

Sermon Text for May 24, 2015 – Pentecost Sunday

by Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Mark 5:38-43, Genesis 2:4-9, 15-17

“The breath of God”

Today is one of those Super Sundays where you don't know where to turn first, so much is happening. We are celebrating Memorial Day so we have to make sure that we have something patriotic in the service. It is Pentecost Sunday so we need to be able to touch upon the birthday of the Christian Church nearly 2000 years ago and how the Holy Spirit was given to the church for it to be able to reach out into the world with the Good News of the Gospel. We are welcoming new members into the congregation, two classes in quick succession, it is a very exciting time. Then we have two baptisms to celebrate of people within this church who for the first time in their lives are giving themselves over to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This is why we do what we do. All we need is communion and a wedding and we would have pretty much everything you could think of in a service.

But while I've been in this Genesis series I almost find myself panicking because I realize, I'm preaching from Genesis. How in the world am I going to get Christ in Genesis every single week. After all my Baptist friends tell me it aint a sermon until you can take them to the cross. But then I realized, you know, everything in Scripture, be it New Testament or Old Testament, be it revelation or even Genesis point to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. All that we do today in this service from celebrating those who have died so that we would be free to lifting up a new life in Jesus points to the one who loves us so much that he gave his life for all. Jesus is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end.

This is one of those Sundays where the intersection of Christ in Genesis comes fairly easily. A.W. Tozer once said “An infinite God can give all of himself to each of His children. He does not distribute Himself that each may have a part, but to each one He gives all of himself as fully as if there were no others.” Let's see how God gives himself completely to us today.

Today we read in Genesis how from the very beginning, even before we took our first breath, God fills us with his spirit, so that we can have life and have it abundantly. We learn that there are a lot of people out there who are living, but are not alive because they don't know what to do with the breath of God that was given to us at creation. Some

are empty shells not knowing that God has given himself completely to us, without hesitation and without strings attached.

There are people who would argue that these verses in Genesis are a second, separate, unrelated account to the 7 days we learned about earlier. I find it more helpful to say that this second account amplifies and explains some of the details of those 7 days. Without a doubt we have here the beginning of human destiny. We find Adam is created with a certain purpose and with certain tasks and even more importantly with certain responsibilities (read out the Genesis references). Human destiny begins its journey in this account. As we can read, it begins very well.

It has been said that if we are to find the solution to the riddle of time and space then it must come from beyond time and space. Sometimes we think that God is so completely other, so different than we are that there is no real point of contact between us and God. Once I heard something very true about God: God is God, Christ is Christ, and guess what, you're not him. Very true, very accurate, but also very distancing.

But in this second chapter of Genesis we see that God is so much more than a force from beyond. We find God creating us not by word of mouth, like in chapter 1 but rather with his very own hands. We find God stooping down, reaching into the dirt (adamah) and making, forming, shaping man (Adam). We have a very definite, real, palpable contact between God and man in this account. There is nothing unreal about this God but rather something very personal, something very intimate that continues in the next chapter as God walks and talks with Adam in the garden of Eden.

Awhile ago, Stacy and I rented a movie called the Horse Whisperer. You've seen it haven't you. This beautiful horse has a terrible accident and so becomes wild again. This little girl, about 13 or 14, is the owner of the horse and she goes out with her mom to retrain this horse. The trainer is Robert Redford. They let the horse out into the pen, do you remember how Redford is able to calm the horse down and make him come to him? He stoops down and stares at the horse as it is running wildly about. He just looks it straight in the eye as he is down near the ground until the horse comes to him. This is what God did for us when he made us. He stooped down, created and made us and looked us in the eye and said: I love you and then breathed his spirit into us.

We find Jesus in our first Scripture in Mark very nearly doing the same thing with Talitha. He could have simply told the religious leader that his daughter was healed, but

no, he chose to drive everyone out of the room except for mom and dad, and his favorite disciples Peter, James and John, and then, he reaches out, he takes her hand, he touches her, makes eye contact with her. Little girl get up.

In the movie you also see that when the 14 year old was mad about something he did the same thing to talk to her. When my girls were younger I thought I would try it. One day one was running around and then did something she wasn't supposed to. I stopped her and got down to look at her in the eye and you know it worked. She listened and calmed down. But then my knees gave out and she pushed me over and that was the end of that lesson. God is God, Christ is Christ, and you're not him.

You will find your pews a piece of clay, or play dough, you are free to open that if you like, or you can take it home, but feel free to make something, to shape something, and remember that God crafted you perfectly, took the time to care about you, think about what you would look like, to put his energy and his love into you. There was no distance between you and God. This is so visible in baptism, isn't it, when we see that God calls us and claims us as his children.

Once God does stoop down and create us, Scripture tells us that he breathed into Adam. Do you remember Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones in chapter 37. It was filled with bones, they were brought up, knit together but they were still bones. Then the Spirit of God was breathed into them. It takes the breath of God to get us moving. The same breath that was moving over the waters in the first chapter of Genesis, the same Holy Spirit that we find in the New Testament that revitalizes and gives life to the apostles on Pentecost. This day of Pentecost that we celebrate because God has given us life which is manifest through the Holy Spirit. Without that breath of God Adam would have been an empty shell. The same is true of us. Without God's breath, we are empty shells.

There are some who feel like empty shells in their lives in their relationships with their spouse. They are just going through the motions and doing what needs to be done to keep the family together. There are others who are empty shells in their relationship with Almighty God, not knowing where to start to get the fire going that would spark a desire to let others know about Jesus. There are others who are empty shells because their job is just dragging them down or their health is sapping all the energy and fun out of their lives.

Do you know what happened on the day of Pentecost? God came and breathed life into us as individuals and as a church. Do you know what God's breath, the Holy Spirit does? It changes us. It first changes us from sinful to obedient, from independent to co-dependent, from fearful to unmitigated service out of love, from emotional or intellectual to where godly wisdom resides.

To be alive you have to have the breath of God in you that gives you that personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That breath of God gives you vision for your future and gives vision to the future of the church as well.

If there were ever a time that our nation needed the breath of God to fall upon us it would be this Tuesday as we vote for those who will lead us. We need the spirit to give us vision and understanding for our country and for our local community and state as well.

As you can see our human destiny began well with God.

God stooped down to create us, to touch us, teach us, form us.

Today we celebrate baptism and it is a time that we recognize God's stooping down in Jesus Christ, in the incarnation Christ became one of us, lived with us, died a cruel death on the cross, but the grave could not hold him down and he rose again. We are reminded in Genesis and in the water that there is not a single part of us that Jesus doesn't claim for his own and say MINE!! We have been grafted and sealed into Christ forever.

In baptism God reshapes us and breathes life into us. You know it usually isn't until we are broken down, in the dirt, and without any spirit that we seek God. In baptism God takes us by the hand and tells us to rise up. Like the phoenix from the ashes, we are given another chance in Christ. Baptism represents that chance we have because Christ shed his blood for us on the cross and that blood washed us clean.

Brothers and sisters, know that God loves us and has breathed his life into you. But also know that we can be church members, we could have been baptized as children, even gone through confirmation class but unless we allow the Spirit of God to work in our lives then we will be empty shells. I want these baptisms today to be the affirmation of that commitment that we have for Christ. Today in these baptisms rededicate yourself to serving Christ. Fill up with the Spirit of God, and then serve him. You will find, I guarantee you, a fulfilling life in Christ. Amen.