

“Go Into the World and Be Essential”

Pentecost 2, Matthew 28:16-20

June 7, 2020; 9:00 am

Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO

Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

Matthew 28:16-20 (NRSV)

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”^[a]

TODAY IS THE DAY!

Today, Pentecost Two/Trinity Sunday *and* The Great Commission, all rolled into one—we take a step back. Back *before* the great Pentecost Event with all the flames and tongues of fire; all the languages—some recognizable and some not. All the babble and the breath, the passion and the purpose bestowed upon the disciples, then and now, and we look “Behind the Story.”

Behind all that hullabaloo on that confusing, yet exciting and heady day, to what Jesus *most* wanted those disciples and we disciples to know—that we are

to follow in his footsteps, to *love* God and neighbor above all. To remember what he told us to do and be, and that “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” No question! He’s not gone. He’s among us; the Spirit is here and God the Father and Mother, God the Risen Christ and God the Holy Spirit are *dancing* a divine dance **with** us, breathing life and **fire** into us and calling us to GO! Dance! Connect! Breathe! Share the good news of God’s never-ending presence in every soul, and never forget: You are not alone! We are in this together.

The Great Commission. The marching orders for followers of Jesus. “Go! And breathe life into *everyone* you meet.” **Wherever** you see souls struggling to breathe, do everything in your power and My power to change that! *Challenge* whatever is keeping the breath of the Spirit from anyone. Preventing *anyone* from being able to breathe freely. It’s that simple. And that complicated—all rolled into one!

Today we also begin a **series** for **June**: “*Love Your Neighbor...Even When....*” I hope you’ll join us **each** week to really delve-in and look deeper at what it means to love our neighbor—in *this* time, in today’s world, in more **profound** ways than we might have considered before. Even when there are many forces challenging us NOT to love *every* neighbor. To make exceptions. To decide who is lovable and who is not.

WHAT'S ESSENTIAL?

So, to begin our exploration of the Great Commission and Jesus' charge to go and do everything he commanded us, we ask the question: What's the most essential commandment Jesus gave? Of all the many things he told us to do and teach and model?

It's another "great." The Great Commandment: Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul and strength, and Love your neighbor as yourself. That's it. The Essential nutshell.

We've been talking a lot lately about what is "essential." What IS essential? Right here and now. In our lives, our workplaces, our homes, our relationships, in how we spend our time?

Besides doing jigsaw puzzles, it seems that the #1 activity of this season for many has been cleaning out; giving away clothing and treasures—figuring out what's NON-essential in our world and our "stuff." The thrift stores are overrun, I hear! We are getting down to essentials—in our closets, pantries and storage units—physical and virtual.

Each person must ask that question for themselves. Then ask it as it pertains to loving your neighbor—in essential ways.

ESSENTIAL to SPEAK UP!

Beyond our homes, in our congregations and communities, we are also considering what is essential. Especially when we cannot gather in buildings and

rituals in the same way we always have. We have taken some time to remember "what really matters" in community: building up and not tearing down.

Remembering who and Whose we are. Finding new ways to express love for one another—to connect in meaningful ways—ways of the heart if prevented from reaching out with our hands and hugs.

Not being able to gather safely in a building has compelled us to look deeply at our core values. Why do we do what we do as church? In community?

In our wider world, we are becoming profoundly aware that:

*All races are essential to the human race. And,
* It is not okay for us to sit back and be silent about things that matter

All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men (and women) to do nothing.—
Edmund Burke (attributed)

ESSENTIAL BREATH

We have discovered in ways we will never forget how essential Breath is. At Pentecost we celebrate the Breath of God, and we live in a time when that's become more essential than ever.

Rev. Sue Artt, our Conference Minister, sent us a Pentecost Letter with a truth we must ponder:

“We were formed from the Breath of God given to each so that we might know we are all of one body, intricately interconnected, one to another.

As the Body of Christ we cannot pretend we have not seen the unwarranted violence done to George Floyd and multitudes of other black and brown lives. We do not have the luxury of averting our eyes: nine generations of systemic, institutionalized racism lives in all of our individual bodies, whether black, brown or white, and, thus, the collective body of the church.

As we come together as the Body of Christ to celebrate Pentecost, let us open ourselves to the deep work of the Holy Spirit that seeks to heal the trauma of racism within each of us and our world.

Breathe, Holy Spirit, Breathe, that ALL may have breath.”

WALMART/HOSPITAL

I went out into the world this week. First time in a long time. And I wore my N95 heavy duty, serious, supposedly-breathable mask. I was dizzy!

I looked at the medical people in amazement that they wear these things all day long. My respect and appreciation for all the “essential workers” grew another bunch of leaps and bounds.

How do you breathe, I wanted to ask them?! When you have so many restrictions?

HOW DO WE BREATHE LIFE?

How do we breathe life into a society that seems hell-bent on death and violence?

How do we make breath available to ALL? To strive for loving our neighbor by assuring that *every* soul is “free to breathe!” “To live and move and have our Being” as scripture promises.

We start with awareness of our privilege, our bias, our conditioning and our ingrained assumptions. With recognizing our “asleepness” to the life experience of our brothers and sisters who are not “in the mainstream.”

Then we look back—to gain an awareness of our centuries-long propensity for colonialism and equivocating, excusing and writing-off unacceptable behavior—even the quoting of scripture (in whatever language!) to justify our own bias and excuse unfathomable evils done in the name of “keeping the peace of society and keeping the economy (and worshiping of that god) going!

WHERE IS SPIRIT MOVING YOU?

What is moving in you? In your heart?

Where is the breath of spirit blowing gently on you, and then perhaps a little stronger (not a breath full of virus droplets!) but a healing, filling, enlivening, en-spiriting breath of fresh air?

What is Spirit calling forth in us and from us,

followers of Jesus, filled with the Spirit? In this time, and in this long journey ahead. It's a marathon, not a sprint!

What has been "enclosed" in this time of enclosure that is breaking open in you—catching the breath of the Spirit?

We don't have to break out of geographical space—don't have to put ourselves in harm's way, physically, to have this awakening in our spirits!

The Holy Spirit works and moves and breathes *within* us. Not just around and outside of us! We are NO less on fire and called out to love and serve in earth-turning ways from inside the safety and enclosing love of God in our homes than we are—right wherever we find ourselves, safely distancing, limiting our exposure—it's a balance.

So. Go. Out into the world—even if you never leave home. BE the essential love of God in the world. Examine deep in your hearts and society what really matters. What is crying out to be acknowledged, attended to, affirmed?

Say to one another—neighbors all—you. are. essential—and I am committed to breaking down whatever barriers are keeping us from being essential together. I will fight for your life and your right to breathe and to breathe freely.

CLOSING PRAYER (Thom Shuman)

grace is essential
love is essential
hope is essential
peace is essential
justice is essential
mercy is essential
kindness is essential
inclusion is essential
wonder is essential
humility is essential
tenderness is essential
generosity is essential
forgiveness is essential
faith is essential
everything else is window dressing

In the name of the Father who created us, Jesus Christ who calls us out into the world, and the Spirit Who breathes life and love into us and fires and inspires us, Go! Be essential! The time is Now. Amen.