**The Breath of God and a Mighty Rushing Wind**

 I have a deep conviction, and I know many of you agree, that revival is coming soon. When we think of a mighty rushing wind of God, it is a powerful move of his Spirit, sweeping across our nation. We pray and envision a day when we see mental illness broken off of people by God’s hand. We dream about demonic strongholds being snapped off the people we love so they can be in their right mind again. Imagine those you have prayed for for years; their minds were darkened and their hearts hard towards God. When God’s Spirit rushes on them, their eyes are opened and they are forever changed. We look forward to a day when the ones who seemed the most unreachable will all of a sudden develop a hunger to know Christ. Those who once spent their evenings watching filth on TV or online now have this incredible thirst for reading the Bible. Anxiety, fear, a love for money – they all fade away under the light of Christ. When the Spirit of God rushes upon us, he stirs up gifts of miracles, prophecies, healings, and powerful preaching of his word. I was on a prayer walk in my neighborhood and I saw a vision of all the porches filled with people signing worship songs together and reading the Bible with their neighbors. That felt like revival to me. In my own strength, I was so excited that I wanted to go knock on doors and tell people to come outside. I wanted to print out fliers and try to get everybody going on the *porch revival plan*. But, even though this is a beautiful picture, I cannot force a move of God in my neighborhood. So, what should I do?

 When we look around at the culture, we see hints of revival coming. The confused minds and oppressive leadership and even the stirring in the church, all points to a coming revival. But, if we’re not careful, our tendency is to try to force it. We are eager to stir up the gifts and see miracles in our generation. We want to recreate the powerful moments we read about in Scripture, and we are trying to manufacture a move of God. We get worked up chasing after one revival meeting or another, one prophetic ministry or another, or various social causes. I think our hearts are generally in the right place, but we have to recognize God’s order for bringing about revival. Yes, revival is coming, but what the Lord is doing in this day is preparing us for it. I sense it in worship and in prayer. There is a gentle stillness that he is calling us into. There is a profound peace and a subtle whisper of his presence. He is trying to call us to it but we have to slow down and discern it.

Valene’s Plant

 A couple weeks ago, our good friends Anthony and Valene asked us to keep a few of their plants at our house while they were out of town for about a week. All they needed us to do was water the plants and make sure they were getting some sunlight throughout the day. Now, my background in business for years was project management, so I am Mr. Efficiency. I had this brilliant idea that we could just flood the plants with water early in the week and leave them by the window. I thought we wouldn’t have to water them as often and they would grow faster. I was in a hurry to see them grow, and I was worried about the plants dying. I really wanted to good job for my friends, so I tried to rush the process. Some of you are cringing because it’s obvious that I know very little about plants. I don’t buy plants. I buy flowers for Dani. I pick out the arrangements myself, trim the stems, put plant food in the water, and put them in a clean vase. And I keep them alive for a solid week. That’s all we need. Plants are little different. So, Dani in her incredible wisdom, came to me and cautioned me not to overwater the plants. My argument was, they need water, so just give them extra and speed up the process. However, she cautioned me that if you flood the soil, even if the water is pure, you will actually strip the soil of the nutrients – you will rinse the nutrients right out and eventually kill the plant. The proper approach is to spend more time with the plant, pruning it when necessary, rotating it, giving it smaller servings of water occasionally. Now, this is an image for our discussion today. We see this growth, this harvest of souls, this revival coming and we are eager to bring it about. But if we try to force a move of God, we can actually cause more harm than good.

When we think about the *mighty, rushing wind of God*, we are talking about revival. When we talk about the breath *of God*, we are talking about a place of intimacy with him.

**Here is the main point for today: You will never be able to manage the mighty rushing wind of God if you have never known the breath of God.**

**Wind of God – Breath of God**

*Acts 2:1-4*

*“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*

 The day of Pentecost relates to an Ancient Jewish celebration known in the Old Testament as the *Feast of Weeks.* It was about 50 days after the Passover celebration and was a time to thank God for the barley harvest. They had a number of sacrifices they offered as a remembrance to the Lord, and as they brought in all of their crops, they were to intentionally leave the edges of their harvest alone. The intent was to leave something for the poor or the traveler. So, you might say this time of celebration was a moment of God giving rich blessings to his people, and then his people sharing those blessings with others as a testimony unto God. So, it is symbolic of what we see in this passage. There is a tremendous spiritual blessing in the way of God stirring up miraculous gifts and empowering his people with superhuman abilities. In turn, they would take that “harvest” and also reach out to bless others. They not only spoke in languages they did not know, they preached the gospel in those languages. Imagine seeing them with flames of fire shaped like cloven tongues hovering over their heads. It was amazing!

 Often, we read this story and we think that this is the first time the disciples received the Holy Spirit. We tend to prioritize the big moves of God’s power in the Scripture, which contributes to us rushing towards revival. However, let’s look at one other verse to settle into our discussion today.

