

Easter Home Worship April 26th, 2020

Music

Come and Fill Our Hearts with Your Peace Taize - Columbiana UMC

<https://youtu.be/Cfilhol6-abM>

***Come and fill our hearts with your peace, You alone, O God, are Holy.
Come and fill our hearts with your peace. Alleluia***

Blessing of Breathing

"In last week's Gospel, Jesus gave his friends the gift of his own breath, his Spirit, that will sustain them amid their sorrow and fear. In all that makes it difficult or literally painful to breathe in these days, this blessing is for you."

That the first breath will come without fear.

That the second breath will come without pain.

The third breath: that it will come without despair.

And the fourth, without anxiety.

That the fifth breath will come with no bitterness.

That the sixth breath will come for joy.

Breath seven: that it will come for love.

May the eighth breath. come for freedom.

And the ninth, for delight.

When the tenth breath comes, may it be for us to breathe together,

and the next, and the next,

until our breathing. is as one,

until our breathing is no more.

Jan Richardson [The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief](#)

Reading:

The Road to Emmaus, Luke 24:13-35

That same day two of the disciples were making their way to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, discussing all that had happened as they went. While they were talking, Jesus approached and began to walk with them, though they were kept from recognizing him. Jesus asked them 'What are you two discussing as you go your way?' while you walk along?' They stopped and looked sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened these past few days?' Jesus asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'About Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet powerful in word and deed in the eyes of God and all the people - how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. We had hoped that he was the One who would set Israel free. Besides all this, today- the third day since those things happened- some women of our group have just brought us some astonishing news. They were at the tomb before dawn and did not find his body. They came back and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who declared that he was alive. Some of our number went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not find Jesus'. ' Then Jesus said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Didn't the Messiah have to undergo all this to enter into glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them every passage of scripture that referred to the Messiah.

By now they were near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us. It's early evening. The day is practically over' 'So he went in to stay with them. After sitting down with them, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Jesus, who immediately vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was explaining the scriptures to us?' ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'Christ has risen indeed, and appeared to Simon!' ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread

Reflection

You don't know my name. The story doesn't tell you. Am I a man or a woman or? Am I married? Do I have children? How old am I? How did I know Jesus? What relation am I to Cleopas? Friend? Wife? Sibling?

I could be anyone. I could have been you, if you'd lived back then.

Here's what you need to know. Jesus was dead- a terrible violent death, cutting his life tragically short. Our community was shattered. Who were we without him?

How were we to go on?

We'd glimpsed evil doers close up- those who would destroy the best of people if it suited them- and they had power. No benign prime minister in our land.

No benign governor general. Violence was legal, if it kept us poor, quiet, and scared.

Our world was not safe. It was a time to huddle in dark corners.

Whom could we trust any more?

So we got away- a change of scene, a change of space- a quiet small village - where we hoped to be safe. Who'd ever heard of Emmaus? Nobody!

Everything was strange. We talked about that. And just then a stranger walked beside us.

We should have been scared. The roads were not safe. People were robbed, beaten, left for dead. And there could be spies. Ready to pick us up and question us or worse.

It was a time when trust had been broken, big time- Why did we trust this stranger?

How did we know he came in peace?

Well, we were taking a risk. But you go with your heart- and our hearts told us to share our sorrow- And he heard- He understood us- and he understood much more than we will ever understand.

Evening was falling- it wasn't safe to be out at night- and somehow, even in our grief, we realized we needed to eat- We did not want our new friend to leave.

We wanted him to keep talking- we would have listened all night.

But then, suddenly, we realized he wasn't a new friend after all. When he took bread and broke it- it all came back to us-: the open countryside with a hungry multitude- where he broke the bread, and blessed it – and the fish- and there

was enough for all and to spare; the Upper Room where only 3 short days ago we had seen him break and bless the unleavened bread at the Passover meal; in between, many times around many tables, with all sorts and conditions of people.

And many a deep conversation, many a story, many a teaching around those tables.

Our hearts told us. This One, the Beloved, is here, he's alive, he's saying and doing what he always said and did. We should have known this the moment he fell into step with us, the moment we were no longer afraid, the moment we hung on his every word.

We looked at him with fresh eyes. But our eyes no longer saw him- And yet, our hearts would always see him.

And we knew: This wasn't just for us,

To help us feel better. This was for everyone who needed to hear

Did we even stop to finish our supper? I can't remember.

If we ate, we ate fast. If we were tired, we forgot it. If we were afraid of the dark, we forgot it. We didn't walk- we ran back to Jerusalem.

We had to see everybody, tell everybody.

Ours was not the only story but I love it the best. And I offer it to you today.

You are living through hard times. You are missing so much- you can't welcome a walking companion as we did, or sit at table together, or gather with all your friends. Your world has become strange to you- in these last months and even more in this last week- a week when small quiet places, like Emmaus, are grieving.

There's no quick fix- never was- we knew hard times- we knew times when evil deeds and words did their worst. And soon our friend was no longer seen- We could never go back to life as we knew it. Any more than you can when a loved one journeys into Mystery by whatever kind of death- Any more than you can when pandemic or other calamity turns your world upside down. Life will never be quite as it was.

But still this story can help you through .

The beloved one, the one who shows God's love, still walks with you. When you are pouring out heart and soul to a friend or loved one- or your cat or your dog- or a photograph of someone no longer living- or your four walls- You too are being heard and understood. .

Even in these times when you cannot walk about freely and strike up conversation with someone who doesn't live with you, Love travels where Love needs to go, Love travels with those who have no travel companion, Love sits with those who cannot leave their house.

