

Sermon: *Showing Our Scars*
The Rev. David J. Marshall, All Angels 4.7.24

Welcome to the second Sunday of Easter. There is something unique and expected about this service. And no, it's not a drop off in attendance from Easter (although that happens), it has to do with our Gospel lesson. Sometimes called *Doubting Thomas Sunday*, the Sunday that follows Easter always always always has the Gospel lesson from John who talks about Thomas' famous line: *unless I put my finger in the mark of the nails on Jesus' hands, I will not believe*. Yeah, not much doubt there. This makes the Second Sunday of Easter unique and expected – we repeat the same Gospel every year (we repeat the same Gospel every year).

What struck me this year about the lesson (which oddly enough came up during Maundy Thursday in my heart) is that the first thing Jesus says after the crucifixion is “Peace” and then he showed everyone where he was hurt the most. He showed them his wounds and he calls it Peace.

What does that mean to us today?

First, let me show you my scars. Like many of you, my deepest scars are on the inside – the emotional scars – but, I do have a couple on the outside (which are much easier to talk about). I have a scar that on my right forearm that runs about four inches. It happened in 8th grade. I was horseplaying around with a friend in the hallway and my arm swiped against a panel that covered a light switch (that, oddly enough was placed over the switch to stop kids from turning off the lights – and when I say “kids” I mean my friend [who liked to turn off the light during dismissal] that I was horsing around with). I cut my forearm pretty deeply and then tried to explain how it happened to my parents (who are both educators). The second one came after, yes after, I received my Boy Scout badge for using a pocket knife. Dad gave me a bar of Dove soap that I was crafting into a sperm whale. He said, “Only do this when your mom or I am around.” Of course, it was a Saturday afternoon, they were all busy and I decided to get to work on the whale creation. Little did I know that Dove soap is denser in the interior and softer on the outer edge. As I was crafting the jaw line, the blade got stuck; I forced it and it sliced the whale jaw bone off which then cut deeply into my left index finger almost to the bone. I have that scar too.

My scars could have been avoided if I didn't do horseplay in the hallway or had supervision while whittling a whale out of a bar of soap. But, I have learned from them. And, I have (hopefully) passed the lessons onto my children.

Jesus showed everyone his scars. Then he breathed on them and gave them Peace.

My dad had a long scar. It started just under the sternum and ran along the rib cage back under his right arm. He was diagnosed with kidney cancer in 1986. The way his surgeon treated it was to start in the front of chest cavity and touch every organ until he made his way back to the kidney that had a tumor. He did this to make sure it had not spread. Thankfully, it had not. But, it left dad with a major scar and story to go along with it.

Years later, I was going through a rough patch in my life and was having difficulty seeing which way was up. He and I went sailing. As we were talking, he lifted his shirt and showed me his

scar. He said, "This scar saved my life." Likewise, the trouble in life I was in had created an interior scar but I was going to live and be more thankful as a result. And yes, my interior scar has provided for an abundant life.

At the V.A. Hospital, we had a tough-as-nails Master Sargent who had taken five bullets from a VC's gun in the Mekong Delta in 1968. In 2006, He was a volunteer at the VA and from time to time would be called in to talk to a patient who was nervous about surgery. I witnessed him talk to a scared patient about an upcoming open-heart surgery. The Sargent slowly unbuttoned his yellow shirt and showed each bullet scar. He said, "These were meant to kill me; and they didn't. A field surgeon saved my life. There's a blocked artery that is trying to kill you. Your surgeon is not going to let that happen. I survived; you will survive too and be better for it."

Jesus appeared to the disciples/apostles when they were scared. They were far worse than scared, frankly, and he stood among them and said, "Peace." He then showed them his wounds and said peace again. They went from fear to rejoicing. That's quite a shift, by the way, to go from fear to rejoicing; Jesus has that effect on people.

The prophet Isaiah, more than 700 years before Jesus was born, had a vision of the suffering Messiah. Isaiah wrote, "By his wounds, you are healed." Jesus showed his wounds and healed the group – brought them from fear to rejoicing and gave them peace. By his wounds, we are healed.

What does this tell us about how we are to act in the 21st century?

I think it means that we need show our scars. At the 8 a.m. service a while ago I prayed for a parishioner that was going to have knee surgery. At the peace, a different parishioner went over to her and showed her the scar on her knee. She explained that the scar from her knee surgery allows for her to walk and play tennis. She said, "It's a rough recovery but you will get through it and you'll be better for it."

By his wounds we are healed.

There is healing and peace when we show other what we have been through and then reassure them that they too will make it through. This is how we live in a Christ-centered community; we show our scars and we proclaim peace, just like Jesus did.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.