

## **McCabe United Methodist Church**

Part 9, Ghost Stories: Tales of Holy Visions & Divine Encounters:  
2017 Summer Series

### ***Breathing In and Out***

Sermon on Mark 6:45-56 (8/19 & 8/20/17)

Pastor Mark Ehrmantraut

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Let us Pray: Holy and Powerful God, God who is moving and active and alive, thank you for these testimonies. Thank you for moving in our lives. Here and now as we worship you, may the words of my mouth and the meditations on each of hearts be acceptable in your sight. You alone are our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

About five or six years ago, Marin, our daughter, and I took scuba diving lessons. When you're learning to scuba dive, breathing is a big deal. You're very conscious of your breathing, especially as you breathe in, but also as you breathe out.

Breathing in and breathing out. You have to be able to breathe in and breathe out to stay alive.

And it's the same with our faith, isn't it? Breathing in and breathing out.

But how do we "breathe in" our faith?

We Breathe In the Spirit of God. We connect to God as we pray and as we read Scripture and as we worship and study and meet with other Christians. We Breathe In as we celebrate communion and we Breathe In as we offer grace.

Breathing In is important so we're better able to Breathe Out and make a difference in the world. We Breathe Out so we can live our faith so we can help others connect to God too.

We're reading from the Gospel of Mark this morning.

Hear a little bit about the way Jesus lived this rhythm of breathing as it unfolds across Mark's Gospel.

At the beginning of the Gospel of Mark Jesus is Breathing In. He's solidifying his connections with God. In Mark Chapter 1 Jesus went to be baptized. The Spirit of God poured out upon him, then, immediately after being baptized, Jesus spent forty days in the desert.

- 40 days alone.
- 40 days praying and meditating on Scripture.
- 40 days fasting.
- 40 days, Breathing In, plugging into the power of God.
- 40 Days preparing, so he could better Breathe Out.

Continuing in the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter of Mark, Mark 1:35 says:

*Very early in the morning while it was still dark,  
Jesus went to a lonely place to pray.*

Jesus, Breathing In, so he could Breathe Out, so he could minister as he moved throughout Galilee.

Reading on, deeper into Mark 1, Jesus took time away from the crowds. He prayed in **LONELY** places.

Bill Gaultiere<sup>1</sup> writes that it took a while for it to sink in for the disciples, but when it did, they cried out: "Lord, teach us to pray!"

And to this day, we pray these words that Jesus taught. We've already prayed them this morning.

Lord, Teach us to pray, and Jesus replied:

*Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name.  
[You are holy and mighty and the One and only God].  
Your Kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread. And please forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us. And don't let us give*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.soulshepherding.org/author/bill/>

*into temptation, but deliver us from evil. You are the kingdom.  
You are the power, and you are the glory, forever. Amen.*

At this point, Jesus was teaching and healing. He was challenging people who were using religion to put other people down.

Jesus and the disciples had been busy in ministry. Let's jump ahead to Mark 6 where Jesus needed to again create some space to catch his breath

It had been an exhausting movement of events.

- His cousin and friend John the Baptist had been recklessly murdered.
- The disciples were returning from their breathing out ministries. They were overflowing with excitement and bombarding Jesus with the stories.
- And Jesus, filled with compassion, Breathed Out and fed thousands in the crowd.

Fortunately, prior to all this, Jesus had prepared so his soul was sufficiently filled. Otherwise it could've crushed him, but he also knew he couldn't just keep going and going.

They needed to Breathe In...

Jesus said to the apostles, it's the title of the last hymn we just sang. Jesus said: Come with me and find the Quiet Center. Come with me to a quiet place and get some rest.

So, they made some time. They took some time to breathe in, so they were ready to Breathe Out.

Today's Scripture begins with Jesus seeking to create some space again. Jesus sent the disciples away in a boat. He dismissed the crowds to give the disciples some space. Then, when everyone was gone, Jesus went away himself. He went to the mountain to walk and pray.

As Jesus was catching his breath, in the distance on the Sea of Galilee, his friends were in trouble. Their boat was floundering in a storm. Jesus quickly

shifted gears. He went from Breathing In to Breathing Out. From praying on the mountain all alone to walking on the water, going to his friends and calming the storm.

There's a Holy Rhythm here isn't there?

Breathing In... and Breathing Out...

Let's fast forward as Jesus was nearing the end of his ministry...

In Mark 14, Jesus and his disciples went to the Upper Room for what we call the Last Supper.

They Breathed In through worship and celebration. They Breathed Out caring for one another and preparing for the crowds...

