

Transfiguration  
Dallas, Texas

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Numbers 11: 24-30

Acts 2:1-21

John 20:19-23

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Back in early April, when the pandemic was spiking around the world and most nations were implementing some sort of lockdown, a rumor about the coronavirus began to go, well, viral. Actually, more than one rumor. One said it was unleashed by a secret cabal of billionaires to control the masses. Another suggested that it was a bioweapon experiment gone wrong. And yet another said it was the result of the new 5G cellular technology that is somehow zapping us from all those towers.

Yes, my friends, conspiracy theories are on the rise. It seems like they're everywhere these days.

Which makes some sense. Social scientists say that whenever people feel particularly powerless and frustrated, conspiracies become a popular alternative way of making sense of things. So these days, stories about faked moon landings and grassy knoll snipers are joined by all sorts of new and imaginative conspiracies about the coronavirus.

Friends, I hope we can all remain committed to the truth during this crisis, and the truth usually doesn't reside on a poorly made YouTube video or all-capped meme on Facebook with lots of extra question marks or exclamation points. Scientists really are our allies right now. Thousands of doctors and epidemiologists really do know more about the virus than a lady on YouTube. We really can trust the experts to provide the best information about how to stay healthy and safe, because people of faith can put our hope firmly in God to get us through this crisis, while also looking to science and health experts for guidance and facts.

So, I'm generally not a fan of conspiracies. I think they mostly just distract us from working together to solve our big problems. But...I want to let you in on something. I am, actually, a part of a conspiracy. A big one. One that reaches into every corner of the world, and goes all the way to the top.

And I think you may be in on it, too.

Did you know that the word "conspire" means to breathe together? The root of the word means to be filled with the same breath, the same spirit, the same wind.

Now, I know this is going to sound a little freaky during this pandemic, when we're all paying a lot of attention to staying out of breath-shot of everyone else, but scientists tell us that the air we're breathing right now is the same air that's been in the atmosphere for millions of years. Which means, the breath you are

taking right now once passed through the lungs of tyrannosaurs and blue whales and Abraham Lincoln. And when we exhale, our breath goes out into the world, to be drawn into the lungs of people we will never meet, in places we will never visit, in a world we can't even begin to imagine right now.

There's one breath, though, one *particular* breath, that left the mouth of a man a long time ago and has been spreading out into the world ever since. People have been breathing that breath in their lungs and in their souls from that day to this, and it's been binding them together into a movement, a body...a *conspiracy*.

It's the breath that we hear about in today's gospel, "When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked...Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."...When he had said this, *he breathed on them* and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Friends, do you see? The breath you just took in your lungs carries some of the breath that once passed through the lips of the risen Jesus. Breathe again. That breath carries some of the sparks that almost lit the heads of the disciples on fire on Pentecost. We are breathing that same air, that same wind, that same breath, wherever we are, scattered and shut up all over the metroplex. It connects us in ways we can't understand or imagine, but are every bit as real as the air we breathe. We are breathing together, which means we are conspiring with the Holy Spirit.

So you see, we're part of a conspiracy. The biggest of all conspiracies, one that reaches every corner of the world and goes all the way to top.

Because it didn't take long, it appears, for the conspiracy to get out of that locked Upper Room. The Book of Acts describes how the breath of Jesus worked on those disciples almost immediately, inspiring them to keep his life and ministry going even after he left their physical presence. He was going to leave their company, but the movement he had started had only just begun. With his breath in them, and dancing on their heads and in their hearts like flame, the 11 became 120, and the 120 soon became 3,000.

"Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:43-47)."

That's what makes this conspiracy so different from the sort we can learn about on YouTube. Their stories are mostly about planting seeds of cynicism and distrust, separating people and driving us apart. But from the very first moment when Jesus breathed on his disciples, the divine conspiracy has been about binding people together to be a force for goodness and blessing in the world. When we take his breath into our lungs and into our souls, when we conspire with the Holy Spirit, we become part of his plan to make the earth become a whole lot more like heaven.

Today, we're going to baptize three new Christians. They spent this past year learning and praying and growing in their faith, and now, at last, they're ready. Ready to be baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. Ready to make their covenant and commit to its promises. And ready, also, to be anointed with oil and breathe in the Spirit. So Sam, Alex, and Natalie, welcome to the divine conspiracy.

It's must be this spirit of conspiracy that inspired us to celebrate the Eucharist today for the first time in over two months. At least, it feels a bit like a conspiracy, the way we've planned and prepared it. In just a few minutes, Mother Rebecca will preside at the altar, blessing bread and wine for over 500. When we finish the service, a handful of volunteers will carefully arrange the Sacrament into packets, and then nearly 75 more volunteers will drive them all over the area. To houses and apartments. To high rises and assisted living communities. To over 30 zip codes. The Body and Blood of Christ will head out from this place like, well, like that breath Jesus first breathed on the disciples that quickly spread out into the world. A breath that will be with you even before the little packet gets to your home with its sacred contents.

Because the conspiracy of which we're a part is about more than this, or any other, building. Our highest calling is to *be the church, not go to church*. We are divine conspirators when we act like Christians not simply in a specific building, but in our entire being. Because, the truth is that the world has plenty of people who've spent a lot of time in church buildings who still seem sadly unfamiliar with the way, the truth, and the life of Jesus. It's not the building that makes the Christian; it's the desire to follow and love like Christ that makes the Christian. As G.K. Chesterton famously said, "Just going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in your garage makes you a car."

So this conspiracy with the Holy Spirit is about becoming the sort of people who show our Savior to the world out there every bit as much as in here. And that's especially true right now, as we continue through this long, strange ordeal. There are more people than ever in my lifetime, and perhaps in yours, who need Christians to behave more like the one we follow – healing, forgiving, feeding, blessing. And the way we'll do that is by drawing that divine breath deep inside us,

and then letting it flow out from us in acts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That is what the Spirit does, or rather, those are the signs that the Spirit is around – when you see and experience those things. That’s when you know you’re in the presence of someone who is in on the divine conspiracy with you...someone who is sharing that same breath, blown by the same wind.

My dear friends, we are going to have to be Christians at home for a little while longer. Which means, we are going to have to conspire with the Holy Spirit a little harder, but that’s okay, because the Holy Spirit is a master of conspiracy.

So breathe in the breath of Jesus. And breathe out goodness and mercy.

Breathe in the Holy Spirit. Breathe out compassion and peace.

Breathe in and breathe out, again and again, and let that divine conspiracy flow out from you to change the world.