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“Our Wounded Savior”

The Rev. Amanda Gerken-Nelson

Lutheran minister and author, Nadia Bolz-Weber, has an expression which I’ve heard her speak to many times which is: “preach from your scars, not your wounds”

Her message is often to fellow clergy, but I think we could easily change “preach” to “proclaim” and her message is more universally relevant: “proclaim from your scars, not your wounds”

Nadia’s message is one I’ve often taken to heart - like Nadia I believe that the most powerful preaching is personal, it’s vulnerable, and sometimes the clearest signs of God’s grace and love are revealed to us once the scabs have formed and God has saw us through a hard time

But, be careful to preach from your scars and not your wounds because our wounds aren’t yet healed

For instance: Many of you know that my family and I have been displaced for a little over a month as we do a renovation of our kitchen and bath in our home

If you do the math with me, you’ll notice that being out of our house for a little over a month means that my family has been out of our home since Ash Wednesday

That’s right, the WHOLE season of Lent, my family has *literally* been in the wilderness

When I tell people this they often say “must give you great fodder for your preaching” and I say “Yes! Next year!”

The wounds of being displaced from our home are a little too fresh for me to speak of them with any wisdom – and goodness knows our story isn't over and the lessons of this time away are still very far off for me to consider

So yes, prepare yourselves, I might preach about our Lent of displacement next year

But, in many ways, this is still a wound, not a scar

For the disciples in this morning's story from John, Jesus' resurrection is, believe it or not, still a wound – one they are still experiencing the vulnerability of, the disorientation, the fear

Last week we proclaimed with great excitement "Jesus is risen!" and we surround ourselves with the wonder of the scar of Jesus' death on that cross because the 2,000 year old wound has healed and we know its glory

But, today's gospel lesson says that later that same day (that day when Mary went to the tomb and learned of Jesus' resurrection) the disciples lock themselves in an apartment together because they are afraid

And in the deep wound of the unknown future and the shattered hope, Jesus appears

Jesus appears and says "Peace be with you" and then he showed them his wounds

And it is in this act of love, of Jesus showing up in their woundedness with his own woundedness still embodied, offering peace, that the healing of the wound begins

They are able to proclaim Christ resurrected: "We have seen the Lord!"

Christ resurrected is Christ wounded

Or said the other way around, Christ wounded is Christ resurrected!

Thanks be to God! Amen!

And, I'm not surprised that Thomas, not being there for Jesus' first appearance to the disciples, is still in disbelief even after his friends tell him what happened

How are Thomas and we to believe that there is healing for our wounds without seeing the wounded savior who brings the healing?

And so, Jesus appears to the disciples when Thomas *is* present and shows him his wounds

And, Jesus does not judge Thomas saying "you should have believed without seeing me"

No, Thomas' needs in his time of doubt and disbelief, like those of the other disciples, are met

Wounded touches wound, vulnerable touches vulnerability, Thomas touches Jesus and the healing power of God's love is revealed

Jesus meets Thomas exactly where he is, and Thomas' wounds begin to be healed as he proclaims "My Lord and my God!"

Christ resurrected is Christ wounded, thanks be to God!

Jesus' comment of, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" is not an admonishment of Thomas so much as it is a reassurance for all of John's readers – for you, and for me.

A reassurance that, though the wound has healed and the church now proclaims the great glory of this immense scar, our woundedness is still

connected to Jesus' woundedness, our vulnerability to God's holy vulnerability, our hopefulness to the hopeful presence of the Holy Spirit

We are not always comfortable sharing our wounds or our scars with the world, nor is it always safe

Unless someone publicly discloses their scars, we often make assumptions that people don't have any – or, at a minimum they can't have scars worse than mine

And, trust me, this isn't a sermon where I now say "throw down the veil, expose your scars, it's great!"

But, rather, it's a sermon that says your wounded Christ knows you, loves you, holds you, and heals you

Christ resurrected is Christ wounded.

It's a sermon that can't help but acknowledge the woundedness of our world and can only pray that Christ is active in the healing of the conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, and Sudan

Christ wounded is Christ resurrected.

Johnny Tuttle, an Episcopal priest writes, that "Perhaps this means...that we must look at the scars of the world if we are to be witnesses to the life that claims to be victorious. It is counterintuitive, of course. But seeing through those scars, placing our hands in them, caressing whatever has been wounded, might be the place where we can come to the surprising exclamation, 'My Lord and my God!'"¹

It is true for the world and it is true for you in your life, too – that, if you survey your scars – what used to be wounds – that perhaps the

¹ <https://www.ekkleσιαproject.org/lectionary/2024/4/3/iaikix1vjtek7kypq4hxy1rzlumpy8>

sacredness of presence, love, hope, and healing have come near to you,
too – and you have witnessed the power of resurrection

Those scars preach the good news – they proclaim that Christ is risen!

And, if you are still too much in the wounded phase, know that your needs
will be met by our beloved, wounded savior

And the peace which Jesus offered to his disciples, he offers to you and me
and all of us now

Peace, be with you. Amen.