This was so much more than a meal. This was a time of renewal and preparation. This was a time for Breathing In so they could once again... Breathe Out.

Mark 14 continues: Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the Garden of Gethsemane. Breathing In, Jesus watched and prayed all night. In doing so, he was strengthened to Breathe Out one last time.

Jesus praying. Talking to God saying: God, I don't want to go to the cross, but not my will. Instead, may your will be done.

Chapter by chapter we're confronted with what it looks like for Jesus to Breathe In and to Breathe Out. And Chapter by Chapter we're forced to examine our own lives.

There are times we might cry out.

- I'm too busy... Man, I don't have time to just sit and pray.
- I'm too busy... I don't have time to read my Bible or meet with Christian friends for encouragement and accountability.
- I don't have time to serve others.
- I'm too busy!

Patrick Morley <sup>2</sup> writes about the young businessman who said he didn't have time for 'Breathing In' he didn't have time to pray and spend time in his Bible. Even getting to worship was a stretch.

He was too busy Breathing Out.

- He had young kids...
- He was building his career...
- He was so very active at his church.

And then we consider Jesus' response...

Luke chapter 14 touches on it.

This guy prepares a great, delicious feast. He sends out special invitations and when the banquet is ready, he lets everyone know.

Anybody else remember singing about it at Bible School?

- ♪ Come! The banquet is ready, but instead of coming, he gets the excuses.
- ♪ I cannot come to the banquet don't trouble me now. I have married a wife. I have bought me a cow.

Remember that song?

- ♪ I just got married. I have to work. The fields need me. I have a new place I need to take care of [, and so on].

In Luke 14 we learn that if we don't have time for Jesus, Jesus will keep going. He'll eat without us. Jesus wants us at the table, but he's not going to wait around for us. He'll leave us behind if we don't have time for him.

If we don't make the time to Breathe In to rest and renew in the arms of Jesus, then we begin to suffocate, and if we suffocate spiritually, we don't have the chance to live out the second part of The Greatest Commandment.

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<sup>2</sup> Morley, Patrick, *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines: 12 Habits to Strengthen Your Walk With Christ*, Moody Publishers; English Language edition (February 1, 2007) Amazon page at <https://www.amazon.com/Mans-Guide-Spiritual-Disciplines-Strengthen/dp/0802475515/>

We never create the opportunity to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Loving our neighbors, Breathing Out.

Martin Luther said that he was so busy, he HAD to spend three hours every day in prayer so he even had a chance to get it all done. Luther said:

I've got to spend real time Breathing In, talking to God, listening to God, so I can have a chance to Breathe Out, to live in a faithful and productive way.

Friends, I come this morning confessing. This is hard for me. I wrestle with finding this balance. If I'm not careful, if I'm not intentional, I can find myself sliding into Breathing Out alone.

I feel called. I feel like I need to be doing things that increase the likelihood that we're making disciples of Jesus Christ because I believe it is through Jesus Christ that lives are reached and that the world is changed.

Yet I also know that if I'm not careful, if I'm not intentional about spending time in prayer and in my Bible, if I'm not intentional about meeting with people to talk about faith, I start to wear down, and little by little, my breath gets shallow and weak and I start to suffocate.

In the short term, I'd rather be moving and going and doing, but I also know that ***IF*** I'm going to keep going and moving and doing, I have to spend time Breathing In too.

If I don't:

- I begin to wear down...
- My fuse gets shorter...
- Any reserve of grace I have empties....
- And I slip into a perspective of passing judgment...

There's no doubt I am a work in progress. I also have no doubt that I have a God who loves me and who pursues me even in my brokenness. So it is, I also know that I am better able to receive this love, and to offer this love, when I am intentional about Breathing In this true gift from God for me.

So. How are you this morning?

Where are you in this discussion?

Maybe you feel like your breathing levels are full and well maintained. Great!

Or, maybe you feel like you're filled up and overflowing. You have so much to give, but don't have the opportunities right now. Maybe this is the time to find places to Breathe Out your love of Jesus. Maybe this is the time to follow those holy promptings to Breathe Out wherever God is prompting you to serve.

Or, maybe you feel like you're running on empty gasping for air. Maybe you feel like you're barely hanging on.

How's the rhythm of your breathing going, and, are there any adjustments God wants you to make?

Let's pause for a moment to spend some time with God in Silent Prayer.

O Holy God, we Breathe In and we Breathe Out. Fill us with your power, fill us with your compassion and peace. As we worship you and as we examine who you've created us to be, show us the way and lead us into the future. You are God. We love you. We need you and we humbly bow before you praying in Jesus' name. Amen.