



## St. Michael's Church

CHARLESTON, SC  
SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2020

ROMANS 10:8B-15  
LUKE 4: 18

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT  
WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,  
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,  
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

So much happening today, the joy of our reopening day! The Concern of a pandemic still raging and the pain of National Civil unrest, all wrapped up on Trinity Sunday. Despite the winds of change, fear, and anarchy, we again know and believe:

- God is in Control
  - God the Father who Created us
  - God the Son who has saved us
  - The Holy Spirit breathing and burning within us.

Still, it's never been as much business as UN-usual as it is today. So, to be authentic, real, and to help make sense of our times, and the Gospel, we're doing a first ever Sermon-Duet, with Gospel Partner and Friend, the Rev. Anthony Thompson who himself lost his wife to the murder at Mother Emanuel. Anthony and I are going to do a good old fashioned preach-off on Luke 4:18...one verse, 6 lines. I'll take the first three, Anthony will take the next three.

*My part: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*

*Anthony's part: He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.*

Let me begin my part with a story, an imperfect parable, but it gets the job done. Let me take you to 19<sup>th</sup> Century Paris and the love story of Jacob and Lila. They are childhood sweethearts. Lila is ambitious and energetic, while Jacob is contemplative and thoughtful. They get married and move into the apartment above Jacob's bookstore, where Jacob would mind the books downstairs and they would live happily ever after. Jacob loved it, but Lila felt cramped and craved adventure. She finds an agent who praises her singing voice and entices her to tour Europe. She says yes. Jacob, realizing their marriage is over, is devastated. At their parting, Jacob reaches into his pocket, hands her the key to the front door of the bookstore, and says, "Keep this. You'll come back and I'll be waiting." She kisses him and leaves. To escape his pain, Jacob turns to books, as an alcoholic turns to liquor. He speaks little, does little, and distracts himself in books and the business. Sure enough, fifteen years after Jacob hands her the key, Lila returns. When Lila walks back in, Jacob stands up but doesn't recognize her, and treats her as an ordinary customer. "Do you want a book," Jacob asks? Lila is startled Jacob doesn't recognize her and playfully says, "I do, but I can't remember the name of it. But it involved 2 childhood sweethearts who lived above a bookstore?" Jacob's face, like his heart, is dead. He shows no recognition. To Lila's heartbreak, she realizes Jacob lost touch with his heart's desire, that he no longer knew the purpose of his waiting and grieving. All he remembered was the waiting and grieving itself. Dropping the key, Lila flees the shop in tears. Jacob returns to his books, unaware the love he waited for had come and gone.

You may recognize this story. Tennessee Williams' *Something by Tolstoi*, written in 1931.

An imperfect analogy. Lila is our Faithful Father who has never left us. But Jacob, Jacob is our country, maybe even you and me. Those who have dropped the key, lost that first love, lost that love for our Creator, Redeemer and Holy Spirit. What we have seen across our country are the evidences of forgetting. Forgetting who wrote our laws, who our true Father is. The consequence of forgetting????? Godlessness. Specifically, the church forgetting its true purpose of evangelizing and discipling. From California to Washington, we are seeing the consequence of forgetting.

Maybe this was why Jesus goes to the Synagogue in Luke 4, proving that even Jesus attended church. Jesus reads from that Jewish Prophet Isaiah, Chapter 61, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*" Three action-packed lines. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...* Yes, the Spirit of God was indeed on Jesus, who would then breathe into the disciples that same Holy Spirit, to send them as He was sent. Later still, that Holy Spirit anointing coming on everyone at Pentecost! This breath..this life-saving breath.

Last week we talked about three roles of this breath of the Holy Spirit.

1. As one coming alongside us to point us to God
2. As a welder's flame to bend our sinful wills, convicting us to repent
3. As dynamite in our hearts, imploding here to change us from within into the image of Jesus!

But today one more role of the Holy Spirit. The breath of the Spirit brings:

- Order out of disorder
- Order out of chaos
- Order out of anarchy

Genesis 1. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. The God said, "*Let there be light,*" and there was light. You see, God stared into the face of chaos and brought order by breathing the Holy Spirit. Without that breath: Destruction!

That breath that George Floyd was calling out for, whose last words were *I can't breathe*. On Tuesday of this past week, Billy Graham's brother-in-law, and friend of St. Michael's Leighton Ford wrote: *Dear Jesus, Please breathe your breath on us again for all who are suffocating in sin, sorrow, no way out, sickness, slavery...*

My beloved friends, we have generations of

- men
- women
- and children
- black
- white
- brown
- red
- and
- blue who are not breathing!

They're trying to breathe on their own. They don't know the Holy Spirit. They may not even know any other way to live, than living eye for eye, tooth for tooth. They don't know that in Jesus they have the power to forgive and be forgiven! They don't know right from wrong! My friends, the consequence of forgetting is death.

Yes, Come Holy Spirit, come alongside. Refine us with your refiner's fire, with dynamite change us from within, and use us to bring order out of chaos. By giving us, from Luke 4:18, an insatiable desire to preach the Good news to the poor!

What is the good news? Who are the Poor? The Good News is both new and good! For thirty-three years, the God of the universe stepped out of heaven to come to earth in order to secure redemption for all who believe in His name. Becoming Jesus, the anointed One, Who would redeem His people, as foretold by Isaiah. He came as God among us, so that His shed blood would pay the full price of our bottomless swamp of sin. He would be crucified with criminals and have His hands and feet pierced. He would rise from the dead and in so doing break the power of sin and Satan, death and hell, for all who would trust in Him.

Billy Graham sums up this news that is Good this way:

- God's love and forgiveness
- Adoption into His sons and daughters
- Fellowship with His people
- Freedom from the Penalty of Sin
- Freedom from Generational Sin
- Liberation from the Power of Sin
- And deliverance from Hell!

Who are the poor?

- Yes, the down and out
- BUT ALSO, the rich – those who are up and out
- Those who have everything but Jesus
- All colors, all ages
- With badges, without badges

As that hero of many who recently died, Ravi Zecharias said, "Our challenge is huge. How do you reach a generation, a people who listens with its eyes and thinks with its feelings?" Where there is no breath, there is no good news, only destruction now and into eternity!

Church, Rise! We cannot afford to do business as usual. We can't afford to be Jacobs who are so forgetting and distracted with life, grief, anger, or indifference, that we actually forget our first love, and the need to give our faith to those suffocating right now.

Back to Leighton Ford who prayed, "Jesus Breathe out your Pentecostal Fire! On all flesh, black, brown, yellow, red, white. Burn out our hatreds, our silences, our forgettings. Before we all burn. before we all die"

Oh my, if we've been Jacob, forgive us...we repent. Breathe your holy spirit into each one of us today, into our leaders, into the hearts of our nation. In Jesus Name.

Take it , Anthony...

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Lord Jesus..

We confess we are poor and needy.

Captives to sin and Satan

Spiritually blind

and dead in my trespasses and sin.

Come into our hearts today through the Power of the Holy Spirit...

Redeem me..

Redeem us

Redeem our country from the pit

Reach down and save us from my captivity and

Help us daily breathe in the Holy Spirit to open my eyes to the truth of your word and bring your Kingdom Order.