

The Wounded Christ

This is how Luke describes the resurrection: first there is the story of Mary Magdalene and other women arriving at the tomb on Sunday morning, where they find the tomb empty. Two men in dazzling clothes appear and one of them speaks to the women, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead. He is not here but has risen. Go back to Galilee, your home, there you will see him" The women go and tell the other disciples, but they don't believe it. Peter decides to go to the tomb to check it out for himself; he looks around and sees it as the women described, but he goes away wondering what had happened.

Next, Luke describes the story about two disciples, Cleopas, and his companion, who were traveling on the road from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. It is a journey of about seven miles. As they are walking and talking along the way, a stranger came and joined them. This visitor began to open the scriptures, so they began to understand them in a whole new way. At the end of their journey, they share a meal with this stranger. Suddenly their eyes are opened, and they realize that in both the scriptures and the breaking of bread, they had encountered the risen Christ. Immediately, these two walk seven miles back to Jerusalem to tell all the disciples of the good news. "It is true," they tell announce, "The Lord has risen."

This is where today's story picks up. It is still that first Easter Sunday. While Cleopas and his friend were proclaiming that they had seen the risen Christ, Jesus himself came and stood among the disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you."

And the disciples, rather than believe the stories the women had told that very morning, nor what the two travelers said thirty seconds ago, they were startled and terrified and they thought they must be seeing a ghost.

Jesus said to them, "Why are you frightened? Why do you doubt? It is I." They had heard the stories, and now resurrection was standing and speaking right in front of them, so close they could touch it, and they were afraid and did not believe. "It is I," Jesus said. "Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones as I have." It is me. Look, here are the wounds in my hands and in my feet. And as the disciples were filled with joy and uncertainty and wonder, Jesus said to them, "Do you have anything to eat?" And they gave him some broiled fish that they had, and he ate it in

their presence. And then, as he did with the two travelers on the road to Emmaus, Jesus opened their minds and hearts to understand the scriptures about himself, the Messiah. And the disciples came to know that it was Jesus among them, revealed in the scriptures and in a shared meal, the breaking of the bread. Jesus told them that they are witnesses of these things, witnesses of new life, and like the women at the tomb or the companions on the road, they were now called to share this with others.

One of the striking things about the resurrection of Jesus is that he appears to his friends with the wounds from the crucifixion there in his hands and his feet. The Risen One is also the Wounded One. New life has occurred, but that life has come out of the wounds and suffering and death that has taken place. Resurrection does not mean wounds are not erased. It is not like those wounds never happened. The suffering of Jesus was real, and the death was real. What Jesus went through, and his wounds, were carried into new life.

Some of you may be familiar with the Japanese art of pottery repair. I placed a picture of it on the table at the back of the church. It is an ancient art that is still practiced today. It is called Kintsugi. It is not just repairing a piece of pottery; it is transforming it into something new. Suppose there is a ceramic cup or bowl that has cracked and broken into pieces. Kintsugi is the practice of putting those broken pieces together, binding them with glue and then filling the cracks with lacquer and finally gold. The process creates a bowl or cup that is stronger and more beautiful than it was before. If I were to fix a broken cup or vase, I would try to hide the cracks as much as possible. In Kintsugi, rather than hide the cracks and breaks, they are shown, even highlighted. Attention is brought to those very places; they become radiant and now shine with gold.

New life comes from the broken places. The cracks, the wounds, are still there.

I grew up in Utah, in the prominent religion here. You may have noticed that it is a religion with no crosses on their building and steeples for all to see. And there are no crosses inside their buildings – none at all. No depictions of Jesus on the cross – heaven forbid they show that. No sign of the cross is ever made by the members of that tradition. No jewelry in the shape of a cross is to be worn. “We don’t focus on the cross,” I was told growing up. “We want to focus on the positive.”

That is not scripture. That is not the reality of Jesus and the Risen Christ. Suffering happens in human life. Death happens. Pottery will break. And new life happens *through* suffering and death and brokenness. The Risen Lord is the Wounded Lord. Jesus showed the wounds he received from the cross. We don't need to pretend it didn't happen, and we shouldn't act like it doesn't matter. We don't have the option of erasing the cross from our buildings and our theology because it makes us uncomfortable. Can you imagine the disciples telling Jesus in today's story, "Please don't mention your suffering and death. Don't show us your wounds; we don't want to think about that?"

The Messiah, Christ our savior was crucified, died, was buried in the tomb and on the third day rose again. That is part of the story. The apostle Paul wrote that "If I boast in anything, I will boast in the cross, for that is where God brings life and salvation." In Holy Week we in the church proclaimed:

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

The Risen Lord is the Wounded Lord. And this is a hopeful message for us. We each have our wounds, our cracks. We have places in our lives where we are broken or have fallen apart. God knows that. God doesn't ignore that. God doesn't say "Let's pretend those things never happened." God never looks at us and says, "I am afraid this vessel is broken; it is beyond repair and needs to be thrown out." No, God says, "Here is where I will bring healing and wholeness and new life. You will carry those wounds to new life. You will become strong at the broken places. Stronger than you were before. There is no need to hide the cracks. They will become radiant; that is where you will shine like gold." That was true for Jesus. God promises it will be true for us.

This past week I watched an interview with a master of Kintsugi, an elderly Japanese man. He explained why he devotes himself to this art. "A cup is not just a cup, a bowl is not just a bowl," he said. "It represents moments of your life, who you shared meals with, who you drank tea with. That cup is a storehouse of memories." That is why it is honored and restored and given new life.

The resurrected Jesus is still Jesus. The scripture stories are clear on this. In his life and ministry, Jesus walked with the disciples and spoke with them, taught them, and shared meals with them. Who Jesus was mattered, and after his death and

resurrection, his life still mattered. Jesus, the Risen Christ walked with the two on the road to Emmaus. As Jesus gathered with the disciples, he taught them, he opened the scriptures to them. He shared a meal with them. Just as Jesus had always done.

And Jesus showed the disciples his wounded hands and feet. The wounds are signs of God's strength and power to make all things new. "It is I." Jesus told his friends. "The one who received these wounds. I am not a ghost. I am not something you are imagining. It is me. Jesus. Still present in the stories from scripture. Still here in the breaking of the bread." The life of Jesus was and is a storehouse of memories for the disciples. Resurrection tells us that will not be lost.

The Risen Christ shows us that Christ's presence – the real presence of Jesus – is now shining with new life. The tomb has been open, and Christ is now to be found among the living. So, Christ can now appear to Mary Magdalene and other women at the tomb, Christ can be there to those who travel on the road. Christ will be there for you and me as we open our minds and hearts to his presence. Christ will be there as we share a meal with friends, or share this meal, this communion shared with all who follow Jesus. Resurrection proclaims that Christ can be revealed to us in the church, in the stories from scripture, on the paths we walk, in nature, and anywhere. In our Collect we prayed that "we may behold Christ in all his redeeming work." That is everywhere. It is there for us as we go back to our own Galilee, back to our homes and families and daily lives. And yes, this new life given in Christ can be revealed in our wounds and in our broken places. That is where God's light will shine like gold.

May we look for Christ and be open to receive Christ, so that the new life given by God may be revealed to us and in us, and through us. Amen.

Trace Browning

3rd Sunday of Easter - Year B

Acts 3:12-19 • Psalm 4 • 1 John 3:1-17 • Luke 24:36b-48

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