



The Wounded Healers: Jesus and Us
April 18, 2021: Liturgy of the Word for the Third Sunday of Easter
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Oh Lord, may Your Word only be spoken; and may Your Word only be heard: in the Name of Jesus Christ, the Living Word. **Amen.**

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

It's good to be reminded that Easter is not just a day, but a season, in the Church year, just like Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and the season after Pentecost. Easter is a season lasting 50 days.

And this is a good thing, because often we need encouragement to remember that the Lord is risen and present, because what we read in the newspaper, and our experience in own lives, may seem to indicate otherwise.

Today's Gospel recounts yet another story of Jesus' appearance to his disciples after the Resurrection. In the narrative that leads to our Gospel passage for this morning, Jesus has already appeared to two men walking west from Jerusalem toward Emmaus. And when they realize who it is, they race back to Jerusalem to let the other disciples know. It turns out that the Jerusalem crowd had also seen Jesus. They are all standing around comparing notes, when suddenly, Jesus shows up.

He tries to set them at ease, as he does elsewhere when they are afraid and confused. "Peace be with you," he says. And then he follows up with two noteworthy actions that point to the reality of his presence. The first is the attention he draws to his wounds. He says: "Here, touch my hands and my feet. A ghost doesn't have muscle and bone like this." In fact, the Greek is closer to, "Here, handle my hands and feet." It's more than a light touch with an outstretched finger.

For Jesus, showing his scars was the first way that he could convince his frightened disciples that he was who he said he was: that he had undergone real suffering, as he had said he would; and that he was really alive again, as he had said he would be.

While they're puzzling this out with joy and disbelieving, he says simply, "You have anything to eat here? I'm hungry." They recover their manners and give him a snack of broiled fish. This points to the second aspect of what makes Jesus real to them: he's hungry. He needs something to eat.

Wounds and hunger. What could be better proof of Jesus keeping his promise to be present to his frazzled disciples? These two characteristics reassure his disciples that he is really there, really able to offer them peace amidst the storm of their upended lives. If the disciples can authenticate Jesus in his scars and in his hungers, are not we also asked to see Jesus in the scars and hungers of others and even, and especially, ourselves?

We may have scars from c-sections, tragic accidents, open heart surgeries, brain operations, spinal procedures, hip and knee replacements, cancer treatments, combat, athletics. And we may have psychic scars, spiritual scars, emotional scars—deep ones—scars which may not be obvious, but which have



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symptoms which *are* obvious—fears, anxieties, rages, controlling or dangerous or self-destructive behaviors, deceptions, pride and hatreds. These symptoms have consequences not only interpersonally but in the wider society, as we can see all around us. And the hungers we and others have—for food, for love, for peace of mind, for connection, for justice – point toward the yearning we have deep inside for God. As Episcopalians we are challenged in our baptismal covenant to seek and serve Christ in all persons – especially the wounded and hungry—which is all of us.

But there's more. Not only do these wounds and hungers make Jesus real to his disciples; in these wounds and hungers there is Christ-like power to bring healing to others. The late Roman Catholic priest and writer Henri Nouwen wrote a marvelous book some years ago called the *Wounded Healer*. I believe the great Swiss physician and psychologist Carl Jung originally coined the term in his own healing work.

Nouwen's book points to the fact that our hungers, wounds and hurts, *when properly processed* with love and honesty, prayer, therapy, friendship, community, with Jesus himself—these wounds and hurts provide us with the best opportunity to be a healing presence to others, to minister God's healing power to one another.

For example, someone who has suffered the loss of a loved one can be a caring, supportive presence for another person who is mourning the death of someone close to them. Or someone who has survived divorce can offer hope and solace to others who are struggling with divorce. Alcoholics provide one another support and healing in the community of an AA group.

Someone who was bullied as a child may find herself defending the down-trodden as an attorney, crusading for justice. The apostle Paul reminds us of this truth when he writes, "Jesus' strength is made perfect in my weakness." (2 Corinthians 12.9)

You get the idea.

The Resurrected Jesus is present when our wounds and hungers become sources of healing and hope for others. When we offer these wounds and hungers to Jesus, Jesus transforms them into deep wells of healing. And when we become wells of healing for others, the Resurrected Jesus appears.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen.

Amen.