



ABUNDANT JOY FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER MAY 2020

A BREATH MEANT

Breath is crucial to our existence. When it is present, it comes with hope, opportunity, and potential. When that breath is the very breath of God, something even greater happens. With a look at the very breath Jesus Christ took, both before and after the resurrection, we discover the key to more than existence. We will realize the power of life.

Breath is really fascinating. We breathe reflexively. We don't really think about it. What's so weird is, when we do start thinking about our breathing, we can get anxious and worry about, "Well, I hope I can breathe next!"

We breathe a lot. Just for a second I want everyone to inhale...and now exhale. One more time. Inhale and exhale. To breathe means we are alive, we're functioning. I don't want to sound morbid, but we only have a certain number of breaths during this life. I did some calculations, and Jesus, for example, lived for 33 years on Earth and he took around 280 million breaths. If we live long lives, we'll take just under 1 billion breaths – anywhere between 800-900 million breaths. That's a lot of breath. The amount of air we breathe over a lifetime weighs about 300 tons.

We need oxygen to survive. We breathe in oxygen and we breathe out carbon dioxide. We breathe in and we breathe out. We inhale and exhale. In **Luke 23:46** Jesus breathed his last breath. **"Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last."** As we look back on the earthly life of Christ, every breath meant something.

Jesus breathed his last breath on the cross as he died for the sins of the world. Then, when he burst forth with resurrection power, he breathed the life of newness. In **John 20:22** he breathed on the disciples. And the Bible says he breathed the Holy Spirit on the disciples. Literally, the resurrected son breathed on them, which is the spirit of Christ.

What happened, though, between the last breath of the crucifixion and the first breath of the resurrection? On the cross, Jesus did what he said he would do in **John 10:17-18**. He said, **"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."**

In **John 19:30**, **"With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."** And in **Luke 23:46**, **"Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." [a] When he had said this, he breathed his last."** Jesus gave his spirit, his breath, his life to the Father on the cross. And the Father gave it back to him better than it was. His resurrected body correlated to the body that hung on the cross. He could be felt. He ate. He had recognizable marks in his resurrected body. Yet, the resurrected body was made alive by God with his breath. His spirit was better. And Jesus was able to walk through doors and ascend to heaven. Anything we give to God he gives back something better.

We love breath mints. My favorite? Altoids. They're curiously strong! When you pop one into your mouth, you know it's an Altoid.

A breath mint doesn't last very long. But a breath MEANT lasts forever. Though Covid-19 may try to rob us of our breath, it cannot. Remember, the God whose breath stirred over the waters of chaos and brought everything into being—whose breath inspired the prophets and poured over the disciples at Pentecost—whose breath fell upon Jesus at His baptism, filling Him with love, and raised Him from the grave; this very breath God breathes into us now, tomorrow, and forever! It's a breath meant. Though fear may be suffocating, God breathes new life into us. Though anxiety may make us short of breath, God breathes new life into us. Though we are scattered about, and isolated from each other all across the world, God breathes new life into us and makes us one.

So, right now take a deep breath....inhale and exhale. God is saying, Receive Me, Receive My life-giving breath, Breathe Me in (inhale), and Exhale The Kingdom! Your life is a BREATH MEANT!

Anchored in His love and hope, Pastor Cathy