*John 20:19-23*

*19 “One the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’ 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.’”*

 So, this is happening around the time of Passover; again, roughly 50 days before Pentecost. I see here an image of Jesus looking ahead at a coming revival and releasing his power – through the Holy Spirit – unto them. But notice, this first time, he does not come with overwhelming power and a rush wind. He comes with a quiet, subtle, almost forgettable release of his breath on them. Why is this important? If you are never close enough to Jesus to feel his breath, you will never know what to do when he sends his mighty rushing wind. So, to prepare us for a coming revival, he calls us to his heart, not just to a use of gifts. If you want to be mighty for God in the marketplace, you have to be still with God in the secret place. John the Baptist preached powerfully in the city squares and baptized in the Jordan River. However, it was not his gifts that led him – he had searched the Lord’s heart for years in the wilderness first. You see this in the lives of many prophets. The Lord settles them in a place of solitude with him for a time, sharing visions, and sharing his heart for the people, before they go out and preach.

 We find here in John’s passage that the Lord calls his disciples to the secret place, breathing on them, and sharing his heart. Jesus shows them his pierced hands and his side. It’s not just about powerful gifts. He wants them to see his passion for the lost. They have to go with his heart if they are going to be effective in the revival. His words unto them are, “Peace be with you.” It is a reminder that he has settled our debt with God, and we are forgiven. That is, we have peace with God forever. In the same way, he calls us to be ministers of this gospel of peace, and says he is sending us out. He says that he sends us out in the same way the Father sent him. What is that place? A place of compassion for sinners. We are close to touch his pierced hands and his pierced side. We are learning, not just about powerful gifts from him, but about his incredible mercy – his compassion – for sinners. He sees a harvest of souls ahead, beginning with Pentecost. He calls us to be laborers in that harvest. In verse 23, he talks about us how power to forgive sins or withhold forgiveness. The idea here is that if we preach the gospel of peace, we can proclaim that sinners are forgiven before God. If we do not preach the gospel, if we do not labor in the harvest, we risk people not hearing about God’s forgiveness towards them. Therefore, we are “withholding” forgiveness. It is the image of gleaning the harvest. If we reap to the very edges of the harvest, and take it all for ourselves, we leave nothing for the poor or the traveler. Instead, we are to leave the edges untouched so they will know someone has had mercy on them. It is a testimony and witness. As we see the Lord’s wounds and hear his message of peace, we are close enough for him to breathe on us. That is, we take on his very compassion and from that place, we go out to stoke revival. Without this, we will be ineffective when the mighty rushing wind blows.

Military Example

 Many of you know that I grew up in the Air Force. Most of my business experience for many years was working for a private financial services company that exclusively serves the military. I loved the military. I actually tested to join at one point, but I ended up withdrawing my application because I didn’t have total peace about it. But I always remained interested in military culture, history, and the lives of the servicemembers. Any military person you talk to likely has a story about basic training. They will tell you about the utter confusion and chaos during that time. Many people join the military thinking about heroic movies they have watched. Some have dreams of carrying an assault rifle into enemy territory and finding the terrorist. Some want to fly a fighter jet. So, they attend basic training expecting to learn how fire a rifle or how to fly a plane. What they learn instead is how to fold their underwear precisely, or how to make their beds, or how to march. It seems so insignificant and useless. They have to get a buzz cut and learn a new way of living. None of it seems to matter in the moment. In my previous job, I got to participate in something called a ZeroDay PT experience. In the military, ZeroDay is the beginning of your military career at basic training. The entire intent is to break you down as an individual and build you up as a member of the team. When you get off the bus, there are loud speakers with sounds of gun firing, screaming, and explosions. At the same time, the cadre (drill sergeants) are yelling orders and it’s pitch black outside (4:30 am). The idea is to mimic the basic training experience and we learned that all of the “useless” routines in basic actually served a greater purpose for war times. No one would entrust you with an assault rifle if you couldn’t follow simple instructions with folding your underwear. No one would turn you loose with a fighter jet if you couldn’t remember how to put patches on your uniform. See, if you don’t take the time to learn the intent of your commander, learn the ways of your fellow soldier, and learn the basic disciplines, it could cost your life on the battlefield. It doesn’t matter how talented you are as a marksman if you cannot follow orders and watch your fellow soldier’s back. So, it is in the spiritual realm. The Lord first calls us unto himself in the secret place, and then releases us as laborers in the harvest of revival.

