

## Wednesday Evening Service, April 15, 2020 - Reflection and Prayer Practice

### Breath Prayer Pastor Amy Zalk Larson

A reading from the Gospel of John 20, a portion of the Gospel reading for this Sunday.

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of our Risen Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus brought peace to the disciples as he breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. Oh, do we need that breath of peace now. So many in our world right now are struggling with shortness of breath and chest pain; so many are trying to breathe through anxiety and fear.

Tonight, I invite us to pay attention to our own breath:

- As a way to pray with those struggling to breathe,
- and as a way to connect with God who breathes peace in the midst of chaos.

The word for breath in the biblical languages is the same as the word for spirit. The breath of life in us connects us to God's Holy Spirit and reminds us that God is as close to us as our breath.

This Sunday we will reflect more on this topic in the sermon, but for tonight I want to lead you through a breath prayer.

Sit up straight but relaxed by placing your feet on the floor.

Rest your hands gently in your lap.

Close your eyes fully or partially by looking toward the ground.

Now bring your attention to your breath.

Notice how in each moment a breath is there for you without you having to remember to breathe, without you having to do anything.

Your breath is a pure gift.

Notice the ebb and flow as you breathe in the oxygen you need for life and let go of what you no longer need.

**After you are feeling the ebb and flow rhythm, allow your thoughts to turn toward God in prayer.**

**Imagine breathing in God's gifts as you inhale.**

**Then, as you exhale, imagine letting go of what is not needed.**

**Breathe in trust ... let go of anxiety.**

**Breathe in peace ... let go of tension.**  
**Breathe in rest ... breathe out weariness.**  
**Breathe in love ... let go of fear.**

We will continue to breathe and pray together for a few moments. When your mind wanders, as it will, simply remember your breath. Inhale what is needed, let go of what is not.

Amen.

You can pray in this way as you move through your day. When you feel anxious or overwhelmed, bring your attention to your breath and imagine breathing in what you need and letting go of what is not needed.

As you do this, you can pray for those most in need.

As you do this, you can know that God is as close to you as your breath by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.