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Showing Our Scars
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Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Welcome to the season of Eastertide – the 50 days celebrating that remarkable event that happened last week and a time of making sense of it as we read about the disciples' encounters with the risen Christ

What really happened last week? What happened to Jesus? Could this really be true? Has our grief turned to celebration? How could it be so?

I imagine that those are just some of the questions on the disciples' hearts as they gathered in that locked room

Are we really allowed to hope once more?

The reality of the moment has been utterly transformed – and very quickly – from utter grief and misery to hope and celebration – no wonder they were hesitant to truly allow themselves to celebrate until they know that Jesus has, really, risen

And then he appears to them: Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord." (vs. 19b-20)

Erin Default-Hunter, a professor of Christian Ethics in CA, notes:
"Remarkably, the disciples do not recognize Jesus as himself – they do not respond with the delight appropriate to this astonishing appearance – until he shows them his wounds. It is not his face or his eyes that makes him recognizable or reveals his identity. Rather, it is the viewing of his wounds

– that very aspect of his life story meant to render him ineffective and gut his witness to God’s peculiar power – that evokes joy in his friends.”¹

It is his wounds

Jesus still has wounds – which I’m not sure we think about very often

Resurrection did not take away the wounds on his hands and the hole in his side, it is these very wounds that Jesus points to to prove his identity

It is these very wounds that assure the disciples it is truly him

It is these very wounds that then Thomas, who wasn’t there the first time, wants to see so that he, too, can believe

“Resurrection hope does not do away with our woundedness” Default-Hunter writes

And woundedness does not diminish or negate Christ’s resurrection

The disciples don’t see these wounds and say “NO! he WAS crucified! What a tragedy!” rather, it’s in seeing the wounds – the very markings of the real life of their friend – that helps them to say “Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed!”

“Christ does not deny the experience of shame, betrayal, loneliness, pain, but rather redeems it. He reconciles it by the power of self-offering love that overwhelms even the most wretched experience” Default-Hunter continues. “Yet it does not do so by obliterating it as if it never existed. It leaves a wound that yet might become a scar – a scar that need not pull us back into self-doubt, isolating sorrow, or genuine profound regret. Instead, it proclaims the goodness of grace, of forgiveness over all that stands against it, be it violence, arrogance, fear, gluttony, or the like.”

¹ <https://eparchive.rf.gd/2014/04/26/shame-scars-and-resurrection-hope/?i=1>

Wounds, scars – signs of both the trials of Jesus’ life and of that self-offering love that raised him and which redeems us all

God is not in the business of perfection – Jesus is raised from the dead with wounds and scars

Resurrection does not mean magical reversal or erasure of all that we have been

Resurrection does not remove our wounds and scars as if they never happened like our society tries to do

We’re not very comfortable with looking at wounds and scars

So much so that as a nation there is a movement to ban books that point to our wounds lest we and our children see our scars

And individually, so often, we hide our wounds and scars – get them laser treated or hide them with clothing or tattoos so as to not be defined by them

Nevermind the emotional woundedness we feel after certain times in our lives and how good we are at picking those scabs and reliving our pain

But Jesus, “Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you.’”

My friends, “the presentation of God’s reconciling peace in Christ [is] extend[ed] to us in still-wounded hands.”²

² Ibid.

Jesus – our history, our bodies, our hope – reaches out to us with wounded hands

Default-Hunter writes, “Christian hope reimagines such scars so that [we] need not hide them in shame or deny the dull ache even ancient ones still provoke. Instead, they become testimonies of God’s determination to expose the false arrogance of the sin and evil that inflicted them. Taken into the body of the wounded yet triumphant Christ, our own abrasions – whatever their source, whatever their form – also become ways we are known honestly, nakedly, and without shame. For God so loved this wounded world, John claims, that he takes those wounds into himself and thus strips them of disgrace.”

Notice Dr. Default-Hunter doesn’t say “and thus strips them away forever” – but, rather, God “strips them of disgrace”

Jesus wounds stayed with him, *stay* with him forever

As do ours

And these wounds, through the radical love of God, have been striped of their disgrace by Jesus’ incomparable grace

We don’t have to hide our wounds and scars, nor be ashamed of them

Jesus was known to his disciples by his wounds

We are known to our God by our wounds – not in shame, but in resurrection joy and hope

Jesus showed his disciples his wounds and their reaction was joy – Jesus is risen!

Jesus looks upon our wounds, our scars – both personally and communally – and says I have redeemed you and love you, do not be afraid to be a witness to your scars as you are a witness to mine – for they also proclaim that YOU are risen indeed, alleluia!