




devotional



love, peace + life

Pippa Peppiatt points us towards the source of peace in a time of crisis

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t a time of crisis, we need to hear words of hope and be encouraged. There's no better place to start than God's word, and the passage I want to share

is John 20: 19-22, when Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection:

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again, Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that, he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'

love not fear

The disciples were hiding in a locked room for 'fear'. For them, it was fear of the Jewish leaders. Our lockdown is over a different cause, an unseen virus, but at times we feel the same fear that the disciples felt.

The Bible tells us that fear has to be treated drastically; it needs to be driven out. *How? By love, for 'perfect love drives out fear.* (1 John 4:18)

God is love.¹ And indeed it was God himself in the form of his resurrected son coming into this locked room in Jerusalem that caused the disciples' fear to go. Verse 20 tells us their fear turned to rejoicing!

As believers let's invite Jesus into every 'locked room' - whether your bedroom or study in home lockdown, or a hospital room, GP practice, or other places of work. Let's also invite Jesus into our squeezed and anxious hearts at this time. Turn our fear into prayer as we welcome the presence of God into each situation that we're in.

Jesus gave them his peace

He stood among them and said '*Peace be with you*'. (John 20:19b)

Peace isn't a warm fuzzy feeling. Peace in the Bible is both harmony and a military term. For example, the peace mentioned in Philippians 4:4 is a peace to guard your heart and mind. It's like a sentry or an armed guard doing spiritual warfare on fear and anxiety.

Jesus knew the disciples needed his peace. He next shows them his wounded hands and feet- reminding them what he achieved on that cross. Death is defeated! We are restored in our relationship with Father. Harmony (or

peace) is offered us. And how much it cost Christ to achieve this peace for us!

God knows we need this peace too, just like the disciples. He knows nurses and midwives especially need his peace at this time.

As CS Lewis is alleged to have said '*Life with God is not immunity from difficulties, but peace in difficulties*'

Jesus breathed on the disciples

Ironically, at this time we're almost viewing another's breath as potential death to us. The virus attacks through breathing on one another. I read in the news just today how a simple exhalation generates a small fast-moving cloud of gas that contains droplets, which can carry in the cloud over long distances.

We've almost got used to people walking around in public wearing face masks. We're desperate for more PPE in the hospitals. I heard from one of our lovely nurse members this week who works in an A & E department at a London hospital. They start the day with PPE to wear when seeing patients, but it's all run-out two-thirds of the way through the shift, leaving them exposed. You may have experienced

something similar. There just aren't enough masks (or good enough masks) to help protect health workers from virus-positive patients breathing and coughing on them.

yet God wants to breathe on us

God's breath is only life-giving. God's breath is healing. If you stand within two metres of God, his breath will refresh and restore you.

It's the *Ruach* breath of God that hovered over the deep in Genesis 1 and created life. In Genesis 2, God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

In Job 33:4 –it says '*the breath of the Almighty gives me life*'. And in 2 Timothy 3:16, we read that even Scripture is breathed out by God; God's life-giving word.

Now here, in John's Gospel, Jesus breathes on the disciples to impart the Holy Spirit.

Whatever our situation, whatever our concerns, let's stop, close our eyes, take a few deep breaths, and quietly ask the Lord to breathe afresh on us. Receive his Spirit. Receive his love, his peace, and his life. 🙏

1. 1John 4:8