

Bristol Lutheran

Pentecost

Acts2:1-4, Galatians 5:16-26

June 4, 2017

Take a breath. Whether it is yoga, or running a 5k, breathing is essential. Yoga is probably more about breath control, focus, and mindfulness with our inhale and exhale, than it is about the postures you twist into. Constantly being reminded by our instructor to take a breath.

Last weekend in Colorado, I went for a run and realized how important breathing is. The first few breaths, in thin air and high altitude, burned my lungs. But I made it...barely. Just breathe.

In the hospital room, as that baby is about to be delivered, there is a prayer –take a breath. For mom, for dad, and especially for baby. You hear that cry, that escape of air from new lungs, at the same time parents release their held breath knowing the baby is living.

When tragedy strikes, accidents, sickness – there is a pleading prayer – just breath! We want to hear and feel and see that air move and the belly rise up and down.

When we are scared by the events of our world...we take a breath.

When we swim in the ocean or ski on the lake, and gulp a mouth of water – we fight for the next breath.

When you are a teenager and you finish confirmation classes, you can take a breath – but also remember this is not the end of church, it is a new beginning.

When we are confused by the order of the worship service and want to leave our pews...relax, take a breath.

When we are stressed out, frustrated, full of uncertainty and anxiety, there is a prayer ... take a breath. Sometimes when I need calming down...that prayer comes off stronger...take a breath! I am not always good at taking a breath.

Whether in a life and death situation, or something less serious, that feels like life and death, taking a breath is always a good reminder.

We know where there is breath, there is life.

The Holy Spirit is so hard to figure out, but really it is breath. Wind, air, life. Pentecost is celebrating that life, that breath that God gives through the Spirit.

God's breath blows over the waters of creation, gives life to Adam and Eve, restores the dry bones in the valley, lifts Christ from the tomb, enlivens Christ in the resurrection. His new breath, his risen life becomes our new life, our new breath.

When we say take a breath – usually we mean a gentle exhale... but the Spirit comes more like a violent wind, creating holy chaos, messing up our order and routine and system. The Spirit, the breath of life, ironically takes our breath away, and messes up our life.

The church, the people, we... are never the same because the Spirit descends on us.

A new baby.

A disaster avoided.

Anxiety calmed.

Fears relieved.

Faith enlivened.

Chaos made holy.

We are changed forever by Pneuma...the breath of God.

Even Paul in Galatians recognizes how the Spirit changes us – as we are adopted, claimed as God's own children. Given life in the family of God, with Christ as our brother and friend. We get to know God as Jesus knows God, calling God Abba, Daddy, Father, Loving Parent.

And that is why Christ is raised from the dead, and given new breath. So that we may have abundant life and may know the intimacy and love and forgiveness of the Father.

So that we may recognize the life and the gifts that we have been given. So that we may work with others in this community and world to share those gifts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Trevor and Jared – do you know what you are getting yourselves into? This crazy strange, wonderful, challenging life of being a disciple, following Christ, loving God and God's world, working for justice and peace, explaining the Holy Spirit. Are you sure you still want to do this?

Take a breath, it will be okay.

Let me read you your confirmation verses, picked for you...

...both of you show great mercy and compassion.

Both of you talked about this faith as a way to help others. That is the Christ working through you, which you affirm today, and we all affirm every time we gather.

The work of the church is to continue the work of the Spirit in Christ – which has been ongoing since creation.

The Spirit's breath draws human beings into a relationship with God, a relationship modeled between father and son. The same way Christ works to knit human community back together, to unify us, to bring us into a relationship of love with God, to make us a family.

No matter where the spirit blows, no matter where we are blown by the spirit. We are still church together.

When we take a breath, we don't control it. I guess breathing can be both voluntary or involuntary – but really breathing is out of our control. We go where God takes us. Breathing in. Breathing out. Filled with life and breath.

Breath is life. Life is breath.

We want breath, we desire breath, we hope for breath, we pray for breath.

Until our final days.

Have you ever wondered why we spend so much time fighting for breath – but in the last moments we accept that breath will soon be gone?

As life comes to an end, as vigil is held around our loved one's bedside, there is a time when we no longer ask for breath. The time between breath gets longer and more labored, and we pray for silence, for no more breath.

And it is okay. Because faith and hope in the living  
breath, the living God, the living, Spirit, the living Christ  
– is that when we no longer breathe, we still have life.

Life in the God who is breath.

Life in the God who is always there.

Life in the one who was, who is, and who is to come.

So go ahead.....take, a, breath.