

Let us pray... We thank you God for giving us your peace... for breathing life into us and for continuing to breath your peace in us... Amen...

The very first thing we read in the Bible is the creation story... We hear how God created light and darkness... How God separated light from darkness... making...the first day... And this was good...

Now, we do not hear that God created the sunrise, the sunset, twilight or all of the amazing displays of colors and light gradients in between day and night...

Yet each day we experience them, and they are as much a part of creation, as day and night are.

And then we have a second creation story... A story where God creates man from the dust of the earth... breathing into his nostrils the breath of life...

Breath that has been breathed into you as well... And you have heard me talk about breath and God, and breath and Spirit a few times now...

So, some of you may recall the very intimate relationship that our breath forms with God.

But today's gospel highlights a different sacred passage on breath... Where Jesus breathes on his disciples...

However, a better translation for "on" is actually "into" ... And the proper translation should read, Jesus breathes into his disciples...

Because this is the same action from the second creation story in Genesis... Where God breathes life into the man he formed from the earth.

Which connects Jesus' resurrected presence with this same action from the dawn of creation.... Because Jesus is doing more than breathing on...

Jesus is breathing peace into his disciples...

Peace, that throughout the gospel of John, has been associated with the Holy Spirit...

Again, revealing the power of breath and the relationship that breath creates...

Between one's breath and God... breath and Jesus... breath and the Holy spirit...

Because our breath is sacred... Our breath is part of our life source, and where the Triune God dwells...

So, it is no wonder then, that Thomas is feeling a little perturbed to have missed this sacred sharing of breath and this time with Jesus...

And he is so bothered by this, he shares that he not only needs to see Jesus but that he needs to put his finger in Jesus' hands and side to be sure that it is Jesus.... Giving him the nickname... Doubting Thomas...

When all Thomas really wanted, was to have the same experience that all the other disciples had... He wanted to witness, touch, and be with Jesus...

He needed that physical and visual reassurance that Jesus was real... Which is something that most people can relate to...

As Dr. Karoline Lewis shares, "Thomas gets to say what we all want to say, the truth of what we do not want to admit, how difficult it is to believe in Jesus whom we have never encountered for ourselves."¹

Because it is hard to be in a relationship with someone that you cannot physically touch, see, or embrace...

And I'm thankful for Thomas, because he brings to light our need to see and touch God, and shows us that Jesus understands this need...

Jesus knows that there are going to be times you will want to feel God's presence in your midst... and times you will want a sign from God...

And sometimes you might be very specific about what you need, like Thomas was...

¹ Karoline M. Lewis, *John*. Page 248

And, lucky for him, just a few verses later, he got what he needed...

As we witnessed, Jesus met Thomas where he was at. Jesus acknowledged what he wanted, by inviting him to see, touch, and experience his wounds.

Jesus offered him a one-on-one personalized experience...

Which is wonderful for Thomas, but how does this help us today?

Especially since each one of you experiences God differently... And each one of you may be needing something different...

For example, it could be discernment, for finding peace, guidance, recovery, or spiritual renewal...

And as Christians we have faith that God will reveal Godself to us in ways and personalized experiences just like Jesus did for Thomas...

And part of our faith even allows us to hold doubt... Because Jesus didn't scold Thomas for needing what he needed... Instead, Jesus invited him to do exactly what he wanted...

And the thing is, the gospel doesn't say that Thomas actually touched his wounds... Because maybe all he needed was for Jesus to be present and to understand his needs...

Which invites us to wonder, how God is meeting us in ways that are personal and unique... Ways that might not involve physically touching God, but the ways we are invited into God's presence.

For example, just the other day, someone told me that they experience God through creating religious artwork... They couldn't really describe it, but God's presence is very intense in those moments...

And for me, I experience God in my breath, and when I am out in creation, in the presence of the sunset, the wind, the rebirth of spring, and so much more...

Because God our creator has created so much life around us, and God's very breath keeps this planet and all of the cosmos alive...

A God that is so vast and expansive that it goes beyond our imagination... And yet a God that is so personal and relational, that God shows up for someone like doubting Thomas...

And I believe that God continues to personalize our relationship... meeting us where we are at... We just need to take the time to recognize it...

Because it might not be something you were actually looking for...

For example, how we heard in the first creation story that God created day and night... And if you are just looking for the daylight or the night time, you will miss all of the beauty from the sunrise, sunset and everything in between...

And then there are some ways that do not change in how we experience God, ways that I pray fill you with God's presence and give you fuel for the week ahead...

As God always promises to be present in Holy Communion... Where you are invited to touch and taste God...

And we have our worship services... Where you can hear and experience God through word, song, and prayer...

Where we share the peace of God... By saying the same words that Jesus said to us today... breathing into us as we say... peace be with you...

Because no matter what you are going through, or where you are going, even in the chaos, God's peace is with you, because the Holy Spirit has breathed and continues to breath into you...

Meeting you where you are at and bringing you peace... Every day and night, and every single space in between...

Where you are invited to breath... Breathing in God's peace and presence...
Knowing that even in your times of doubt, that God is right there with you...
Amen.