

Scripture: John 20:19-31

Sermon Title: "The Wounded Faithful"

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Today, I want us to take a moment and talk about scars – talk about wounds that we carry. Whether they are scars of the body, physical reminders of a difficult moment in our lives, or they are wounds of the heart, the emotional, psychological scars that we carry from the challenges that we have faced, we all have our wounds – we all have our scars. Now, some are visible and some invisible and while wounds begin to heal and scars may fade over time, they never really go away. So the question I want us to consider today is what do we do with our wounds – with our scars? Do we seek to hide them hoping no one ever sees the struggles that we faced, even still face? Do we cover the emotional scars with smiles thinking if only we act cheerful no one will know the pain that we still feel inside, even if it is only from time to time? What do we do with these wounds and with these scars?

In our scripture reading today, we witness what Jesus decides to do with his wounds. We hear the familiar story of what took place on the evening of the resurrection when Jesus appeared before most of the disciples, showed his wounds freely, showing his hands and his side, and greeted the disciples with peace. We hear of those same wounds being shown to Thomas a week later and in all cases, after the disciples saw the marks that bore a memory of deep pain from Good Friday and a testimony of extreme triumph from Easter morning, they rejoiced, they saw Jesus for who he was, is, and forever will be, the Lord of all, and their faith was strengthened. What we learn from Jesus through our scripture lesson today is that there can be extreme value in bearing our wounds – extreme value in opening up and being vulnerable with the hardest times of our lives. Jesus did not try to hide them, but he embraced them as a testimony of where God's great love has brought him for these wounds they did not hold the victory. And our wounds they do not hold the victory either. Jesus rose above them quite literally and Jesus lived beyond them through the powerful love of our great God. The

wounds that Jesus experienced, visible signs of the darkest moments of his earthly life, now stand as a witness to God's light which will not leave us in the darkness. And by Jesus being willing to share these wounds with his disciples, they came to believe. In his vulnerability, there came strength. Might we be willing to show our wounds too? Not denying their existence which in so many ways gives them power over our lives, but embracing their reality and taking back the power. Might we be willing to share from the depths of our pain and struggle to bring strength to ourselves and to those around us and stand as a beacon of light proclaiming you are not alone and that struggles and challenges – they can and will be overcome?

You know, I have heard people say before something that I simply cannot embrace as truth. I've heard people say that if our faith is strong enough, if we pray hard enough, we will not have to face the hardships that leave scars in our lives. This simply is not true. Faith is not determined by the lack of wounds, the lack of struggles, the lack of challenge, the lack of scars in our lives. No our scars and our wounds do not show a lack of faith, if that was ever true, how would we explain Jesus? If the lack of wounds, the lack of struggle, the lack of adversity showed a perfect faith how would we explain the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ, facing the cross, receiving those nails, bearing the wounds? No, the scars that we bear and that Jesus bore do not show a weakness in our faith, in fact, in this very moment today they show the opposite. When Jesus showed his disciples the wounds and that he was still living today, they claimed a victory stronger than death. And for us today, the fact that we come to this place to worship God, to celebrate in the truth of Christ, to gather in Christian community while also bearing all the wounds that we carry, it shows a strength of faith. For despite the hardships, despite the struggles, we have overcome and we will overcome, and we thank God for being by our side through it all. And if today you are in the midst of a struggle, if you are nursing a fresh wound in your life, know that these darkest moments, they do not win. Even if on this day it is hard for you to see the light, know that it's there and it is coming.

Beloved people of God, may we follow where our Jesus has lead and be the wounded faithful? Not feeling shame or weakness because of our wounds but allowing the scars in our lives to be a powerful testimony, a powerful witness to carry us and others through the hard times. May we show our wounds and be vulnerable with our struggles, for Jesus shows us that there is belief-giving power in that openness to show the scars of our past, to share the wounds of our present, and still proclaim the glories of the future founded in God.

On this second Sunday of Easter, as we cherish and still revel in the joys of Easter morning and in the beauty of the resurrection, we also join the disciples in seeing the wounds of Jesus. Wounds that Jesus shares so that others may come to believe – so that the disciples can see that it is really him and that they are not alone – that we are not alone. For this life will not be without struggles it will not be without wounds. Yet, as the season that is Eastertide reminds us, as the scars remind us, scars borne by Jesus and scars borne by us today, this life will not be without wounds, yet it will also not be without hope. So may we face all that this life brings with the joys of powerful resurrection faith – a faith that may not prevent the struggles, but a faith that will surely see us through. Thanks be to God. Amen.