

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA

The Very Rev. Fr. Arthur W. Ward, Jr. + Dean

Scripture: 1 Cor. 2:10-3:4

"The Spirit Filled Life" (part 1)

THREE TYPES OF PEOPLE

Did you know that the Bible refers to three types of people in our world? Every man, woman, and child is one of the three. See if you can find them in the Apostle Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (2:10-3:2): ***2:10"For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.***

14But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16For **WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM?** But we have the mind of Christ. 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 4For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

Did you find the three types? There is the natural man, the spiritual man, or the carnal man ("man of the flesh"). Everyone at any given time is one of those three – natural, spiritual, or carnal. And my hope on this Pentecost Sunday is for us to be able to know what we are in order to make sure we are what we should be in Christ. The truth is you can never really become what you want to be until you first understand what you already are!

A few weeks ago I went to the Boulevard Mall. It's been a long time since I was in a mall and I needed to locate a store. Rather than walk all over the place, I looked first for the mall map. Before I could find the store, I needed to find where I already was. And so I looked for the little red arrow that says "You are here." Well that was a big help. At least I knew where I was so I could find out where I needed to go! You can't get to where you need to be until you first find out where you are. And that is true when it comes to our relationship with the Spirit of God. So, let's see how we can find out where we are on God's spiritual map.

THE NATURAL MAN

Paul first mentions the *natural man*. Simply put, the natural man is the person who does what comes naturally. Look again at verse fourteen. ***"14But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."***

So who is the natural man? He is the one who is born into the natural world. That means every man, woman, and child is first a natural man. We all have to be born once. We are born of the flesh. But the natural man has not been born again. He has not experienced the second birth. He is just simply a man as he is by nature. Nature has not only formed him but he has been corrupted by his very nature. The Bible calls that sin – the self-oriented and self-directed life. We are born selfish by nature. You don't have to teach a child to be selfish; you have to teach him to be selfless. It doesn't matter what a man is or does; left to his human nature he will always do what comes naturally!

You see, the natural man is blind to the spiritual world. There is no real sense or appreciation for spiritual things. Look again in v.14. ***But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.*** In other words the things of God are not welcome in a natural man's heart. This doesn't mean that he doesn't have some appreciation of superficial spiritual things. A natural man will be impressed with big church buildings and budgets, good preaching and music, and the nice things that a church does, but He does not appreciate the call or conviction of God. He does not hear what others are hearing. He does not sense what others are sensing. There is no real spiritual appreciation or apprehension. Why? Look in verse ***they are foolishness to him.*** He can't know them. I don't care how smart he is; he won't be able to figure them out. Do you remember what Jesus said in **John 8:47?** ***He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.***

The reason the natural man has no spiritual apprehension is because he does not have the apparatus to tune in! Right here in this room there's music and messages and movies available, but unless you have the right gadget or receiver, you can't tune them in. And that is the problem. The natural man can't tune in to the true things of God because he is just natural. He does not have the Spirit of God in his heart! He does not accept the things of God and they don't make sense to him because they are spiritually discerned. He simply has no capacity for fellowship with God and therefore his motto is get all you can when you can, for you only go through once in life, and so grab all the gusto you can get. And that's what he is living for - gusto, natural satisfaction; in other words, he lives a good dog's life.

I've got a dog – her name is Daisy. Do you know what my dog is satisfied with? Food (something to eat), a warm place to sleep, some affection, and every now and then achievement, take a walk and even better catch a rabbit! And that's it. She's just comfortable if she gets something to eat, a nice warm place to sleep, somebody to pet her and then a sense of achievement, Take that walk or catch that rabbit. And the truth is a dog doesn't really mind dying, because she never thinks of it because she really doesn't know what living is. She just lives a dog's life and that my friends, is the life of a natural man. He is just living for the same things that an animal lives for: self-gratification, self-propagation, and self-preservation. He has no appreciation for, or comprehension of, spiritual things.

THE SPIRITUAL MAN

Now how are we set free from such a life that is perishing? We must be born again. We must become a spiritual man – to live supernaturally! That's the second man. He does what comes supernaturally. Look again at verse 15 – ***But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.*** In other words, the spiritual man is on another plane. He is living supernaturally. How?

First of all, he lives by the spirit. ***12*** ***Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,*** The spiritual man is the person

who has received the Spirit of God. He has been born again, born from above. He has been indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That's why Christianity is not simply a creed, or a code, or a cause. It's not even a specific church! It is Christ in you. We have received the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. He now lives in us and abides with us, forever. In other words it is a new life, a divine permanent relationship.

But not only does the spiritual man live by the Spirit of God, he also learns from the Spirit of God. Notice beginning in verse twelve and following. ***13which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words....15But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.***

The spiritual man knows things that cannot be simply taught in school. There is nothing wrong with education, but you do not come to God head first; you come to God heart first. Jesus said unless you become like a child you can't enter the kingdom of God. In **Mt. 11:25**, He prayed, ***"I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants."***

The spiritual man learns from the spirit. The natural man with all of his education, with all of his earthly wisdom, and with all of his philosophical degrees can never figure out God. Can a man simply by reasoning find out God? No way! It is why Paul says, ***"For to us God revealed them through the Spirit."*** So since they are spiritually discerned, we must first learn from the Spirit of God.

