



The Second Sunday after Pentecost
Trinity Sunday



A Sermon By
The Rev. Kevin Antonio Smallwood

June 7, 2020
Grace Episcopal Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

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Living and One True God, direct us in your ways that we may be unified and whole just as you are with the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A young woman froze in her tracks today, and not because she was cold, but she froze within herself. She went into a deep state of what seemed like the inability to process, move, speak, or any other function.

Then she heard the words “inhale...exhale”....again, she hears the words “inhale...exhale”

The words began to catch up with her mind as they slowly melted into her nose, then through her chest, and into her belly.

“Good, just like that, keep breathing”, her doctor said.

Keep breathing, keeping doing that thing we all do that lets us know we are alive. Breathe. Breathe. Breathe.

And yet, so many of us are not able to simply keep breathing with a steady rhythm and flow of normalcy.

Black people in America have not been able to breathe correctly since the colonizing of this nation.

Black Mothers of a distant past still gasp for air as they cry for the return of their children who were ripped from their arms.

Black Fathers of today still scream without oxygen in cement cages built to destroy the black family.

Black Young children of the future still advocate for the release of oppression from the necks of our people.

Yes, see breath... the ability to breathe...the act of breathing.. is not only a sign of life, but it is a gift, therefore it is a gift of life, and ultimately a gift from God.

This gift has been unjustly taken from so many black lives over the past 400 years and we can see that just as in the past, this present day and time is riddled with the sin of racism.

It is one of the original sins of this nation and we are still asking, with the little breath that is left. When will it end!?

When will the justice that we seek be transformed into tangible policies of reform, and reconstructed into truthful systems of democracy that actually work for the liberty and justice of all.

Can't you hear it in the voices of the protestors out on the frontlines who scream 'WHEN GOD WHEN'.

Can't you hear in the tired, yet strong, voices of your black friends and colleagues who have to wake each and every day to a nation, and world, that is too often ready to erase the cadence of our joyful noise and our sorrowful pain.

Can't you hear it in the voices of the young children who don't understand why their schools are not as equipped with good textbooks and teachers as the schools down the street?

If we don't listen and learn of the voices from the beginning of the oppression, we surely will lose the voices of the present, and muffle the voices of the future.

For our liberation from past injustices is tied to the liberation from the present injustice, for there to even dream to taste the hope of a liberated future.

Three distinct happenings in time all leading toward one reality: God's justice, God's truth, God's love.

Many theologians ponder different ways of understanding and speaking about the Holy Trinity, as did I upon praying over the scriptures for today. How is God both Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but at the same time One, three persons in One. How does the unity of God work, what does it mean to call God Father? Does the word Father exclude the idea that God is also mother? How does the Holy Trinity explain our place in this existence?

These questions and thousands more come up when discussing the Holy Trinity, and yet what seems to be a common thread not only in academia, but also in lived experience, is the mutual relationship of communion.

The Holy Trinity seems to be all about mutuality in love, light, and truth. This is what I focus on when I think about the Holy Trinity. The communion of the Holy Trinity is concerned with the beginning, the middle, and the end of time.

For instance, Today's singing of Canticle 12 is to highlight the Old Testament reading which the Genesis account, the creation story.

You know the one about God creating all of this existence in 7 days.

That account is the beginning to understanding the Holy Trinity. It begins by naming God as a creator, a supreme being that brought life from a formless void and hovered over the water, like the air that we can't see.

The account goes on to tell of what God does to continue breathing life into creation. We have waters and dry land, daytime and nighttime, animals and humankind.

In this account we learn that God calls creation good.

This goodness of creation is an extension of the goodness that already exists in the essence of God. God's gracious, tender, and loving compassion gave us the gift to experience this good creation, and we know this by our ability to:

Inhale...exhale...

We too have the gift of breath, which gives us life.

God then loved us so much that he created a way for us to not only breathe, but to breathe forever, in the eternal. This way that he created came in the form of Jesus, the Christ, who shared human form with us, died, came back to life, and says to us

"Wait there is more life to live

There more air to breathe, and it is with God the Creator, I am going back to God but I am bringing all of you with me."

Then God gives us a promise that the Holy Spirit will be with us continuously, until all of creation is brought back into God's unity.

Three persons in One God. The same God who breathed life into creation is the same God who walked among us and breathed life into the dead and healed people, it is the same God who moves as the Holy Spirit, guiding us into truer ways of justice and peace.

If our One God has breathed life into the trees giving them reason to be, our God is also breathing in us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to help liberate black lives from the oppressive forces.

So that when we are righteously angry at the injustices of the world like racism and poverty, we are then moved by the power of the spirit to peacefully protest and to share the wealth by donating to food drives.

It is the same God who comes to us in spirit and teaches us right from wrong, truth from lies, good from evil.

So that when we are bombarded with fake news sources that aim to continue oppressing us, we are then empowered by the spirit to speak the truth in love.

It is the same God who empowered Jesus to preach Good News to the poor and release of the captives.

So that when the Holy Spirit moves in us we know how to vote, how to share, how to building bridges and communities that sustain all people, not just some.

It is the same God who is breathing within each and every one of your spirits right now at this very moment.

It is the same God who says I am with you always, which means that we too are brought into the Holy Trinity.

We are baptized in the Holy Trinity, which means we too will one day experience the True Unity of mutual love.

If we therefore are baptized into a Unity of mutual love that creates, redeems, and sustains the gift of life eternal....

then that same God must have breathed the same gift of life into George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Emmett Till, myself and all other black lives that move towards the Holy Trinity of God's all-consuming love, justice, and peace.

Therefore we continue to pray, to protests, and rest, just as God did, so that tomorrow when we scream again that Black Lives Matter.

Maybe the world will remember that when God created the heavens and the earth, you and me, black and white, gay and straight.

God said it was GOOD, and made a plan to bring all of us back into God's loving embrace! Inhale...Exhale...

Amen.