

Sermon 21.04.11

John 20: 19-31

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, 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. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, '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.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. **Although the doors were shut**, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

SERMON

We heard stories from Nathan, Bethany, Jess, Amy and Paul of how their scars have shaped them; how their faith in Jesus, the Risen One, gives them ways of living with their scars, finding their way through fear and pain.

19 year old Christopher Martin knows something about scars - the internal scars left by guilt, regret,...'what if'...

You see, Chris was the store clerk at Cup Foods, in Minneapolis, back on May 25th last year. He was the one at the cash register that morning, unsure how to handle the \$20 bill that he was handed. It looked counterfeit, but he didn't think this man in front of him knew that. After some indecision, he finally asked his manager what to do...

What if... what if I hadn't taken that bill...what if we didn't call the police? Christopher has carried those scars with him these past 10 months, reliving the moments that unfolded in front of him as he paced back and forth, in front of the store, hands on his head, helplessly watching George Floyd pinned on the street in front of him. Those scars run deep. "There's so much pain and hurt that's followed" he said in a recent interview¹. "if I hadn't taken that bill, this might have been avoided. Not only am I the contributing factor, I'm the big domino that fell, and now all the small dominoes are scattered... I know what it's like to grow up in a household without a father..."

Christopher showed his scars to the world, ending with a hope, a way of connecting his own pain to that of George Floyd's children. "I just hope and pray that George's daughters know that they can do it."

Scars wound us, scars shape us,

What scars do we carry? Visible and invisible...

The Risen Jesus, son of God, knows the pain that scars hold. Knows what it is to suffer at the hands of those in power, knows what it is to be beaten, ridiculed, abandoned by every friend he had. Knows what it is to die.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyjsGZULxTM>

It's this Jesus who shows up that night. This Jesus who, on the first day of the week - the day that follows the Sabbath, the day on which everyone in the rest of that ancient Jewish society, went back to work, it's this Jesus who comes inside. He comes inside to meet *his disciples who have locked themselves away out of fear*. A pretty reasonable fear, really. The fear that society would do to them what it had done to him.

It's here, inside that room, locking out the dangers of the world, that Jesus greets them saying - "Peace be with you".

THEN he shows his scars, holding out his hands, showing the marks of pain and suffering - the marks of crucifixion.

By holding out his hands for all to see, Jesus shows them, and us, that resurrection doesn't erase the pain of crucifixion; resurrection isn't reversal - it's not going back to what was. No going back. Resurrection is acknowledging the scars and receiving God's peace, not allowing our pain and fear to keep us behind locked doors.

You see, Jesus **appears to them for the purpose of sending them outside**. "As Abba God sent me, so I send you." Their purpose in life will not be to stay inside, but get out there and—like Jesus— follow God's call to bring the Good News of God's Kingdom.

But, for now, they remain there.

What happened during that next week? The disciples have their own scars - the 'what if's' that burden them - the failures to show up, the fear that is squeezing the life out of them. Jesus came, offering peace, acknowledging his own scars, and breathed on them, telling them to go - spread my gift of forgiveness of sins.

But what did they do that week? How were they changed by this resurrected Jesus who told them to step out into the world and continue his work?

A week later with Thomas now present, they are still sitting behind locked doors.

Still locked inside, unsure how to move forward, perhaps still afraid.

And so Jesus comes again. Jesus meets them where they are, locked away in fear.

Jesus says 'peace be with you' again. Jesus holds out his hands again.

Do not look away. Look. "I know suffering" these marks of his say. I know your suffering AND I come saying "Peace be with you".

Jesus held out his wounds for his followers to see,

To see, to believe,

To receive God's peace and go forth into this new space, forgiving others in the name of Christ, no longer bound by locked doors and fear.

Resurrection did not erase Jesus' wounds and scars.

Jesus' scars show us that resurrection isn't reversal, it's not going back to what was, instead, it's stepping outside of our locked doors into a new way of being.

Christopher Martin has stepped into a new life, no longer working at Cup Foods, no longer living in an apartment above the store. He continues to try and make sense out of the brutal death he witnessed; tries to find ways to live in hope.

And here we are, still sitting in our own homes, behind closed doors, unsure of how and when to venture out.

Jesus comes to us where we are. Twice he breached those locked doors, greeting his followers with “peace be with you”. Three times. Three times he offered those words.

Jesus shows us that resurrection isn’t reversal, it’s not going back to what was. Jesus wasn’t there to stay, yet the promise of the Holy Spirit to guide them was.

What will we step back into? What will church look like, what will work look like, what form will renewed relationships take? Church won’t be handshakes and hugs, singing hymns that speak our deepest hopes and longings, at least not at first. We don’t know what lays ahead, we don’t even know if and when it’s time to step out.

What this beautiful gospel message tells us, in this time of considering what it looks like to open the doors, is that Jesus meets us where we are; Jesus shares our suffering, knows our suffering; Jesus doesn’t hide his scars, he shows them, allowing us to share our scars as well.

But it doesn’t end there. Jesus meets his disciples, meets us, where we are, not forcing us to change, but breathing new life and giving us work to do - his work of love and forgiveness.

Behind what closed doors do you find yourself?

How might Jesus be speaking to you ‘peace be with you’? Breathing new life, new work, into you?

My friends, we’re called to seek the Risen Christ in our lives - inside, outside, following the One who breathes peace and beckons us on.