Of course, this does not mean that we sit around and do nothing or just learn on our own without the help of others or apart from the Church. Spirituality does not necessarily mean maturity. We can be spiritual and still be babes in Christ; but if we remain spiritual, we will eventually mature! You may be instantly spiritual but you are not instantly mature. Look now in **Hebrews 5:12-16**: ***Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. 14But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.***

In other words, unless you spend time in the Word of God and put into practice what God is showing you, you will not grow in the faith! You will become carnal! We will see how when we look at the third type of person.

But before we do, there is something else that is also true of the spiritual man. Not only does he live by the Spirit of God and learn from the Spirit of God, but he is liberated by the Spirit of God. ***15But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.***

What does that mean? He now is free to make proper judgment. To appraise means to discern. It's really a legal term. It's like a lawyer who takes the evidence, and then after examining the evidence he makes certain judgments. Jesus said in **Jn. 8:32**, ***"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free!"***

Why is the Christian free? He is now a citizen of two worlds but for the first time he can see things spiritually, and that means clearly! For the first time he can see things in their proper perspective - Who God is and what God requires. Who we were and what we can become in Christ. But he is appraised by no one. In other words, no natural man has the authority to judge him! It doesn't mean people won't criticize or judge him. They will! In fact, they will criticize him because he himself is understood by no natural man. You see, the unsaved world cannot understand what makes a Christian tick. They cannot understand what makes a Christian operate. They can't understand what motivates a Christian. But we now, as believers in Christ, we can make a proper judgment of things. We have passed from judgment and condemnation to freedom and life. We can understand right and wrong, and we now have the power to do what is right! We now can see things through the love of Christ and the working of His Holy Spirit!

THE CARNAL MAN

But that doesn't mean we won't still do battle with our old natures. Who is the carnal man? He does what comes unnaturally. This is the believer who has the Spirit of God but who is not walking by the Spirit of God. He is supposed to be living supernaturally but is actually living by the flesh! Paul is addressing the believers in Corinth and look at what he says, "***And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 4For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?"***"

This, frankly, is the greatest problem in the Church – it is comprised by mostly carnal Christians, Christians who are not really living for Christ. Sad to say but the average Christian is the carnal Christian. They aren't living supernaturally; they are living naturally according to the flesh – their human nature. And that is really an abnormality. The normal Christian should be the spirit-filled man!

Paul highlights three marks of the carnal Christian. First, they are immature spiritually. They haven't taken the time to grow up in the faith. Look again at what Paul is saying. "***2I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3for you are still fleshly.***"

And that's what happens (like we saw in the Hebrews 5 passage above). People have attended church for years but they haven't grown in the Lord. They haven't surrendered themselves to the will of the Lord. It's alright to be a baby if you're a baby. We don't expect much out of these who first come to Christ. But they have to grow into maturity. I mean, if my big 22 year old son comes to me and says "Dada!" I'd swat him!

The truth is that a carnal Christian is one who is immature for his or her years, and therefore dependent on others for basic spiritual knowledge and wisdom. Paul said I have fed you with milk. There are three classes of growth. First, you have to be fed; second you need to feed yourself, and third, you're able to feed others. But Paul is saying he still has to feed them! He can't give them a beef steak; they still need mama's milk!

A second mark of a carnal Christian is that they are critical, divisive, and cliquy. Notice verses three and four. ***3for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 4For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?"***

Pentecost Sunday, May 20, 2018, Liturgical Year "B"

In Corinth, the carnal believers were breaking up into groups following Paul, Apollos, or Peter! The truth is a true Christian does not gather around any preacher; he gathers around Jesus Christ and he puts his eyes upon Jesus Christ!

But if we focus on the minors or get critical of others because of something we don't like about them that is not concerning their character, or we don't like something in the church or something in the worship and let that become a distraction in our relationship with God or others, then we have a carnal problem! Little children get fussy over little things. You'd be surprised what will get some folks upset. Strife, envy, division - when that comes - it is because people have not focused their attention upon Jesus Christ; they are still carnal!

Do you want to test whether you're carnal or spiritual? What comes out of you when you are stressed or pressured? What spills out of you when you are poked or pushed? Don't simply look at your actions but look at what are your reactions to others and the unpleasant circumstances in your life? Whatever spills out of you is what you're full of! You can plan your actions, but it is your reaction that tells whether you're natural, carnal or spiritual. In fact, I don't believe there's ever been a church fuss that hasn't been led by Mr. and Mrs. Carnal!

The third mark is, are you in fact following and keeping Jesus above all else? The reason we left the Episcopal Church some ten years ago is because that church was not keeping Jesus Christ and His Word front and center in all that they said and did. How do you tell whether or not someone is spiritual? What do they say about Jesus and how closely do they follow His Word and example.

So what are you? Are you a natural man, never been born again? Or are you a spiritual man – living and learning by the Spirit, and free to serve God? Or are you carnal? Spiritually immature, critical, reactionary, and looking to someone or something else, other than Christ? Which are you?

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!