

Pentecost

Reflection for Pentecost

Sometimes I think we do the Holy Spirit an injustice. All this talk of Doves and Comforters suggests gentleness, even cosiness. But there is nothing cosy about the Spirit in our readings today. In Acts 2, we hear how a rushing, mighty wind fills the house where the disciples are gathered, despite the fact that doors and windows are closed. A mighty wind and tongues of fire – this is the Power of the Spirit, and it takes our breath away.

Surprising that, given that the Hebrew word for spirit is *Ruach* – the same as the word for breath. How often have you sung ‘Breathe on me Breath of God’? A lovely hymn that acknowledges the life giving power of God as Spirit.

Today we too are living behind closed doors and windows. But they cannot keep the Holy Spirit out. And today what most of us fear more than anything is not catching coronavirus – it is getting it so badly that we can no longer breathe. Breath is essential for life – more than food, more than water, more even than companionship. Suddenly that basic human function so necessary for life seems precarious – and if we lose the ability to perform it unaided we will need serious and invasive help.

I wonder how Jesus would make this situation into a parable – because there is no doubt in my mind that if he were here in his bodily form today he would use virus and lockdown as teaching aids. But perhaps he is doing that anyway. What does he want us to learn from our situation today?

At Pentecost, the disciples were in a state of suspended animation – between being followers of a man who walked and ate with them, and becoming the New Creation – the Church of the Risen Christ. The mighty Breath of God was what made the difference. The coming of the Spirit turned them into a fearless band of witnesses ready to go to any lengths to spread God’s Word and live as a new creation.

So today, when our church buildings are empty and we are once again living with fear, may the Breath of God inspire us, fill us with love, hope and courage, and help us to look beyond the immediate dangers to the excitement of what we might become if we truly allow God to fill our hearts.

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