

SUNDAYS SOUL SONG Vol 2 No 27 Pentecost Psalm 104

“Sing the words and tunes of the *psalms* and hymns when you are together” Ephesians 5:19

Theme: “Breath on Me Breath of God”

**Lord, send out Your spirit
And renew the face of the earth.**

¹ Bless the LORD (YAHWEH), my soul!

Yahweh, God, how great you are,

²⁴ How many are your works, O LORD!

The earth is full of your riches.

²⁹ You take back your spirit/breath, they die,
returning to the dust from which they came.

³⁰ You send forth your spirit/breath, they are created;
and you renew the face of the earth.

³¹ May the glory of the LORD last for ever!

May the LORD rejoice in his works!

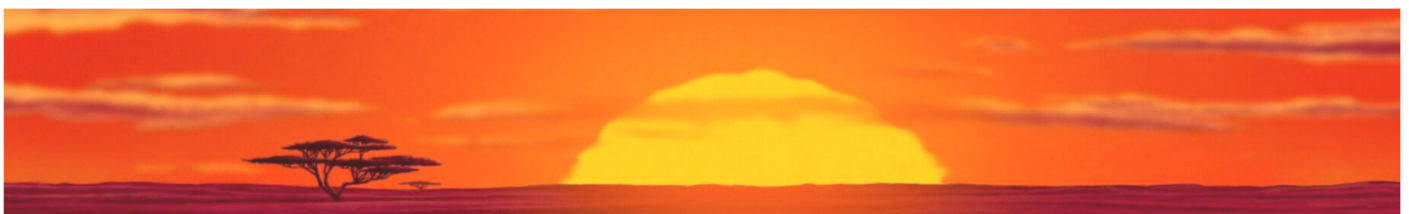
³⁴ May my thoughts be pleasing to God.

I find my joy in the LORD.

If you have time try and read all 35 verses of our appointed psalm of praise to the creator



The British singer ‘Sting’ sings “every breath you take.” The pop group Berlin gave the original Top Gun movie its romantic theme music with “Take My Breath Away.” Taylor Swift has a whole album titled “Breathe” and its lead song is the result after her love went away. Not to be outdone, Britney Spears has a song in which she hopes her love will “Breathe on Me” and one of the mellowest songs of the rock band ‘Pearl Jam’ includes a lyric invitation for a lover to “just breathe with me.” By the way, this list of songs about breath and breathing could continue, but you get the point. On YouTube you can access a religious material such as “O Breath on Me Breath of God” or “Breath On Me Breath of God” or Marty Goetz’s “Breath On Me” so very beautiful a meditation.



Ironically breathing is the one thing we all do without (thankfully) ever having to think about it. In fact, there is no swifter way to have trouble with your breathing than trying to pay attention to it or being forced to pay attention to it. We don’t pay much attention to literal breathing but we talk metaphorically about it a lot. We express shock and surprise by using the phrase “It took my breath away.” This conveys the idea of fear or suspense when we say “As I stood there, I didn’t even dare breathe!” Breathing is something we all do on average 16 times per minute and we do not need to think about it or will ourselves to do it. In fact the only time we pay attention to our breathing is when something is going wrong.

Psalm 103/104 is a psalm of praise, which focuses on God's creative work. It begins and ends by calling the prayer to praise. God. Claims that each breath is given by God. It makes it sound like this is a conscious action on God's part, which of course is a little hard to take literally. The average adult takes 23,000 breaths per day and nearly 8.4 million breaths per year. One cannot quite see God breathing in and out of each person's mouth and nostrils every single time. And let's not even factor in what Psalm 103/104 includes: birds, and animals. Everybody. We are talking about a lot of breaths!

But since part of Psalm 104 is assigned for the Year A Pentecost Sunday, lots of breaths and thinking about breathing (verses 20&30) is the point of it all. Pentecost is the great out-breathing of God's very Spirit and although some Bible versions capitalize the word "Spirit" in this psalm, that is really more of an anachronism that glosses a Trinitarian theology over and onto a Hebrew poem whose author had no idea of a separate Person in the Godhead known as the Holy Spirit (distinct from the Father and the Son). For the ancient Hebrews, if God breathes onto a creature, it lives and has life. If God stops breathing that creature dies.



Psalm poetry works with hyperbole (exaggeration) and so we know not take it as biblical literalism that God makes each person's chest rise and fall 16 times a minute. But that does not diminish the profound truth that lies behind such poetics. Sometimes we make Pentecost all about only the one Person of the Holy Spirit. But really; Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all part of the Pentecost Package. What's more, Psalm 103/104's contribution reminds us that our Triune God is sovereign over all things. God's attending to us by the gentle (now indwelling) presence of that Spirit is such a profound gift. It's the reason to give God all the praise. *"Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, enkindle in them the fire of love."*

Psalm 103/104 tries to muster the whole glorious entire creation to give praise. And it's more than a good Pentecostal reason to give God the glory for our salvation in Jesus Christ. Because through Jesus and now by his gift of the Holy Spirit we come to see and know the truth of who Jesus is for us. Verse 33 proclaims; "I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God for as long as I live." Going beyond Psalm 103/104 we know that "as long as I live" will be forever. Because Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will never die but live." Thanks be to God for giving breath to all God's creatures, now and into eternity! *'Breath on me breath of God. Fill me with life anew. That I may love as you do love, and do as you would do.'*