

## Luke 24.36-48 | Sermon for Easter 3 'Glorified Wounds'

*Preached on 14 April 2024 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Adelaide by Pastor Tom Pietsch.*

Acts 3:12-19/ Psalm 4 / 1 John 3:1-7 / Luke 24:36b-48

*Heavenly Father, as you glorified the wounds of your Son Jesus Christ, so give us hope in the resurrection of our bodies, and in the end of suffering. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Jesus comes with peace**

It's not very common for us to hear the same Biblical episode, two weeks in a row, described by two different Gospel writers. But that's what we have today. The lectionary has given us Luke's account of the same event that we heard about from John's Gospel last week – Jesus' appearance in a room to the disciples, on the Sunday evening of the first Easter.

Here is Jesus, arisen from the dead that very morning proclaiming "Peace be with you" to his disciples. His resurrection has brought peace between God and humankind, peace with the Father, and also peace with each other. Back in Luke 10(:5-7) Jesus had sent out the seventy disciples and instructed them that whenever they enter a house they should first say "Peace to this house". Jesus himself now follows this pattern by declaring peace in the house – a pattern we continue this day. Declaring the peace of Christ, in God's house here at Bethlehem, peace with God, in the absolution, in holy communion, and peace with each other. And this is also the mission we are given, to bring peace to the world as we bear the name and mercy of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we heard that it was Thomas in particular who doubted, but today Luke tells us that all of the disciples were on this journey from unbelief to joyful worship of the risen Christ, a journey that Pastor Fraser preached about last week.

Today we heard that all of the disciples were "*startled and terrified*" (24:37) and even think they are seeking a ghost, or a spirit. Let's listen to Jesus' response:

### **Jesus' Glorified Wounds**

*He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see. For a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. (24:38-40)*

See. Touch. Look. Jesus appeals to the disciples' senses. This is partly to refute their fear that they have seen a ghost. Jesus is showing that he is true flesh and blood, just as he

does when he later eats some fish. But what in particular does Jesus draw their attention to? What is the object of this seeing and touching? *“Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself.”* It is not just a generic body that Jesus is drawing attention to, but his wounds in particular. In the Greek text Jesus is literally saying “Look at my hands and my feet; that I AM myself”. Jesus uses here the Old Testament name for God, affirming that He is great “I AM” which Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms all testify about, as he says later on in our reading (24:44). Jesus is the great “I AM”, and as evidence he points to his glorified wounds. God the Son can be identified with the healed holes in his hands and feet. The Great I AM is the I AM with glorified wounds.

You see Jesus is risen, and has defeated suffering and death, and yet the marks of suffering and death remain. No longer is Jesus suffering, no longer is Jesus able to die, but the evidence that he once did these things remains on his body. The wounds, in other words, have now been transformed. What once were signs of defeat, are now signs of victory. Jesus now displays them, draws attention to them, and identifies with them. They are wounds of victory.

### **Wounds of Victory**

To understand this, perhaps we can be helped by Shakespeare, from his play Henry V. You may not be surprised to know that it was Pastor Fraser who pointed me to this analogy some years ago. In that play King Harry is rousing his troops for battle on the eve of St Crispin’s Day, a feast day for the English at the time. His soldiers are downcast, they are outnumbered, and so King Harry stirs them with one of the most famous speeches in Shakespeare. Included are these words:

*He that shall live this day, and see old age, Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours, And say “To-morrow is Saint Crispian.” Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars, And say “These wounds I had on Crispin’s day.” Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot, But he’ll remember, with advantages, What feats he did that day.*

In these rousing words, King Harry points to a time when the wounds his soldiers are about to face will no longer be painful but rather proud symbols of victory – things even to show off, to invite the neighbours around to see.

And can we not see this in all sorts of ways in our everyday life? Children wear bandaids with a certain pride, and enjoy drawing others’ attention to them. What was painful is now evidence that I’ve made it through. Sports men and women often bear injuries that they later remember fondly even as they wince. Mothers bear real scars from childbirth, scars that were once painful, but now can be worn with a certain pride and joy. And I know farmers and fishermen can often tell long stories from their hands.

### **Resurrected Body**

Well, Jesus' hands and feet tell a story too. His wounds are no longer simply our shame, evidence that we killed the Author of Life (Acts 3:15), but are now our pride and joy – wounds worth telling the neighbours about, worth putting on a feast for, marks that show what Jesus has gone through for us, wounds which show that we are now healed, that the blood of Christ has set us free, and that death has no power over us. We sing about this in the hymn *Crown Him with Many Crowns*. Listen to verse three:

*Crown him the Lord of love; behold his hands and side, those wounds yet visible  
above in beauty glorified: no angel there on high can fully bear the sight, but  
downwards bends that burning eye at mysteries so bright.*

What are the bright mysteries? The wounds of Christ that are now glorified in beauty, joyous to behold.

### **Our wounds**

But the mystery also extends to us, and our wounds. In our reading from 1 John today, we heard this:

*Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed.  
What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see  
him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.*  
(1 John 3:2)

We will be like him. What occurs to Jesus is a pattern for our resurrected bodies, a template for our hope. Already we are God's children, but we are still awaiting further transformation like Christ.

As many of you well know, not every wound we get in this life mends before the resurrection of the body. Not every hurt or scar we bear will be fully healed when we die and are made to be like Christ. We aren't promised that we will always understand our experiences and sufferings and wounds. We are already children of God, but we are also awaiting an end to our suffering.

In *The Lord of the Rings* story, the hobbit Frodo receives great wounds on his quest to destroy the ring of power. At one point he does receive healing treatment at Rivendell, but he is never fully healed and bears the pain of the wound from time to time. Readers have sometimes imagined that the author, JRR Tolkien, was referring to his own experiences as a soldier in WW1. The trauma from that experience could be managed, but never fully healed in this life. So Frodo also bears his wounds even after the battle is won, and he returns to live in the Shire. But then at the end of the story Frodo, leaves Middle Earth, leaves the Shire, and finds healing in a new land, what Tolkien, who was a devout Christian, called the Undying Land.

Not all of our wounds are healed, even after the battle is over. Many of them accrue, like barnacles on a ship. But as God's children, we wear our wounds with hope. Because "*we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.*" We live in hope, and this is a hope that already now is purifying us.

## **Conclusion**

The resurrection of Christ is our joy because we see in Christ what we will be in Him. The wounds which Jesus identifies with are no longer wounds of grief, but wounds of victory. Some of our wounds may even still be to come in our life. Remember King Harry was rousing troops by talking of wounds they were yet to receive? In a similar way we can face our wounds, especially those wounds we suffering for bearing God's name, with a great confidence: That our perishable bodies will be made imperishable. That every tear will be wiped away. That suffering will come to end.

We have this unshakable hope, even as we declare that Christ's peace already abounds. That on account of his death and resurrection, our burden is light, our shame is covered, our sins are forgiven. And the time is coming when we will be like Christ, with *wounds yet visible above in beauty glorified.*

*And may the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*