

The Holy Spirit was pacing the main corridor in the palace of heaven. It was the day that Jesus rose from the dead. Finally growing courageous, the Spirit knocked on the big door at the far end of the hall. "Come in, please," said a loud voice.

The Holy Spirit had been in God the Father's office before, but today was especially tense. "I'm getting anxious." "Don't worry about it," God the Father replied. "After all it was Jesus who had the hard part of this plan. But now he's risen from the dead, showing up in the most peculiar places all over Galilee, and surprising the togas off everyone. They'll be so happy to see you that you won't have a thing to worry about."

"No, you don't understand. I'm getting anxious. I don't want to wait until Pentecost, I want to go there now." God the Father jumped up from his desk. "Now?" He was astonished. "Look we've been over this thing a million times. First Jesus has to come back to heaven and then we'll send you to take his place. We've got to stick to the program. Why do you want to go now?"

"I'm just afraid. I'm afraid they'll miss the point. You know how it's been: all those miracles Jesus worked have made them think he's some sort of a magician. Now that he's risen from the dead, how do we know they won't just applaud and say that was another neat trick?"

"What do you have in mind?" "I think I need to go there now to tell them all future miracles will happen not just because of Jesus but because of them."

God the Father was beginning to see the light, but he pleaded one last time. "But what about our plan? Haven't you even glanced at your appointment calendar? You're supposed to go down there on the first Sunday of June in a mighty wind and dressed like tongues of fire--it'll be spectacular."

"I can still do that," replied the Holy Spirit, "but let me sneak down now for a few minutes in another form." "What other form?" "Breath." "We did that already at the creation of the universe 15 million years ago. Don't you remember anything?" "But no one was there, no one remembers."

"Why breath?" asked God the Father. "Because breath will remind them of life. When a child is born the doctor slaps his bottom to produce the first breath, when old people die the family gathers to pray at the last breath. When lovers embrace they breathe together. In fact, at every birthday they prove their maturity not by speaking, not by writing, not by lifting weights, but by blowing out a bunch of silly candles with their breath. Breath means life."

"But how will breath tell them it's their turn to work miracles?" "Jesus will tell them that. There's only one miracle they need to work. Most of them aren't good at it, but if they practice 77 times a day like they're supposed to they'll get it right." And God the Father agreed.

So on the night that Jesus rose from the dead the Holy Spirit made an advance visit to earth, many days before Pentecost so that we could work the most marvelous miracle of all. Jesus breathed on his disciples. "Receive the Holy Spirit, and forgive."