

## Thought for the Day 28th May - Helen Cox

When I went to Sunday School I came home each week with a small card on which was written a scripture verse from the King James Bible to memorise for the next week. I still love the words of this version. In later years the Three Year Lectionary guided my reading. One of these post-Easter readings was (John 20: 19-31 KJV) and when I read this passage some words stood out which had faded from my memory and have moved me to write.

The first appearance was when Mary Magdalene found the empty tomb. This was the second.

“19 Then the same day in the evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 20. And when he had so said. he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. 21. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. 22. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost;”

Of course we now speak of the Holy Spirit. Was this the way forward for them? To be sent? And what did “breathing on them do”? Jesus saw their fear and spoke of Peace but also of action and the gift of the Spirit.

There is opinion among some writers that Jesus breathing on his disciples could be connected in John's writing to the creation story...”And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living man” (Genesis 2:7). And then, the Psalmist (Psalm 33: 6,9), recalling the Creation, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth, for he spoke, and it came to be, he commanded and it stood forth”. Here again “the breath of his mouth” was the vehicle for life.

Another appearance occurred on the road to Emmaus as two disciples walking were joined by Jesus but they didn't recognise him. Verse 32 touched a chord: “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures.” (Luke 24: 13-35)

Later Acts 1: 8-11 records the disciples witnessing the Ascension and as instructed gathering together in Jerusalem and (Acts 2: 1-4) “there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind”, when Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled and this mighty act is what we remember at Pentecost which is celebrated at the end of this month.

How often we need to be reminded that what we read of different events learned from the Bible sometimes contain the small phrases which prompt much to consider and learn and of which we should be reminded and memorise. Do our hearts burn as we turn the pages of scripture? Do we take time to convince others about the power of the Gospel?

We too can be spirit-filled and remember that the Spirit can be a gentle breath or a rushing wind, but it is alive and active in our world. (John 14: 15-20) This was what Jesus promised. It is the complete enabler in a world full of doubt and fear as we hesitate about the future. After Pentecost the fearful doubting disciples were spirit-filled and taught and preached the risen Christ and from that time forward the Great Commission was fulfilled. An old hymn is an encouragement -

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love  
and do what thou wouldst do.

Edwin Hatch 1835-89