

In the beginning, God, the Breath of God, the Spirit of God and the Word of God were all one and the same.

When God created the heavens and the earth, God spoke and things happened. The Breath of God formed the Word of God and the heavens and the earth were created through God's spoken Word.

When God formed human beings from dust of the ground and breathed into them the Breath of Life, human beings became living souls with the power to do good or evil as they chose.

We are filled with the Breath of God but that does not mean that we are perfect or good because we can choose to ignore the presence of God in the lives of others as well as in our own lives.

When we kill someone, we are ignoring the presence of God in that other person. Only God has the right to give life or take it. We do not have that right. We have power to do it, but we do not have the right.

When Isaiah realized that God had been calling him from the womb, from the body of his mother, to glorify God as the servant of God, he told us about it. Because Isaiah wanted us to know that God calls everyone by name to be a servant of God. God wants everyone who is filled with the Breath of God to do God's work in the world. And if you are alive, you are filled with the Breath of God, and called to do God's work.

But we are not just called to be Servants of God, when God calls each of us by name, (and God does,) we become a Word of God sent into the world to do God's work. God expects that every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God shall not return empty. When God calls your name, you are supposed to fulfill your potential and do what God asks, as the Word of God at work in the world.

This is supposed to be as natural as rain. But we can ignore God's call. We can go through life doing as little for God as we can or even doing nothing for God all our lives. We have that choice.

God calls us constantly. God hopes for the best. But God loved us so much that God gave us the power to choose of our own free will.

This is why Jesus is so important. Jesus showed us the way. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is one person who chose to do God's will even if it killed him. And it did.

John writes, chapter one, verses 10 through 13:

"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood or the will of man, but born of God."

All we have to do is accept that God gave us life; Believe that God calls us; Do what God asks; And have faith that we are children of God and brothers and sisters of the Christ.

Remember the story of Thomas. Thomas did not believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Thomas said, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger on the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples and had Thomas come forward and place his fingers on the nail holes and his hand in his side. Then Thomas said, "My Lord and my God." And Jesus responded, "Do you believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen, but believe."

It's the same way for us. That's the Amazing Grace: That we can believe in the power and presence of God in our lives; That we can believe that Jesus is Alive in us; That we can hear God's call and respond with our whole being, and do the will of God in our lives.

Jesus was called Emmanuel which means God is with us. Jesus was the kind of Servant and child of God that Everyone is called to be. God is with us. We are filled with the Breath of God. We are Children of God. We have life because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

God is with us, but we ignore God. We do what we want. We do not do the work of God, unless it is convenient, or on our way there, or when it doesn't take up too much of our time. Or we give money so other people can do the work of God on our behalf.

Giving money is good. We want to support people who devote their lives to doing God's work. But we are supposed to do God's work in our own daily lives as well.

And, "What does the LORD require of us," say it with me,
'To do Justice,
To do Loving-kindness,

To walk Humbly with our God.”

This is not easy. Even Jesus was afraid. Reading from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 14, verses 32 through 36:

“And they went to a place which was called Gethsemane; and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I pray.” And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And Jesus said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even unto death; remain here, and watch.” And going a little farther, Jesus fell to the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, “Abba, Father, (Daddy), all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but thy will be done.”

Jesus shows us the way to serve God. The Child of God is intended to be the Servant of all. Jesus was meant to be the first of many children of God all doing the will of God.

Paul, the Apostle, has his own way of saying this. Reading from Today’s English Version, Romans, chapter 8, verses 14 through 17:

Paul writes, “Those who are led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons. For the Spirit God has given you does not make you a slave and cause you to be afraid; instead, the Spirit makes you God’s sons, and by the Spirit’s power we cry to God [as Jesus did], “Abba! Father!” [Daddy!] God’s Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are God’s children. Since we are God’s children, we will possess the blessings God keeps for God’s people, and we will possess with Christ what God has kept for Christ; for if we share Christ’s suffering we will also share Christ’s glory.”

Paul uses the same words that Jesus used when he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. “Abba! Father!” Daddy!

Paul says that we have the right to talk to God that way. God is our Daddy. This is very personal. Little children who are not afraid of their fathers and need comfort, will call out to their fathers, “Daddy, I’m scared.” “Daddy, I need a drink of water.” And our Father who art in Heaven will give us Spiritual Water from a well that will never run dry.

Reading from Today's English Version, Romans, chapter 8, verses 18 through 23:

Paul writes: "I consider that what we suffer at this present time cannot be compared at all with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. All creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal his sons. For creation was condemned to become worthless, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was this hope: that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay, and share the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that up to the present time all creation groans with pain like the pain of childbirth. But not just creation alone; we who have the spirit as the first of God's gifts, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us his sons and set our whole being free."

