

**Week 3: A Purpose We Must Pursue – The Church Multiplied**

**Day 19: The Breath**

**The Passage:** John 20:1-23

**The Focus:** “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” (John 20:21-22)

**The Meditation:** “He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

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**Empowering Truths:** Fear can paralyze us. It can short-circuit our lungs. The night of the resurrection the disciples are locked down by their fear. Their sorrow at the loss of their friend and leader, their fear of their enemies who crucified him, their doubts and questions about the confusing events, their anxieties about their future without Jesus—all conspire to steal their breath away.

Have you ever suffered an anxiety attack? Shortness of breath is one of the most frightening symptoms of these troubling episodes. The disciples are having a kind of anxiety attack and are unable to breathe deep. But then Jesus shows up. Twice he repeats, “Peace be with you.” It is a statement directed to the bullseye of their fears.

Then Jesus re-commissions them. He reminds them of what he said to them when he first called them— “Follow me and I will send you out to fish for people” (Matthew 4:19).

Next, Jesus restates their identity: “You are sent ones.” In essence he declares, “Your purpose and mission are not dead but more alive than ever. You are sent to multiply yourself into others as I multiplied myself into you.”

But then Jesus takes a deep breath and breathes long and slow into their faces, a gentle breeze of air that carries the power of a rushing wind. His next statement gives the meaning and invitation of his action: “Receive the Holy Spirit.” His Spirit will be what defeats their fears, defines their identity, directs their mission, and determines their effectiveness.

You don’t breathe on someone from six feet away. You position your face in their personal space, near their face, and then exhale. It’s an intimate act of relationship. It is an action of “with-ness.” Jesus will disappear again in a moment, but he is leaving his breath with them. They are empowered because they carry his breath.

Jesus is reminding them of the first Adam, into whom God breathed to empower him to be “fruitful and multiply.” He is recalling Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones who received the breath of God and stood up as a mighty army of hope. He is foreshadowing the “sound of the mighty wind,” which would blow into them in a few days on Pentecost.

Being sent on his mission is the high privilege of living. “Spirit breath” is the means to stay on mission. He never sends us without supporting us with all we need.

So breathe deeply . . . exhale your fear, your stress, your questions, your insecurities, your inadequacy, your selfishness, and then inhale deeply the breath of Jesus, the presence, peace, and power of his very Spirit . . . with you, in you, through you. Breathe deeply, today . . . all day. Many times a day, simply breathe in and pray, “Spirit, breathe in me.”

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**Power Truth:** The breath of the Spirit empowers us to live daily as “sent ones.”

**Our Prayer:** Lord, I confess I am often bound by my fears, questions, weakness, and apathy. Forgive me. Thank you for showing up time after time to breathe your Spirit into me. As I receive, I am empowered to be sent to my world like the Father sent you to ours. Animate this piece of clay to be fruitful and multiply. Awaken my dry bones to march with you! Fill my spirit’s lungs with your Spirit.

