A Breath of Fresh Air:
April 19, 2020

[Video - Jetsons’ Video Phone]

Who would have thought... [1 Zoom Meeting]
Back when this episode of the Jetsons...
First aired... back on October 7th 1962...
That the video phone...
Would be the honest to goodness reality...
The way communicate with each other today.

It has become a vital part...
Of the way the world works...
In the midst of this pandemic.

And I think...
This period of time...
Has pushed us...
Into a new ways of communicating...
That some people...
Didn’t want to do...

They use Skype... FaceTime...
Facebook live...
Zoom... reluctantly..
Kicking and screaming...
Longing for the good old days...

And others...
Were totally ready...
And excited...
To embrace the technology.

Longing for the vision of the Jetsons...
To become normal.
Just a part of life.

But however you use technology...
There is no way to deny...
How important...
It has become to us... right now.

I have a love/hate relationship with Technology. [2 Technology]
I love it when it helps me to do my work...
Or serves to distract me...
When my mind is swirling...
Out of control.

It’s good to relax sometimes.
And watch a movie...
Or read an eBook...
Or listen to some music.
However...
I don't like it when the Grocery Store Self-Checkout register...
Tells me in an overly loud... extreme voice...
To take my receipt.
Or take my bags...
Before I get a chance to do it.

I say... take it easy... I'm working on it...
Don't boss me around...
Grocery Store GYPSY.

See... GYPSY... is what we...
In our family...
Call any GPS or electronic device...
That tells you where to go...
Or what to do.

And to me...
The funniest one... right now... [3 Apple Watch]
Is Janet's Apple Watch.

Sometimes... when we are sitting in our living room...
Minding our own business...
Out of of the blue...
Her watch chimes...

And of course...
We're always thinking...
It might be the VA...
Texting Janet with some kind of problem.

Or it might be one of our kids...
Texting to tell us...
Something has gone wrong...
Or the baby girl is on her way...
Or they need something from us.

But no.
Janet says to me... more often than not...
Her technology is telling her... [4 Breathe]
To breathe.

I'm not kidding.
Apple watches...
On a regular basis...
Tell their owners...
To stop what they're doing.
And breathe.

Of course... if you're like me...
You shut that feature off.
Because I don’t want…
No stinking watch…
Telling me… what to do.

Even though… as you all know…
I am not the greatest at breathing.
It’s not one of my big strengths…
But my breathing… did have something to do…
With location.

Location.
Location.
Location.

When we lived in the midwest…
There was an abundance of humidity…
There were green growing beautiful things…
Surrounding us… all the time.
These factors constantly caused me…
To fight… to get breath…
Into my lungs.

I thought nature hated me.
Was planning my demise.

But it turns out…
That it was just…
The wrong environment…
For me to breathe. [5 I Can Breathe]

When we moved here…
To the high desert…
All the sudden…
I could breath again.

Now… mind you…
It’s not great all the time.
I still lose my breath…
When we hike up a mountain…
Or go for a long walk…
Up a big hill…
By our house…

Because our house…
Is surrounded by big hills…
On all sides.

It is a geological anomaly…

But… anyway…
My breathing is different now.

And two things…
About the change.

I didn’t realize that it could be different.
I didn’t know there were options…
That could change the way I live…
That could help me live and move and breathe…
More freely?

And secondly…
I didn’t know how limited… I was…
How hungry…
My body was for air.

I had adjusted…
To my environment…
And it became my… NEW NORMAL.

I had gotten accustomed…
To being limited.

So listen.
To me… the gospel lesson… [6 Locked]
We have today…
Hits really close to home.

To those of us…
Living and staying…
In our homes.

This is the evening…
The same evening…
That Jesus was raised from the dead.

And even though…
Jesus told the disciples…
What was going to happen.
How this was going to work.
What they should expect…

They didn’t understand in that moment.

I mean… who can blame them.
These events are a complete reversal of everything…
They had know and experienced…
in the course of their lives.

This was so strange… to them.

Remember this story is from the gospel of John.
And John writes…
That at this point…
They did not understand the Scripture…
That he must rise from the dead.
They hadn’t seen Jesus yet.

Mary Magdalene had seen him.  
She had a conversation with Jesus.  
He spoke her name…  
And her eyes were opened…  
And she saw Jesus.

But she was the ONLY ONE…  
At this point.

So. Confused.  
Broken-hearted.  
Unsure.

And filled with fear…  
That the same people…  
Who killed Jesus…  
Might just be after them… too.

They did the only thing…  
They could think of doing.  
Which was to hide.  
Behind a locked door.  
And cower in the darkness.

I can’t imagine this setting…  
This enclosed environment…  
Was the best place…  
For them… to remain…  
Centered in Christ.  
Focused on the hope he offered.  
Filled with goodness and light.

They sat there… in the stale stink of fear.  
They sat swirling in their hearts and minds.  
About everything that had gone wrong.  
They sat in complete darkness.

