

## Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Acts 2:1-4

On this Pentecost Sunday, it's a good time to consider what the dramatic and key signs of a healthy and wholesome faith are. What are key signs of a healthy faith? If you were asked to make a list of the key signs of a healthy faith, what would you put down?

{Get responses from congregation}. For those who didn't answer, or couldn't answer, or don't have a clue, perhaps this may help. Here are three questions that may help you take your spiritual pulse; evaluate your present spiritual temperature; and check your spiritual heart-beat.

First, **do you have a healthy relationship with God?** Think about that. How is your relationship with God right now? Warm and wonderful, alive and well; healthy or unhealthy?

Is your attitude about God that He is approachable or do you see God as "the Bogey Man" who is out to get you. If it is, your relationship with God is unhealthy. And if you spent a few moments in the Word, you'd readily see that God is not "The Bogey Man."

Perhaps your attitude about God is based on self-interest. You hear yourself saying, often: "If I'm good, God will reward me and bless me and let me go to heaven."

This, too, is an unhealthy relationship with God. It doesn't work like that, and if you spent a few moments in the Word you'd readily see that no one is good enough to gain entrance into heaven on their own merit.

That doesn't mean that we don't do good things in life. We do good things not in order to get God to love us, but because He already does love us. And out of gratitude we can't sit still.

Relationships with God based on fear or guilt or self-interest are basically unhealthy. They are "flawed" from the get-go because; you see... a healthy relationship with God is based on trust. "We do our best and trust God for the rest."

That's what Pentecost helps us see It's the celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit by God to the people of God. It is the theme of Christmas, Emmanuel, "God with us" in the person of the Holy Spirit. That's Pentecost.

It's the great promise of God recorded on page after page of the Word, that God will never abandon us; never leave us; always be with us; always be by our side; always give us the strength for whatever difficulty or challenge or obstacle we face on any day in this world.

That's the kind of relationship Simon Peter had with God when he preached on the first day of Pentecost. "O God, help me, O God, please be with me."

God was with him. And God's spirit blew through that place giving Peter the right words to say and the courage to say them. So that 3,000 people were converted - because Peter did his best and trusted God for the rest.

Second, **do you have a healthy relationship with others?** Barbara Brown Taylor tells the story of a 97-year-old friend who is having trouble now with her "short-term-memory," but whose long-term-memory is excellent.

She told Barbara of a time when she was younger and she and her girl friends decided to climb up Mt. Washington in New Hampshire. They had a great time, but

stayed too long. Darkness and fog came in quickly. They had no flashlights, so they ended up holding each other's hands and moving down the mountain together in a human chain. They sometimes debated which path they should follow, but the one thing they did not do was let go of each other.

The woman concluded by saying: "It was so dark and foggy. Sometimes all I could see was the hand behind me and the hand in front of me. We made it by holding onto one another."

That's a good analogy of the church, and it's why the church is so crucial. It gives us a community of faith to hold onto. A hand behind us and a hand in front of us. As well as a hand above us.

The Pentecost Story reminds us that all of us in the world are family - different nations, different cultures, different languages, different backgrounds - all family, all united that day by God's Holy Spirit.

Third, **do you have a healthy relationship with yourself?** More and more we're learning how essential it is to have a wholesome self-esteem, a healthy love and respect for yourself. If you feel good about yourself, you are much more likely to become a happy, productive person who make this world a bright and better place.

On the other hand, those with poor self-esteem, those who don't like themselves... are much more likely to have problems, and be a problem in the world. People who are always negative, always complaining, always unhappy, always criticizing their co-workers are people with low self-esteem problem. Their bitterness is generally within, and they are generally unhappy with themselves.

But, there is help from God. Just look at Simon Peter. His self-esteem was shot when he denied his Lord 3 times. And even though Christ came and found him and forgave him, his self-respect was not restored until the Holy Spirit came into him at Pentecost.

Only then did his confidence return and he gave all the credit to God.

When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, we can sing that prayer-hymn made famous by Josh Groban...

"You raise me up, So I can stand on mountains,  
You raise me up, To walk on stormy seas.  
I am strong when, I am on your shoulders  
You raise me up, To more than I can be."

That's the way it works... when the Breath of God Breathes on us, it gives us:  
- A Healthy Relationship with God, with Others, and with Self.