

VIEW FROM THE HEIGHTS

August 2019

Greetings,

As I write this newsletter, Boston and large parts of the US are in the midst of a searing heatwave. Even if we are blessed with healthy lungs, the high temperature and humidity makes it feel difficult to breathe. The ability to respire adequately is dependent not only on our airways but also on the quality of the air we take in. The amount of water vapour, pollen, pollutants and particulate matter in the atmosphere all impact respiration.

In the dark days (literally!) when Britain was heated largely by coal, black dust coated buildings, lungs and nasal passages in equal measure. People with respiratory diseases had to wear “smog masks” during winter fogs and every year the very young and the very old succumbed to the pollution. During a particularly severe “Pea Souper” in London (1952), it is conservatively estimated that at least 4,000 people died of respiratory distress.ⁱ

From smog to silicosis, coal kills. But this is not a public health paper! Nor is this the weather to contemplate the hazards of toxic air! Instead, I invite you to focus on the purest, freshest, most life-giving air imaginable – God’s own breath.

The Hebrew Bible tells us that God’s Spirit is the wind – or breath – that comes directly from God’s self to us and to our planet. *Ruach* (the Spirit) is the quickening breath of all created life. The psalmist praises God that:

*When you let loose your breath, [all creatures] are created,
and you make the surface of the ground brand-new again.ⁱⁱ*

God’s Spirit is the breath of life for all Creation. She is the pollution-free air that our souls long for.

Think how much junk we “breathe” into our hearts and minds! Hurtful words and hate speech, fake news and false beliefs, too many stressors and not enough Scripture – our spiritual lungs darken and fibrose under their influence.

It’s time to get healthy! Breathe in God’s good air! Let prayer and Scripture and contemplation draw it into deeply into your soul. *Ruach* is the perfect antidote to today’s spiritual smog!

“Let God be the air in which your heart breathes at ease.”ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Estimates range as high as 12,000!

ⁱⁱ Psalm 104: 29 -30 Common English Bible

ⁱⁱⁱ Francis de Sales 1567-1622