

Easter 2 Year B
John 20:19-31

By our wounds, we are blessed.
By His wounds, we are healed.

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In the name of the Holy and Risen Christ+. Amen. Alleluia!

We are in Alleluia time! Our Lord is risen, and the powerful mystery continues – he is present among us! We are celebrating, and we’ll continue to celebrate, especially throughout the fifty days of Easter. We as Christians have been celebrating the Good News for two thousand and nine years, and still our joy is fresh.

But on the day recorded in our Gospel passage, for the twelve disciples hiding, locked away in the Upper Room, there was no joy. There were no alleluias. Mary the Magdalene had rushed in with her bizarre news that she had seen the Lord; they probably just comforted her, assuming she was merely hallucinating in the depths of her grief. Imagine the shock and wonder on those faces when Jesus appeared to them! Impossible! To be so ghostly that he could walk through locked doors, and yet so real with his wounds and his flesh! In other Gospel accounts, Jesus even arrived hungry – asking for food: what could be more real than that? *Now* the joy could come rushing in; *now* the Alleluias and the wonder! I can only imagine the joy in that room.

I can also imagine the doubt of the one disciple who wasn’t there – Thomas, the twin. “No way,” he must have said. “Poor friends – they’ve lost their minds,” he must have thought. No wonder, really – the strain of watching the impossible unfold before their eyes would unhinge even the strongest disciple. Their leader and Lord, the Messiah, the son of God, crucified to death, among criminals – it was a wonder they didn’t all simply die of grief. And so it’s no wonder to me that he said,

“Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails, and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

Thomas demands proof of Jesus’ identity. Not only for himself, but for the sake of his friends’ sanity, Thomas demands proof. Doubting Thomas, the one who wouldn’t believe unless he not only saw but *touched* the wounds of Christ – our Thomas has historically been seen as the “bad boy,” the faithless one. But I am persuaded to see him differently. I am persuaded that Thomas was right: that the wounds of Christ are *pivotal* important to our understanding of him, and to our understanding of how Christ would have us be in the world, for the sake of his love.

Thomas teaches us that woundedness is required as a sign of truthfulness, of integrity. Jesus teaches us that we are to allow our wounds to be seen. Have you ever considered how much energy we spend on covering up our wounds? You know, the Latin root of the word “vulnerable” is “*vulnera*”, which means “wound.” To be vulnerable is to be “woundable,” to be open to the other. It is only through our wounds that we receive our deepest gifts. How else can I really resonate with the suffering of someone who is grieving a great loss, if I have never suffered great loss myself? Where does our deep compassion and understanding come from, if not from our experience of the same troubles? Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, ascension, and presence in our lives today is all about this deep type of resonance: deep connection with the other, and deep connection with God. We cannot connect unless we

share our story, our wounds, modeling for others the possibility of sharing their wounded places with us. Jesus models this for us in his encounter with Thomas.

I find it very interesting that the Greek word for “wound,” *tupon*, translates not only as scar, or mark: it translates first as “model.” Christ *models* for us, sets the example for us, to be open and recognizable as one who has suffered, in order to be worthy of another’s trust, and to step into our call to love one another.

I want to share with you a story about one of our saints: St. Martin of Tours. A devout and beloved monk, Martin was in his cell, deep into his work of illuminating a Gospel text, when an apparition appeared to him. This figure appeared to him as the Lord, and was dressed in royal robes, with a resplendent kingly crown on his head. “It is I, Martin, your Lord!” But Martin only looked at him, closely, and then bent his head back down to his writing. “Martin, it is I! Bow down before your Lord!” But again, Martin quietly returned to his task. “Martin! Why do you not heed me?” And Martin said, “I see no wounds, and so I know you cannot be my Lord.” The story goes that the apparition disappeared in a puff of smoke, leaving a foul stench. Martin knew that without his wounds, this apparition could only be that - could only be an imposter. Without his wounds, and without our own, we cannot recognize each other; we cannot connect with each other. Without these wounds, we are not able to do as our collect today charges us to do: to “...*show forth in our lives what we profess by our faith.*”

We are to make ourselves open, vulnerable, to each other. This can be a challenge even within Christian community, where we can still feel guarded, protective, unwilling to share our struggles or our pain. I heard of a congregation once where the priest received many requests for prayer support. When the priest suggested their name be placed on the prayer list, the person replied, “Oh please, no! I don’t want everyone to know I need help!” How sad is this? How easy it is for even a faith community to become just a social center, a place to see and be seen, where real suffering is kept hidden, where joys and sadness are not shared. This is not what Jesus suffered those terrible wounds for. Jesus shares his wounds with us, saying that, no matter how deep the suffering is that we may find ourselves in, “*I have been there. You are not alone: I am with you always.*”

Today, when we share the peace of God, and share in the Eucharist together, let’s practice a new awareness of the other – let’s see each other newly. If we don’t know each other’s name, let’s ask. If someone begins to walk out alone, let’s invite them to coffee hour, or walk with them - in the spirit of partnership, of solidarity; as Christ’s own, in peace. Let’s see each other – old friends, new friends - as family. And as the Family of God, let’s see each other with new eyes, really listening - really opening our hearts to each other.

Jesus said, “*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*”

Let us follow his model, of strength in woundedness, remembering that it is only by his wounds that we are healed, and it is only by our own wounds that we are made deeply useful. Just as Thomas, and St. Martin, could only recognize Christ through his wounds, *let us be recognizable* as his people by our hard-earned compassion and our love, and let us carry his peace with us. Just as the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sent his apostles. And so he continues to send us. Let us be the people he has sent: the Body of Christ, for those to whom Christ shall send you. Amen. Alleluia!