Waiting for our Spiritual childbirth as children of God.

It isn't easy to be a child of God. It is a struggle to do justice and loving-kindness, and to walk humbly with God all the days of our lives. And Paul equates this struggle with the pain of childbirth.

We have God's presence in our lives from the beginning. So, shouldn't it be easy to do what God asks us to do? We have the first gifts of the Spirit. We have the Breath of God in us. God spoke our name when God called us from the womb. But God also gave us free will.

How many of you have ever been a slave to substance abuse? Alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, over-eating? It is a struggle to overcome these addictions. And we have free will.

Sin is everywhere around us. Overcoming our addiction to Sin is just as difficult as overcoming many other addictions. So Paul, who struggled all his life with some GREAT PROBLEMS of his own, Paul says, that striving to respond to God's call to BE a Child of God and DO God's work in the world can be as painful as childbirth.

But with God's help and the help of a supportive community of the People of God, we shall overcome.

And when two or three of us get together in His Name, Jesus will be there also.

And we are gathered together in His Name, Right Now!

We are the Church, the Body of Christ at work in the world.
And Jesus is Alive in us! Right Now!

Reading from Today's English Version, Romans, chapter 8, verses 28 through 30:

Paul writes: "For we know that in all things, God works for Good with those who love him, those whom God has called according to God's purpose. For those whom God had already chosen, God had also set apart to become like his Son, so that the Son should be the first among many brothers [and sisters]. And so God called those whom God had set apart; not only did God call them, but God also put them right with himself; not only did God put them right with himself, but God also shared his glory with them."

How did Isaiah put it, "God said, 'You are my servant in whom I will be glorified.' "

And now we know: "Not just a servant. We are called to be a child of God in whom God will be glorified."

When Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, he said, "Go, thou, and do likewise."

The Good Samaritan was the Christ, the Savior, for the man he helped.

That is part of what God calls us to do. We are called to be the Messiah for other people, to show them the way God wants all of us to live.

The Church, the Body of Christ at work in the world, is intended to BE the Christ for other people, not just for one another, but for the whole world.

That is a tall request.

You noticed I didn't say it was a tall order.

It is a tall request.

Although God calls us constantly to do God's work, God cannot force us to do anything.

We have to do it of our own free will.

Of God's own free will, God poured himself into us, so that we may live, and BE the Word of God, for the world.

Say it with me, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

You are that child of God. Believe in your self!

Believe in your power to reach out and save the world!

Believe that you are called of God!
Believe that God called your name!
You are worthy of being God's Child because God loves you.

Reading from Today's English Version, Romans, chapter 12,
verses 1 and 2:

Paul writes: "So then, my brothers, because of God's many mercies to us, I make this appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship you should offer. Do not conform outwardly to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then, you will be able to know the will of God – what is Good, and is pleasing to him, and is perfect."

Jesus offered himself as a dying sacrifice to the will of God. We are asked to offer ourselves as a Living sacrifice to the will God, to be Living Words of God at work in the world.

God knew you from the beginning. God called you from the body of your mother, God named your name and said you are my servant in whom I will be glorified.

God Breathed into you the Breath of Life and you became a living soul. You are called to be a Child of God so that Jesus would be the First of many brothers and sisters doing the Work of God in this world.

Doing God's work in the world means that we are participating in the Work of the Christ, the work of the Church, the Body of Christ.

When we take communion, and eat the bread, it is a symbol of our unity in the body of Christ, each of us one little part of the whole Body of Christ.

When we drink the cup, it is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the lifeblood of the Church, the source of forgiveness and renewal on a daily basis.

Without it, all would be lost.

But with the Breath of God that gives us life, and the power to do good or evil, we can choose to do good.

So every day, choose AGAIN to do the work of God in your life.

God will never give up on you.

As Paul writes in Romans 8:38:

"For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Each of us is special. God loves us. God has blessed us. God has forgiven us. God continues to call us to do God's work

Every day,
Every Hour,
Every Moment of our Lives.

One of my favorite hymns was left out of the new United Methodist Hymnal. The words were written by John Greenleaf Whittier. I'd like to read them to you now:

"O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother!
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

For he whom Jesus loved hath truly spoken:
The holier worship which he deigns to bless
Restores the lost, and binds the spirit broken,
And feeds the widow and the fatherless.

Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of him whose holy work was doing good;
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.

Then shall all shackles fall; the stormy clangor
Of wild war music o'er the earth shall cease;
Love shall tread out the baleful fire of anger,
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace."

Now let us sing this, together, as our Hymn of preparation.