

C Easter 2 4.24.22

John 20:19-31

Focus Statement: The resurrected Christ comes to us with scars

Last week as I was stressing out about some detail for the Painted Chair Affair, I texted a couple of my committee members that I needed them to make the decision because I was still dealing with childhood trauma from being yelled at by women in heels and pearls for my failure to make things look pretty. Fun, probably surprising, fact about your pastor: Growing up I was part of one of those cotillion adjacent organizations whose purpose was to form girls into proper young ladies, and I was super bad at it. There's a reason I call in reinforcements for any church meal. I can cook, I'm a good cook, actually—shameless plug for the Roadrunners lunch on Thursday. But presentation is where my skills fall short. Anyway, the being yelled at by women in heels and pearls was a bit of a light-hearted joke, but with the text this week, it got me thinking about scars, both mental and physical, and how those scars shape us.

Weird childhood fear of women in pearls aside, I have only a handful of scars. I have a mark on my forehead from a sixth-grade bout of the chickenpox. I have a scrape on my knee from freshman year track when I caught the corner on a two-hundred and Grant the hot sophomore picked me up. My nose is slightly curved to perfectly fit a softball—and not fit a covid test nasal swab at all. I have a niggling lower back injury from when my twenty-two-year-old self misunderstood feminism as being able to physically do whatever my six-six male co-worked could do, and I threw out my back moving van seats. These marks, and the experiences that caused them, have all shaped me not only physically, but mentally and

emotionally, in various ways. They are the backdrop of who I am today, a person I think and hope to be not yet fully formed, but who, all told, I'm satisfied to be becoming.

Our Gospel reading for this morning is always the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Easter. Notice, I called today the Second Sunday of Easter, NOT the Sunday after Easter. Because Easter is not one Sunday. Do not let the half-priced Easter décor at Meijer fool you, Easter is not one Sunday, it is a season of seven Sundays. A week of weeks, if you will, in which we experience the risen Christ in our midst. We stand with the other disciples in awe and wonder at the Crucified One again in our midst, and we reflect back on all we had heard and seen before his crucifixion, understanding his lessons and teachings in light of the resurrection. The season of Easter imparts in us this promise that we are never without Jesus, because the season Easter ends on Pentecost, with the coming of the Holy Spirit. We witness Jesus ascend into heaven, only to be greeted with the rushing wind and tongues of fire of Pentecost, filling us with the Spirit and sending us out to be, as we heard Peter declare in the Acts text last Sunday, "witnesses to all that [Jesus] did."

What has caught me about this morning's text in previous years has always been the locked doors, and Jesus' appearance on the other side of those locked doors. There's a lot of great details to think about in that first verse. "When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews." Evening on that day, the first day of the week, tells us that this was the day of the resurrection. That very morning, Mary Magdalene had gone to the tomb to find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. She told Simon Peter and the other disciple that Jesus

was not there, they had seen it for themselves. Then, after Mary saw Jesus herself, she told them that too. But clearly, they did not “understand the scripture” or Mary, because here it is, evening on that day, and they are locked away in fear.

And let’s also point out two really quick things. First, that fear is well warranted. They literally just saw Jesus put to death, there is good reason to assume that violence is not stopping at the leader of the movement, and they too are in mortal danger. Second—and this is very important—the people they are afraid of is not “the Jews” as a blanket statement, but specifically the religious authorities who have sold out to Rome in a bid for power. Because remember “Jew” in the first century is not a religious identity but a cultural one. Jesus was Jewish, all of the disciples were Jewish. They were not afraid of each other, or of the hundreds of Jerusalem residents going about their daily lives. They were afraid of those willing to put someone to death in order to hold onto their tenuous grasp of power. The question of responsibility for Jesus’ crucifixion is a question of power. Who had it, who wanted it, and how far someone would be willing to go to hang onto it?

But the point is, right in the middle of this fear, a fear both well placed and misunderstood, Jesus showed up behind locked doors and gave them his peace. And here’s a key detail about that peace. This is peace that he had promised them just a few days before, when they had also gathered in a house, maybe even the same house, to share a meal together for what had seemed to be the last time. A meal where Jesus had washed their feet, broke bread with them, and critical to understanding this story, promised them both peace and joy. John chapter fourteen, verse twenty-seven, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to

you.” And here in chapter twenty, where we heard the disciples “rejoiced when they saw the Lord,” that’s John chapter sixteen, verse twenty-two, “So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice.” This scene is Jesus making clear to them his fulfillment of the promises he’d made to them that night, promises that must have seemed so far-fetched, if not totally forgotten, as they stood at the cross and at the tomb.

Jesus showing up behind locked doors, doors locked for reasons both good and not as good, has always gotten me. But what got me especially this week is how Jesus showed up behind locked doors. The form the Resurrected Christ took as he stood among the disciples. Verse twenty tells us that what moved the disciples from fear to joy was not simply the appearance of Jesus in their midst, nor what it his offering of peace, it was when “he showed them his hands and his side.” Dear people of God, the Resurrected Jesus is the Crucified One. Here’s the crazy powerful thing about resurrection, the One who was resurrected was first crucified, and the marks of that event remained on his body for the disciples to see. Resurrection was not an undoing of the crucifixion, like the killing of Jesus was a mistake that God had to erase in order to try again. No, the one who was resurrected first died, and brought all of that death and pain with him into resurrection, and eventually through the ascension and seated at the right hand of the Father. The one who sits at the right hand of God, the one who IS God, is scarred. Carries the mark of those wounds, that pain, still. The crucifixion forever shaped Jesus, just as the scars we carry shape us.

Now I want to tread carefully here, because I am not saying that the experiences that caused these scars were some sort of great life lesson that God put you through in order to

change you. God does not cause suffering; suffering is not God's plan for God's people. But the reality is suffering happens, pain happens, and what this story promises us is that God is with us in the middle of that suffering, and that in suffering, God is still at work, bringing about resurrection in the most unexpected of places.

So come today to this table that Christ set for you before you understood it. Come to the promised peace and joy that you may not be ready to comprehend yet but come anyway, trusting in the promise it is there. This table is set by the scarred hands of the one who died and is alive again, a body broken for broken people. Come. Amen.