Contrast from Scripture – Rejecting Jesus, but accepting his power

 As a quick side note, we should consider the contrast between the disciples and others throughout Scripture who were raised up for revival. What we find in the New Testament is that the Lord called his disciples unto himself and breathed on them; that is, he took the time to share his heart and passion with them in anticipation of the coming revival. So, they were able to be effective in the moment that the Spirit of God rushed upon them with miraculous gifts. If we keep reading in Acts, we will see that this was not just a momentary explosion of gifts but the ministry was sustained for a very longtime. In fact, that first day Peter stood up to preach, thousands were saved, and the Lord added to their number daily. For thousands of years, we still marvel at what they accomplished for the Lord. But remember that what we are communicating today is that:

**You will never be able to sustain the mighty rushing wind of God if you do not know the breath of God.**

Scripture offers plenty of examples as warnings for us. We will just look quickly at three:

1. Samson, Judges 13-16.
	1. Samson was appointed as a deliverer for Israel. He was to be raised up in the spirit of revival to protect Israel from the Philistines.
	2. The Lord called him to the secret place. He called him to what’s known as the Nazirite Vow. It was a consecrated lifestyle that was to serve as a reminder for Samson of his devotion to God. It was to serve as a means for Samson to know God intimately.
	3. It seems that Samson neglected his duty in the secret place. God was still faithful and he would rush upon Samson in great physical strength, allowing him to tear wild animals with his bare hands, or defeat 1,000 Philistines all by himself.
	4. However, because Samson did not prioritize the breath of God, he used the mighty rushing wind of God selfishly. You can read about how he provoked the Philistines with riddles and did not always honor the terms of the Nazirite Vow. So, even though God’s power was evident in his life, I believe he missed out on what God really wanted for him.
2. King Saul, 1 Sam. 10:5-13
	1. He was anointed as Israel’s first king. The Bible says God gave him a new heart and made him a new man – an invitation to the secret place.
	2. The Lord’s Spirit rushed upon Saul producing gifts of prophecy, amazing the people of Israel. However, Saul was not interested in the breath of God, but only in power (mighty rushing winds).
	3. He eventually shipwrecks his faith, is rejected and replaced as king, and dies frustrated and defeated.
3. Simon the Sorcerer, Acts 8:9-24
	1. Simon is a magician who amazes the people. They consider him to have God’s power.
	2. When the apostles come with the true power of the Holy Spirit, people believe and are changed. Their power comes from a place of intimacy with God, not just gifts.
	3. Simon tries to buy this power from them and Peter sternly rebukes him.

The tragedy: I never knew you… depart from me “workers of lawlessness.”

* Those who took the power God gives but never accepted the invitation for relationship.
* “I prophesied, I healed, I preached…” but he never knew you.
* This is not a statement saying, “you’re a stranger.” He is saying you rejected the secret place of knowing me; being under my breath for a time.
* The hint is in “workers of lawlessness” – the law is a revelation of God’s holiness, his character. A worker of lawlessness then, is one who rejects him.
* Springs Church employee example.

The point here is that if we prioritize the mighty rushing wind of God and never know the breath of God, we shipwreck our faith. Randy Sawyer, *Battling the Black Dog.* He shares about post-adrenaline depression. He suffered with depression, not related to sadness, but to being depleted from an addiction to adrenaline. We chase one spiritual high to another, looking for signs and miracles constantly, and if we are not careful, we will deplete ourselves because of chemical imbalances. He suffered long-term health effects from this. Without balance we are no use for the kingdom. We have to be close enough to the Lord to feel his breath on us in the quiet place, so that we will know how to steward the mighty rushing wind of God in the time of revival. Sawyer says, “We must seek a balance of worship in spirit and truth; spirit without truth is wild fire; truth without spirit is no fire” (129).

In this moment, God is calling us to the secret place, where he might breath on us and share his heart in preparation for the coming revival.

**Closing**

Matthew 9:35-37

35 “And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’”

Revival is coming. The Lord’s heart is to send his mighty rushing wind to stir faith and release miraculous gifts in his people, and to draw sinners unto himself. That is his work – he provides the harvest. So, it’s strange to me that, if it is his harvest, why would he ask us to pray to him to send laborers? The issue is that he invites us to a place of intimacy first – the place where he breathes on us. He wants us to pray for others to come along and know his heart (those are the true laborers). It’s not just about gifts and passion and rushing towards revival. Anyone with a sickle or a reaping tool can knock down the crops and drag them in, but God has a particular plan for this harvest and we only find it in the secret place. (“I see a harvest. Bring them to me.”) We will not be able to manage the harvest (or mighty rushing wind) of God if we do not know the breath of God in the secret place with him. What do you see when you look out on our culture? Are they not sick, diseased, and afflicted? Are they not harassed by demonic agendas and helpless under oppression? Are they not lost sheep with no shepherd being picked off by vicious wolves, with no one to come to their rescue? Do you look upon them as the Lord does? Do you have compassion for them and see a great harvest? Do not make the mistake of shipwrecking your faith by thinking you can win this generation with passion and gifts alone. Come and sit under the breath of God so that you can be faithful when it is time for the mighty rushing wind of God.

The Spirit and the Bride say come! Bring the harvest. Bring the revival. Bring your kingdom. We can only say “yours is the kingdom and yours is the glory” when we are close to his heart.

Close in worship – these last few weeks, in worship, there has been a stillness and place where I sense God pulling us in to breathe on us. Let’s steady ourselves and wait on him.

Call up the prayer team (after worship) for anyone who needs prayer

Reminder – one service next week @10:00, for our Summer Social (6/26)