining to the church in the late 14th century – something having a spiritual tendency, or something immaterial (of angels).

In Romans eight (9) Paul talks about how we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in us.

Kind of like that popular phrase – we are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

In 1st Corinthians (2:11-13a) Paul says “For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world,

but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit.”

Maybe you have already thought about this, but all this digging finally made me put two and two together. Aha, Spirituality is about Spirit. The Spirit. The one and only Holy Spirit is The Spirit.

Spirituality is the Holy Spirit at work in us.

All of a sudden everything makes sense ...

- The Dove descending at Jesus' baptism ... God's spirit empowering Jesus.
- The empty tomb ... God's spirit raising Jesus
- The upper room ... Jesus appears and breathes on them / they receive the H.S.
- The day of Pentecost ... when tongues of fire rested on them all and they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

When we sing “the spirit in me greets the spirit in you, hallelujah” – are we really thinking about – feeling – The HOLY SPIRIT inside us greeting The HOLY SPIRIT inside someone else?

We are the descendants of that lineage from the dove to the tongues of flame. It's that big. We're not talking about a cover band. We're talking about THE HOLY SPIRIT ... we're talking about THE Spirit of God.

Is this old news for you all? Have you always thought about it this way? Like has it always been THIS BIG for you?

Maybe part of why it seems so mind blowing to me is because so much of what we read about spirituality today is framed in a vague language of mystery. It's about loving self and others; caring about the planet; knowing we are all One; feeling connected; having purpose.

Don't get me wrong these are all excellent pursuits, but they leave me wanting more. And maybe that's the Christian in me.

I like the real presence of the Holy Spirit in my life, my thoughts, my prayers, my actions. Not a vague Holy Spirit 'out there somewhere.'

The deepest part of me will connect with the deepest part of you because it's the capital S Spirit in me connecting to the capital S Spirit in you. It has nothing to do with my fleshly frame, it has to do with God. It's not me, Julie, working hard to be at One. It's the Holy Spirit already at one and me working hard to get out of the way.

Somehow looking at spirituality this way helps me understand how as a church we can practice Deep Spirituality. This is a life-long commitment and will take our attention every minute of the day.

When David laments the death of Saul and Jonathan he is reaching out to God. He is not making a list of all the times Saul did him wrong. He is vulnerable in the hands of God. And it is in this place of love where we see there is no room for resentment or complaining. There is only Spirit – the Holy Spirit – part of the Trinity – so God ... working with and through David.

Spirit is eternal, the human frame is temporary.

But, sadly, it seems to be human nature to be intensely attached to our human frame, our human identity. This is who we are because it's what we know.

One part of Deep Spirituality might be doing the work to uncover or discover or recover the Spirit that abides within our human frame. And, the more we re-discover the Spirit, the more we can let go of the human frame and all its trappings.

I wonder if that's why it takes the extremes of grief and the extremes of joy for us to feel vulnerable enough to get out of our own way so we can be held or used or challenged or comforted or moved by the Spirit.

Imagine if we were able to loosen our grip on our human flesh identity enough to walk around led by the "Spirit?" Might that possibly mean ... just maybe ... that the kingdom of God could be here on earth? Now?

What if that is the Deep Spirituality this first pillar of the United Church's vision is talking about?

The at-oneness of the Holy Spirit. God with us – with us. In us. Through us.

The SPIRIT in me greets the SPIRIT in you... because we have gotten out of the way.

Amen.