

John 20:21–22

April 14, 2019

“Breath on Me, O Breath of God”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Palm Sunday; Confirmation Sunday

Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father

and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

**[Introduction]** This weekend is confirmation! What a great day! Confirmation is a great day!

A great day for you who are being confirmed—

a day for which you have studied, waited, and prayed.

A great day for you parents and family members—

a day you have looked forward to for years.

A great day for your pastor—

a day anticipated and planned for through hours of instruction.

A great day for the entire congregation—

a day to remember your confirmation and

a day to welcome these young members into the church.

A great day, most importantly of all,

because this is a day when the Holy Spirit will breathe on us.

**[God’s breath gives life]**

This was the focus of our Spring Confirmation trip – the Holy Spirit – *ruach kodesh!*

Through our four Bible studies and private worship service and activities

we discovered how the Holy Spirit is at work in the events of the Bible,

how the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives,

how the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies and keeps.

When God breathes on us, his life comes into us. His breath gives life.

***Breath on Me, O Breath of God***

When God formed Adam out of dust from the earth,

God breathed life into his nostrils and the man became a living soul (Gen 2:7).

Ezekiel saw the vision of a valley of dry bones. God breathed and they came to life (Ez 37).

In the upper room... Jesus had risen from the dead,

but the disciples were still hiding in their locked room.

Suddenly Jesus was standing there among them.

He 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.’”

The Lord breathed on his disciples, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Jesus then told his disciples, “I am sending you out to make disciples of all nations,

but don’t go until you get the power the Holy Spirit will provide.”

50 days after Easter, on the Pentecost day,

he finished what he started on Easter night

when he breathed his new life into them.

The account in Acts 2 says that while the disciples were all together,  
***“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven  
and filled the whole house where they were sitting. . . .  
All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...”*** (Acts 2:2, 4).

You know, the same word is used for wind, breath and Spirit  
in both the Greek of the NT (*pneuma*) and the Hebrew of the OT (*ruach*).

In the imagery of the Bible, when God breathes,  
a wind comes out of his mouth, the wind of the Spirit that gives life.  
***Breath on Me, O Breath of God***

So you ask...  
When does God breathe on me and give his Spirit and life?  
Let's think of three particular times.

**[In Baptism] First, in baptism...**

Jesus told Nicodemus —you know Nic at Nite — that the life we receive at our natural birth  
does *NOT* bring us into the kingdom of God.

In order to become part of God's kingdom—to have God's life in us—  
we must be born again (Jn 3:3–5).

This is one of the times that Jesus is making it clear he is telling the truth.

I tell you the truth — we have been discussing these statements through out Lent.

This time Jesus says,

***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”***

He then goes on to say... ***“That which is born of the flesh is flesh,  
and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.”***

You are born again!

And that happens when God connects his Spirit and his Breath, to water in Baptism.

In your baptism, God breathed, and you were born again.

**[Confessing Jesus] Second, our Confession of Faith.**

After I am baptized, I continue to learn what happened at my Baptism  
and what it means for my life.

I learn that I am a sinner and need forgiveness of sins.

I learn that Jesus, God's only Son, died on the cross to pay for my sins.

But the cross was no mistake. God wanted his Son to die.

He sent him to pay for your sin and my sin by dying in our place,  
for the “wages of sin is death.”

After all, when I say, “I believe” . . . I trust Jesus. God has breathed on me.

St. Paul says, “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3).

God breathes on us at Baptism, and our confession of faith is the result of God's breath.

**[Confirmation] A third important time for God’s breath is at Confirmation.**

When we are ready to make a public confession of the faith into which we were baptized,  
when we have been taught the faith, and  
when we are ready to promise to be faithful to our Lord, even unto death...  
It is then that we are confirmed.

What does that really mean?

There are different ways to describe confirmation, a program, a rite or ritual,  
but the dictionary definition stresses the word firm — conFIRMation  
To be confirmed means that something is made firm, made certain and made sure.

So at confirmation you are made firm, but *HOW* are you made firm at confirmation?

You confess your faith and make a promise.	Does that do it? Does your promise make you firm? NO.
The pastor puts his hand on your head, reads a verse of Scripture and speaks a blessing.	Does that do it? Does the pastor make you firm? NO.
The congregation prays for you.	Does that do it? Does the congregation make you firm? NO

All of this is involved, TRUE but it is God who does the confirming.

He is the one at work,  
and specifically it is the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Hear the blessing that is spoken at your baptism and your confirmation:

*“The almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has given you the new birth of water and of the Spirit  
and has forgiven you all your sins,  
strengthen you with His grace to life everlasting.”*

“God . . . has given you his Holy Spirit.”

God breathes the Spirit, and you are filled with new life.

Baptism, Confession of our Faith, Confirmation.

These are particular times the Holy Spirit breathes on us and is at work in us.

***Breath on Me, O Breath of God***

**[Living the Christian life]**

BUT Confirmation is not a final fix that takes care of us for the rest of life.

In addition to Baptism, Confession of Faith, and Confirmation,

the Holy Spirit works — where and when he wills — through the means of grace.

We must live out our Christian faith,

and the Holy Spirit does not leave us alone.

Likewise, the devil does not leave us alone.

**Renee** tells how she fell away from church. “My Bible got dusty. Slowly I found that church and God were secondary. I became weaker and weaker in my witness.” As this gradually happened, her excuse was, “God knows I’m only human.” You see, the devil causes us to doubt. To doubt in ourselves, to doubt in God.

That’s one way the devil tries to lead us astray. There is another way.

**Barbara** explained how she became one of the looters in the Los Angeles riots. A mother of nine, she said, “We needed food. All the stores were burned down. We didn’t have anywhere to go. There was no mail, so we wouldn’t have any income. And everybody was doing it.”

Everybody is doing it. That’s another way the devil gets at us.

He makes sin look attractive.

The devil has his own ways to get at each of us individually:

rationalizations, real temptations, rejection and ridicule for our faith.

The devil causes us to doubt and he makes sin look attractive.

That is what he did in the Garden of Eden and that is what he is still doing today.

What can we do when this happens?

We can pray, ***Breath on Me, O Breath of God***

and go to his Word and Sacraments,

because through them God breathes his life into us

again and again and again and again.

[***Conclusion***]

Yes, it is true,

Jesus is not physically present to breathe on us as he did in that room to his first disciples,  
but he still breathes on us in Baptism.

He breathes on us through his Word, the holy Scriptures.

He breathes on us as we receive his body and blood in our Lord’s Supper.

Baptism, Confession of our Faith, Confirmation.

These are certain times that the Holy Spirit is breathing on us.

But in living out the Christian life, the Holy Spirit is always with us.

So we pray, ***Breath on Me, O Breath of God***. Amen!

---

REJOICE always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;  
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. AMEN! (1 Thess. 5:16–18)

---