

## First Sunday after Easter

**Text: John 20:19-31 (NIV)**

<sup>19</sup>On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup>And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." <sup>24</sup>Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." <sup>26</sup>A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." <sup>28</sup>Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup>Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." <sup>30</sup>Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

### Theme: Peace through Jesus' Wounds

How many scars do you have? My dad used to show me a scar on his lip that he got from a dog bite. (I always thought it was kind of gross.) I look at my own hands and see scars that remind me of several little injuries in the past. I see a couple of times when a knife slipped. (One of those times I was trying to cut a biscuit that was very hard on the outside.) There was the time that the hammer slipped, and the claw cut my hand. When I was in high school, I accidentally broke a thermometer in chemistry class and stabbed my hand with it. If I look at my hands, those memories come back from the scars.

Jesus' hands still have the wounds from the nails. It says in the hymn, "Crown Him with many Crowns," "**Crown Him the Lord of love. Behold His hands and side, Rich wounds, yet visible above, In beauty glorified.**" Christ's wounds are still visible. Like the scars that we have in our bodies, they remind us of things. But His wounds don't remind us of accidents, injuries, and surgery. It is by His wounds that we have been healed, so His wounds give us peace.

I. His wounds proclaimed peace to people who had wounded themselves.

Every one of those little scars on my hands was self-inflicted. The disciples and all of us have a lot of self-inflicted wounds.

The disciples had all failed Jesus. Do you remember what they were like at the Last Supper. At one point they were arguing about who was the greatest among them. (Lk 22) The Lord said that one of them would betray Him. They all said, "*Surely not, I Rabbi!*" including Judas. The Lord told him, "*Yes, it is you.*" After the supper the Lord told them that they would all fall away. Peter answered, "*Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.*" Jesus then predicted Peter's denial, but Peter

answered, *“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”* All the disciples said the same thing. (Mt 26) Shortly thereafter Jesus was arrested at Gethsemane. The band of men that arrested Jesus was led by Judas. All the disciples deserted him and fled. Peter did return and followed to the courtyard of the High Priest, but it was there, that he denied his Lord. Mark even tells us about a young man who wore nothing but a linen garment. When they seized him, he fled naked, he was so afraid. The Lord had told them many times exactly what would happen. He told them that He would be arrested, crucified, and rise from the dead. When it happened, they all failed the Lord. Even after the resurrection Thomas continued to fail Jesus. He said that he would not believe until he saw and touched the nail marks.

What about us? Do we ever fail Jesus? Do we ever complain that the crosses that He gives to us are too heavy? Do we ever think that we will stand up against temptation, and when it comes, we quickly fall? Do we ever think that we would never deny our Lord, but when we are mocked because of our faith or questioned about it, we act as if we don't know Him? Think of how many times we have forgotten Jesus' word or we have twisted His word to fit what we think. There have also been times like Thomas when our faith has failed. Like the disciples we all have to confess that we have all failed Jesus.

The disciples were also very afraid. They were locked in a room for fear of the Jews. They were afraid that they would be next. The women had told them that the Lord is risen. Peter and John had been to the tomb and saw that it was empty, just as the women had said. Yet, they were still living in fear.

What are you afraid of? Are there things that keep you up at night? Are there things that fill you with anxiety and even make you cry. Do you worry and fret about certain things? There might even be good reason for you to worry. The disciples were afraid that they would be imprisoned and killed for following Jesus. Guess what happened to them in the coming years. They would all be imprisoned, and all of them except John would be martyred for their faith. Now they were living in fear, and it is very tempting for us to live in the same way.

## II. Jesus came proclaiming peace through His wounds.

The first thing that He did was to show them His wounds. John writes that Jesus said, *“Peace be with you.”* Then He showed them His hands and side. A week later, Jesus came again and said, *“Peace be with you.”* Then he said to Thomas, *“Put your finger here; see my hands.”* Jesus pointed them to the wounds in His hands. He was reminding them that He gave His life on that cross for the forgiveness of their sins. He was reminding them that if He loved them so much that He gave His life for them, and had the power to reclaim His life, there was nothing that could separate them from His love.

What is the message that we preach today? In His first letter to the Corinthians Paul writes that we preach Christ crucified. (1 Cor 1:23) He also writes in 1 Corinthians 11 that when celebrate the Lord's Supper we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. (1 Cor 11:26) In Romans 6:3 Paul writes about baptism, *“Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”* The Good News that we preach, the Supper that we celebrate, the washing that we receive in baptism all proclaim that Christ gave His body and shed His blood for us. They

remind us of Jesus wounds, that He gave His life on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, and that if God loved us so much that He gave His own Son when we failed Him, that there is nothing that could ever separate us from His love. Those wound proclaim peace. They remind us of God's forgiveness and salvation through Jesus death and resurrection for us. That is why we gather week after week, to remember Jesus wounds for us. In the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments Jesus shows us His wounds.

In the forgiveness of sins Christ gives us His peace. Jesus then told the disciples, *"If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."* In that statement He gives the church the keys to the kingdom of heaven. In showing His hands, He showed them the price that He paid to obtain those keys. To those who repent of their sins, and trust in Him as their Savior, Jesus says, "All of your sins are forgiven." Jesus tells us that when pastors announce the forgiveness of sins, it is as valid as when Jesus stood there and proclaimed that forgiveness from Heaven Himself. In Luther's *Small Catechism* we learned that when the ministers of Christ, **"absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself."** The most blessed words that we can hear are, "For the sake of Christ, I forgive you all of your sins." In Christ, all of our sins are forgiven. God doesn't hold a single one of them against us. We don't have to remember our sins. Others shouldn't remember our sins. We have been forgiven in Christ. That forgiveness fills our hearts with the peace of God. It takes our sins and fears, and fills our hearts with peace.

These verses ask us whose scars we are looking at. Do we dwell on our own scars, on our self-inflicted wounds, our failings and our fears. Do we look at the scars that remind us of the times when we failed ourselves, each other, and God? Or are our eyes on Jesus wounds? When we remember our failings, we will go through this life in fear, but when we remember Jesus' wounds, that He gave His life for us, and rose as our Savior, He fills our hearts with peace and joy.

Whenever we hear that Gospel, remember our baptism or receive our Lord's Supper, may God's Spirit help us to remember that Christ bore those wounds for me, that those wounds won my salvation, and that through those wounds I am at peace with God. May Christ's wounds fill our hearts with His peace.

Amen.

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