

THE SUNDAY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

February 7, 2016

Genesis 2:4b-8, 18-25

Breath of Heaven

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What are you doing right now?

If you're one of our confirmation students you're trying to come up with something to write in your sermon notes. If you're a mom or dad with small children in worship, you're probably focusing on trying to keep them quiet. Who knows, some of you may even be listening attentively to the sermon.

But what else are you doing?

YOU'RE BREATHING. Without even thinking about it, you're breathing in and breathing out. It's one of the most natural processes in our physical life. We don't have to stop and think about breathing, we just do it.

It may seem strange for me to be talking about breathing on this Sunday of the Transfiguration.

I mean, if you know much about **the Sundays of the church year**, you know that on this Sunday, every year, we hear the Gospel story where Jesus takes three of his Disciples with him up a mountain, and, while they're there, his appearance is changed – transfigured – so that they are able to catch a glimpse of his divine glory.

I've preached over 30 sermons on this Transfiguration Gospel text, some of them really good, but this year I decided to go with something completely different.

One of the main emphases of Transfiguration Sunday, and, indeed, of the entire season of Epiphany which ends today, is about seeing the world as God sees it. It's about seeing with different eyes.

As the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, we are able to see God's presence in our world in ordinary things; and in ordinary people.

That's why the disciples were able to see the glory of Jesus on the top of that mountain – because the Spirit gave them eyes to see in Jesus not just a simple carpenter turned wandering teacher, but the Son of the living God.

In the same way, if our eyes and minds are opened, we can see the simple everyday events in our world; even something as seemingly trivial as breathing, as a sign of God's loving presence.

We don't have to stop and think about breathing, do we? We just do it.

Can you imagine what life would be like if we had to remind ourselves to breathe?

I can't even remember to take my allergy pill every day. **If I had to remember to breathe, I'd be in big trouble.**

But we don't have to. Instead, without conscious effort, 15 times a minute, 900 times an hour, 21,600 times a day, we inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. That means, **if you live to be 80**, you'll have **inhaled and exhaled around 600 million times!** Think of it!

The Bible tells us that, when God was creating the universe, and everything in it, God blew the breath of life into a lump of clay. And that lump of clay became a living human being.

The breath of life is a precious gift from God.

God has breathed life into you and me as well.

At the time of our birth, that first breath, which was usually half-breath and half-cry, was given us by the God who created us.

Have you ever stopped to think **what a precious, miraculous gift each breath is?**

[leave pulpit] TRY SOMETHING WITH ME. BREATHE IN –
 HOLD IT –
 NOW BREATHE OUT AGAIN.
 THAT SIMPLE ACTION, 21,000 TIMES A DAY, IS KEEPING US ALIVE.

And we **don't even have to think about it.**

God, who created us and all that exists, continues to sustain us, each and every minute of our lives. NOW LET'S SAY, "*THANK YOU, GOD.*" **[return to pulpit]**

There's something very interesting about the word for breath in the Bible. The Hebrew word "*ruach*," can be translated as **breath, wind** or **spirit**. So when we read that God "*breathed*" into the lump of clay, it also carries the connotation that God blew his spirit into that clay, giving it life.

And that fits with our experience. At the time of our baptism, God breathes his Holy Spirit into us. Friends, you have the breath of God – THE MIGHTY WIND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – within you.

GOD'S SPIRIT IS AS CLOSE TO YOU AS THE AIR YOU BREATHE.

God' Spirit is as much a part of you as breathing in and breathing out – every four seconds of your life.

And yet, most of us live our waking moments (except for when we're in church) **as if we have nothing to do with God.**

We take the presence of God's spirit within us for granted; JUST AS MUCH WE TAKE OUR BREATHING ITSELF FOR GRANTED.

We certainly **don't live as if that Spirit is alive and breathing within our hearts.** And we never think to thank God for that gift of His Holy Spirit, do we?

Without breath, we would die. That's why I reminded you to say, "*Thank you*" to God earlier.

But, **more importantly, as Christians, without the ongoing breath of God's spirit within us, our faith will die.** And that's a death more horrible even than physical death.

How different would our lives be if we were constantly aware of the breath of the HS within us and within our world?

How do you think **your life might look if you acknowledged and tried to listen for THE BREATH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN YOU?**

Do you think it might change the way you see a lot of things:

- the world?
- the gift of life itself?
- your neighbor in need?

Of course it would. And, unlike inhaling oxygen and exhaling carbon dioxide, the breathing of the Holy Spirit in your life **goes so much better when we are aware and appreciative of it.**

One word of warning, though. Remember in the New Testament when Jesus says to Nicodemus, "*The Spirit blows where it wills?*"

That means, **if we're going to take the breath of the Spirit seriously in our lives, WE'D BETTER BUCKLE UP.**

Because there's **no telling where this wind will take us.** But I'm convinced that the journey will be well worth it.

Let's try it again, okay?

BREATHE IN ...

HOLD IT...

NOW BREATHE OUT.

That's not only the breath of life, it's God's Holy Spirit. Both are marvelous gifts from our loving God. So let's remember to say, "*thank you, God.*" Amen.