

Today is the festival of breath – of wind – of spirit – of fire - of new birth and it comes at a time in our lives when the wind blows ill, when we are threatened by a spirit of violence and breath is an unexpectedly priceless commodity.

Pentecost is a festival shared with our Jewish brothers and sisters, and our plea for the breath of God and the spirit of life are shared with a nation which has marked the deaths of 100,000 of our friends and neighbors, the destruction of a beautiful and bountiful creation and the death of one more black man whose life ended with the words “I can’t breathe”.

All that our God began creating when the wind moved across the water and the breath of God uttered “Let there be light” seems to be unraveling before our very eyes. The gift of life given to all humankind who were ‘made in the image of God’ - has been unmasked to be a gift to be honored only in **some**, in the **privileged**, in the folk with the lightest skin and best English.

The gift of sea and sky, and plant and animal which were given to humans to guard and protect has been disregarded in exchange for profit for the few. The gift of breath – the Divine breath which turns earth creatures into living souls has been stolen from those unfortunate enough to end up with covid in a poor hospital, and those born black in America.

Perhaps, like me, you are having trouble breathing yourself. Perhaps you are exhausted from coping with a world turned upside down, with a future which feels both unknown and frightening; a virus which lurks unseen. Perhaps you cannot breathe with news of yet again another death of a black citizen at the

hands of a white police force – the casual, indifferent kneeling on the neck of a handcuffed prisoner until **breath** was no more. Perhaps, finally, you cannot breathe either.

From creation to covid to George Floyd, the Spirit of the Living God has been turned away – pushed away – disregarded – ignored – refused entry – not by someone else, but by US

and the result is **fear** not peace, **death** not life, **division** not community.

The hopeful story of that first Christian Pentecost when tongues of fire appeared and everyone was speaking in strange languages – where the powerful Spirit moved among strangers and made them into the body of the living Christ – seems more fanciful today than the story of a blind man receiving his sight. The tongues of fire bring a different message today.

We are people who have sought re-birth in the Spirit, we have rebuked the powers of death and the devil; we have renounced those things which turn us away from the God of creation and life; we have renounced those who would lead us into the darkness and away from the light of the living Jesus.

In our baptism we are made one with all who call on the name of our Lord, and sought the salvation promised by Jesus.

We have been marked by the cross and sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit and called into new life in the crucified and risen Jesus.

We are those people. **And this is our calling.**

Remember these words from the book of James? “If you say you have no sin you deceive yourself and the truth is not in you? For years these are the words that led us into confession each week – a time when we admitted that **too often** we have been complicit, **too often** we acted without regard for the neighbor, **too often** we became a part of the darkness instead of the light, **too often** we have convinced ourselves that none of this is about me..... FAR TOO OFTEN we have turned away from God – pushing away the Holy Spirit’s breath of life – and, **too often we didn’t even try to do it any different.**

So the Spirit comes again to us just as it came with Jesus through the locked door of the upper room on that first Easter evening. The Spirit comes to us – up close and personal – offering to us again the power of the breath of life – the power of the empty tomb over the cross – the power to bring us into the light - **the power and the strength to confront our fears and to confess our broken ways.**

Today is often called the birth of the Church – a birth brought about through a pouring out of the holy Spirit on that crowd gathered in Jerusalem – just as our baptismal birth was marked by the pouring of the water of life. **You are alive in Christ, *sharing that life with all the beloved ones who a part of the body of Christ, and*** all of creation. As Paul writes “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

IS IT NOT TIME? Is it not time for us to **take seriously** our Lord's command to love and PROTECT our neighbors – most especially those who are oppressed by the powers of this world? Is it not time to get uncomfortable, to feel our own sin, to pick up our cross and make our way with Jesus

and THEN standing before the Pontius PilateS of our day insist that

Every. Single. Life. Matters. because every single breath is a gift from God?

Today as the Spirit of the Living God blows into millions of gathering places – moving among us – AND WITHIN US

Today as we are touched again by the power of God's forgiveness in Jesus which gives us new life –

let us breathe deeply from that Spirit of life

and resolve to do all we can to ensure that our neighbors can breathe as well.