

Grace and peace to you from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scars.

We all have them.

Some come with a good story,
like the scar on my chin where
I got kicked by one of my horses when I was in 5th grade.

Some are cautionary tales,
like the scar on my leg from climbing over barbed wire.

Some, like birthmarks, we are born with.

Some scars we don't see,
but they form us into who we are...

broken hearts,
emotional abuse,
accident or other trauma induced scars.
All leave marks, seen and unseen.

In our gospel reading today,
The disciples are hiding.
No doubt they are traumatized and scarred
by Jesus' arrest, suffering, death and disappearance.
They have yet to see Jesus.
Yet to know what his disappearance means.
Yet to grasp what his rising as he predicted means.
Their wounds are jagged and raw.

And Jesus appears to them,
in their hideout behind closed doors,
Jesus comes to them and says,
"Peace be with you".
And then he showed them his hands and feet,
his hands and feet that must have borne fresh scars from nails.
And then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

It was Jesus' body,

his body that bears open wounds,
that displays his suffering,
a body broken by pain and
overcome by death that
also carries the message of new life to the disciples.

And, when they try to tell their friend Thomas
that Jesus was there in the room with them,
that Jesus lives,
Thomas would not believe.
He demands to see and touch the very hands and side
Jesus showed the disciples.

And, then, Jesus appeared again.
To Thomas and the others,
inviting Thomas to touch and feel his wounds.
Did Jesus wince with pain when Thomas touched his wounds?
I would think so.

That is how I believe the resurrected Jesus shows up
in the midst of our pain, and with real presence
and says, I am here with you.
I am with you where it hurts.
Jesus says, the resurrection is real
but it doesn't take me out of the reality that you live
each and every day.
I am with you in the pain of broken lives,
the pain of unrealized dreams,
the burden of an impossible choice.
I am with you when the nails of jealousy,
resentment and life pierce your body.
I am there to dress your wounds,
to sit with you while you regain your strength,
while you decide you can go on.

And, just as Jesus' resurrected body bears the scars of wounds he received while living,
We also understand there are some hurts that remain forever.
There are hurts, traumas and pain that may scar over,
but never really heal,
even after the resurrection.
And that's ok.

And yet, it's also ok to shout Alleluia!
It's ok to celebrate Jesus' rising
and feel overwhelmed by our loss and pain at the same time.
We live in the here and not yet time of
the kingdom of God being realized.
And, so, when all the disciples but Thomas shouted Alleluia,
after seeing Jesus,
it was ok for Thomas to grieve,
to ask Jesus for a sign,
to demand that Jesus present himself.

I cherish the wounds in
Jesus's post-resurrection body.
On this first Sunday after Easter,
even though we are a resurrection people,
some are still hurting.
The world is wounded.
Regardless of where on the planet we live,
we experience grief, fear and anxiety
on a scale most of us have never experienced before.
This year especially, Jesus's scarred body speaks with great power,
tenderness, mercy, and truth.¹

It speaks to us today as it did to the disciples
and then to Thomas.

¹ Thomas, Debie. www.journeywithjesus.net

It speaks to those for whom belief comes easy.

It also speaks to those for whom belief is harder to grasp.

We sometimes interpret Thomas to be a second-class believer because of verse 29: *“Do you believe because you see me? Blessed are those who don’t see and yet believe”*.

But here is an interesting thing to consider about Jesus’ words: the word translated *blessed* in this sentence is best translated as “happy” “content” or “at peace”.

Makarios isn’t that God blesses those who believe more easily. Jesus says that those for whom belief comes easy will rest easy.

But no one,

not one of the disciples or any of Jesus’ first followers believe in this way.

Mary needed Jesus’ voice to recognize him.

The women who ran from the empty tomb,

got Jesus’ appearance as they ran on the path to hold on to.

The disciples on the way to Emmaus got Jesus and his explanation of scripture such that their hearts burned and still only recognized him in the shared meal, the breaking of the bread.

It’s ok, to question and to doubt,
to demand Jesus come to us.

We are the product of many generations of faith-
belief and doubt set next to each other.

We are the present-day scarred body of Christ in the world.

By the Holy Spirit,

Jesus empowers us to continue his work.

Blessing our work with the Spirit,

Jesus affirms God’s guidance and presence will
be with us.

The Spirit will guide, encourage, empower
and help us to remember Jesus’ love and grace and mercy.

Thanks be to God. Amen.