And Love travels where you travel, in body or in spirit. In strange times, who knows who is the Blessed stranger for whom..

Jesus was not the only Beloved. We are too. We too can warm the hearts of friends and strangers. We were all there to see the Holy One in each other and be the Holy One for each other. So are you, even when you must send your warmth and caring over the phone or into cyberspace.

And even in these times when we can't eat together as your small or solitary or two-household household sits down to eat, trust this: The Blessed Stranger is breaking bread with you- reminding you that Love surrounds you and upholds you- that you are closer than you think to all beloved beings who are at table, be it in festive mood or eat because we have to mood.

This story is for you.

This story needs you to tell it, to live it, so that the story will stay alive so that fear and hate and violence never get the last word,

There is always another word, A word of Love, a word of Comfort, a word of longing to make a world where there is no more fear and hate and violence.

Even amid "lost hope and broken-hearted places" hear that word, speak that word, of an ancient Love, an aching Love, a Love that was and is and ever shall be!

Sacred Text and Music VU 282 This Ancient Love Carolyn McDade

<https://youtu.be/7vn-Zukczqg>

Long before the night was born from darkness
Long before the dawn rolled unsteady from fire
Long before She wrapped her scarlet arm around the hills there was a love,
this ancient love was born.

Long before the grass spotted green the bare hillside
Long before a wing unfolded to wind Long before She wrapped her long blue arm around the sea ,
there was a love, this ancient love was born.

Long before a chain was forged from the hillside
Long before a voice uttered freedom's cry
Long before She wrapped her bleeding arms around a child
there was a love, this ancient love was born.

Long before the name of a God was spoken
Long before a cross was nailed from a tree
Long before She laid her arm of colors 'cross the sky
there was a love, this ancient love was born.

Wakeful our night, Slumbers our morning Stubborn the grass sowing green wounded hills
As we wrap our healing arms to hold what her arms held
this ancient love, this aching love rolls on.

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Offering Prayer

Holy One, we share our gifts for the good of all. We share the sorrow and hardship of friends and neighbours and of those we do not know. May our gifts feed people in body and heart and soul. May our self-giving express your undying love for all humanity and all creation, today and always.

Prayers of the People

We remember even in these times of isolation,
Even when we feel like strangers in a strange land,
Strangers to each other perhaps,
Strangers to ourselves,
Strangers to the life we used to know-
We remain connected to all humanity-
We eat of the same bread even if we eat alone,
We are made of the same matter and spirit,
We inhabit a Life that never stops changing,
A Life that seems fragile especially in these days,
And yet a Life that finds its way of continuing ,
Upheld by the ancient love, the aching love that rolls on,
No matter what.

And in these difficult days, when trauma is layered on top of trauma,
And meanwhile we each bear our own wounds, hidden or visible,
May we trust in that Love which holds us up, helping us place one foot ahead of each other, the ground of our being, there to catch us when we stumble and fall.

Our hearts are heavy this week, as we take in what we can bear of the happenings in Nova Scotia, feeling whatever mix of emotions we feel, numbness, shock, confusion, grief, anger, whatever our hearts are carrying. This is a burden when we are already living a life which we find unnatural, Deprived of so much that supports and connects and gives us joy. Our patience wears thin, by times- and so may our compassion. Holy One, Compassionate One, breathe your Compassion into us we pray, That we may deal gently and kindly with ourselves, accepting ourselves as we feel , as we are, as we try to cope best we can.

And may Compassion still flow through us to all who suffer- especially to those grieving in Nova Scotia- as families, first responders , communities and our whole nation emerge from our first shock and the tears flow, Tears which are living water of your Spirit,

For as we love, so we grieve. Your beloved Jesus wept for his friends- and so may all of your beloved ones.

And so we remember those loved ones of the 22 grieving this week , those wounded, those traumatized, the communities grieving- and we remember others known to us who are also grieving, or ill, or in trouble- in a moment of silence we hold them in love and light. And we ask for that same love and light to wrap us round today- we need that too for this bewildering journey we continue.

And , with all that is in our hearts, we give thanks that Love persists- even beyond the greatest of losses- and that Love meets us and walks with us daily and sits with us at table. These and all the prayers of our hearts we gather into the words of beloved community here and around the world and across the ages: Our Father..

Music VU 278 In the quiet curve of evening

[Julie Howard] sung by Trinity United Church choir, Kitchener] <https://youtu.be/o5SVHB9eJKY>

*In the quiet curve of evening, in the sinking of the days,
in the silky void of darkness, you are there.
In the lapses of my breathing, in the space between my ways,
in the crater carved by sadness, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.*

*In the rests between the phrases, in the cracks between the stars,
in the gaps between the meaning, you are there.
In the melting down of endings, in the cooling of the sun,
in the solstice of the winter, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.*

*In the mystery of my hungers, in the silence of my rooms,
in the cloud of my unknowing, you are there.
In the empty cave of grieving, in the desert of my dreams,
in the tunnel of my sorrow, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.*

Blessing

May we continue this journey together as followers of the Way, trusting that New Life is in our midst. And may the strong and tender Love within Creation, the persistent Compassion alive in Jesus, and the healing energy of Spirit fill our hearts , now and always. Amen.

Music Stay with us through the night [Farquharson/Klusmeier, Grace United Church, Dartmouth]
<https://youtu.be/LAYSeZ9C0DY>

***Stay with us through the night. Stay with us through the pain
Stay with us, blessed stranger, till the morning breaks again.
Stay with us through the night. Stay with us through the grief.
Stay with us, blessed stranger till the morning brings relief.
Stay with us through the night, stay with us through the dread,
Stay with us, blessed stranger, till the morning breaks new bread.***