

# BREATHE

Acts 2:1-21 | John 7:37-39

The \_\_\_\_\_ of God

The \_\_\_\_\_ of God

Living in a world that can't \_\_\_\_\_

God gives \_\_\_\_\_

READ. REFLECT. RESPOND. REMEMBER.

I have wrestled mightily with what I want to say in this space today. I don't know if I'll get the words right, but I'll try. The church of God has come a long way, and it still has a way to go. That's what we celebrate today, of course, in Pentecost, that we are by the work of the Spirit, the church of God. But in us all burns that spirit of the age that seeks to neither honor God or know him. The Bible's only answer to what we have growing in that spirit is repentance. And sometimes, like now, we can name that repentance. We can name racism as sin. Yet find words that excuse it – it was their behavior. It was their dress. It was their attitude. Then we can, and do state that this is who these people are. Maybe we check ourselves, and maybe we don't. This is all *these* people are. We strip them of meaning. Of mattering. Remember the reaction to saying Black Lives Matter. It's still there in the world. The reaction was "All Lives Matter" and that isn't false. All Lives Do Matter. But it was an exercise in ignoring the truth that for many in our culture, their life in particular under the law but in many other ways as well, did not matter. A way of taking others pain and telling them that it really did not matter. In fact because words can sometimes contain both the positive and the negative, these words that All Lives Matter were often spoken in the context of subtly and not so subtly excluding black lives.

Which gets me to Monday. George Floyd. What is grieved is that life didn't matter on Monday. The secret that we know is that to the spirit of the age, life didn't matter on Sunday or Tuesday or any other day either. What is grieved is that for a group of people, they have walked around for life in skin that did not matter. In the Individual Confession and Absolution liturgy, there is a line that says, "I have lived as if God did not matter and as if I mattered most." That is the spirit of the age. That's the spirit Paul talks to on Mars Hill in Acts 17, but he counters that spirit with the Spirit of God - "He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else." (v. 25). We aren't going to fix our idolatry, that we ourselves matter most. But Paul doesn't tell us to. Instead, he says, "...but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." (17:30).

My work is to confess this week. To repent. To change my mind and being. I have lived as if God did not matter, and as if I mattered most. But I was wrong. May I say to those of this world that your life matters. It matters to God. It might be all the church has left. And frankly, it might have been the only thing He really meant the church to be in the first place.