Alone… together in one room…  
But feeling alone.

Now this is where everything changes.  [7 Jesus]

Jesus comes into the room.  
It doesn’t say how…  
It just says that he came…  
And stood among them.

And what did he see?

His friends that he loved…
Cowering in fear. 
Immobilized by doubt. 
All torn up… inside… 
About how wrong… 
The world was…
In that moment.

And what they need more than anything... [8 Peace] 
Was PEACE.

Not just the absence of conflict.

They needed peace. 
The kind that surpasses human understanding.

The kind of peace that brings wholeness… 
When everything is wrong.

They kind of peace that assures them… 
That Jesus is alive… 
Has defeated death… 
And right now… 
In this dark moment… 
He is STILL in control…

The kind of peace that gives them confidence... 
Or what we Christians call FAITH... 
That Jesus is their LORD.

Peace be with you... he says... 
As the Father has sent me... 
NOW... I send you.

And he breathed on them. 
The breath of New Life. 
The breath of New Hope. 
The breath that changed the world.

And that’s what they needed... [9 Fresh Air] 
They really needed... 
A Breath of Fresh Air.

You’ve heard that saying before... 
It refers to something new... 
Which is refreshing, invigorating or stimulating.

A Breath of Fresh Air... 
Is a refreshing change. 
From the way things currently are... 

That gives us... 
New strength and energy... 
To LIVE AGAIN.
The saying...  
A Breath of Fresh Air...  [10 Industrial Revolution]  
Originated in the 18th century...  
During the First Industrial Revolution...  
When Europeans figured out systematic ways...  
To create coal, iron, railroads and textiles.  
All the materials needed...  
For building the world...  

In the process...  
There were some practices...  
That created extremely harsh...  
Working conditions...  

Many workers started moving...  
From the well-ventilated  
And pollution free areas...  
Out in the country...  

To the cities...  
Where the factories were...  
To dark and dirty working zones.  

Coming out of such enclosed  
And polluted environments  [11 Fresh Air]  
Was a breath of fresh air.  

This phrase became important...  
For the workers...  
Who needed...  
To get out... for their own well-being.  

Same thing with the disciples.  
They needed to get out...  
Into the world.  

The were not called by Jesus...  
To sit in some stinky dark room...  
With no hope in their hearts...  
And no mission in the world.  [12 Sent]  

They were called and sent...  
Just like Jesus was called and sent...  
To be filled... with the Breath of God...  
The Holy Spirit.  
The very power of God...  
To do and work and love...  
In the world.  

And to change things.  
For the good.  
For our God.
That was their calling.

Hasn’t changed... has it?

I mean... obviously...
We are in an environment...
Which for the common good...
Is self-imposed.

However... I think it’s a little dangerous...
To our spiritual well-being.

There is a temptation...
To cower in the dark.
To feel like we have no hope.
To think we have to be afraid...
To the point of being...
Ineffective.

It’s not true.

We are different.
We have two things...
That set us apart...
From those who have no hope.

We have the PEACE of Christ.
The wholeness... inside of us...
That assures us...
That HE IS ALIVE.
HE HAS DEFEATED DEATH.
And WE DON’T HAVE TO BE AFRAID.

And... we have the Breath of Christ.
We have the power of the Holy Spirit...
Living inside of us...

To guide us.
To strengthen us.
To make us more than...
People cowering in locked rooms.

We are disciples.
We are the people of Jesus.
And we have work to do.

And if you can’t think of what your work is...
or what you can do in the name of Christ.
Talk to your brothers and sisters.
Get ideas from them.
Work together.

Call people.
Check in on people.
Send cards.
Make masks.
Color on the sidewalks.  

Think of something new.
To give people hope.
Talk about what you know…
About Jesus working in your life.  

And remember…
As tempting as it is…
To fold in on ourselves.  

It's not just about us.
It's about God's love…
For this world.  

You are called…
To be a life-giving…
breath-filled…
disciple of Jesus.  

[13 Go Outside]
Sometimes it's hard to remember…
Who we are… in Christ.  

So… just like the Apple Watch…
I'm going to invite you…
To take minute…
Every day.  

Go outside.
Doesn't have to be…
Out in the mountains…
Or on a trail  

Just open your door.
Let the air come in…
Come into your house…
Come into your lungs.  

Breathe deeply.
Remind yourself of who you are.  

Remind yourself that your human shell…
Your physical body…
Has been filled…
With the life-giving breath of God.  

Remind yourself…
That you have been filled with the Holy Spirit…
Which replaces the noxious air…
Of anything that closes us in.
You have the Holy Spirit…
Living in you… and giving you…
Continuously…
A breath of fresh air.

Take that fresh breath in.
Hold it in your lungs.
Feel the power of God…
Inside of you.

And know…
That even in the darkest times…
Christ is with us…
To give us strength…
And peace.

Thanks be to God!
Amen!