WE ALL HAVE SCARS

1. The scars you have
2. The scars Jesus has

In the movie Jaws, there is a scene where the three main characters were out to sea hunting the great white shark. It was a quiet night and they were sitting around a table talking. Then two of them started to show off their scars: one had a scar from a thresher shark, another from a sting ray, etc. Even the third, the police chief, who was standing there listening, had a scar, but decided not to say anything. The truth is, we all have scars. There is the story of a man who was joining the army. While in line for his physical examination, the military clerk asked him if he had any identifiable marks/scars. He said no, to which the clerk responded: Come on. We all have scars. The recruit then remembered a couple scars he had and reported them.

The text before us from John 20 is rich with so many worthy truths. We have the example of Thomas and his doubt and how blessed are those who believe without seeing. We have Jesus commissioning his disciples to go out into the world and pronounce forgiveness. We have the resurrected Lord's comforting words: Peace be with you. We have John's marvelous explanation why the Holy Spirit led him to write this gospel, so that we may believe in Jesus and have life in his name. There is so much in text.

But today we will look at one little detail of this text: the scars. Remember, we all have scars. We want to look at the scars you have and the scars Jesus has.

We all have scars. I have a lot of scars. Some are from surgeries, others are from various sports injuries, like the scar on shin from being spiked in soccer. I have another one on a finger that came from being locked in car door. Others are from doing something foolish. What scars do you have?

We all have scars. Some are from accidents. Some from a time we goofed off when we should not have. I heard of a man who had a permanent scar from a terrible thing he did in his life. He ruined his marriage. It got ugly at one point and she slammed the door on his hand, breaking his ring finger and disfigured it for the rest of his life. He confessed his sin and said his scarred finger is a daily reminder of how he ruined his and other people's lives. Sometimes our scars are physical, sometimes emotional.

But we also bear spiritual scars as well. Look at our text. Christ appeared to his disciples on that first Easter evening, but Thomas was not there. We do not know why. Yet despite the testimony of the women, the Emmaus disciples and other disciples, all of whom saw Jesus, he still refused to believe. In fact, he wanted evidence - proof. He wanted to stick his finger into the nail wounds and his hand into Jesus' side. A week later, Jesus appeared again and Thomas was there. Then he stopped doubting and believed.

How do we remember Thomas? As the doubter. Even the dictionary lists the phrase Doubting Thomas with this definition: one who is habitually doubtful. The medieval Germans picked the jackass as the symbol for Thomas. Talk about being branded for life. We remember his one week of doubt better than his lifetime of believing. He is not the only one. Look at Rahab in Bible, the prostitute in Jericho. Eight times her name is mentioned in Bible, five which she is known as the prostitute, even though she became a believer, an ancestor of David and Jesus and is in heaven. Mention the name of David and you think of adultery and murder, Peter as the denier. We remember more of Samson's adultery with Delilah than his great exploits defending God's people. How can you think of the Apostle
Paul without remembering that as Saul he murdered Christians? All of these people had spiritual scars.

What spiritual, sinful scars do you carry? If the dictionary was going to use your name to describe a sin, like that of Thomas, what would it be? What sin/sins should become a permanent part of your name? Would it be liar? Selfish? Hater and murderer? Adulterer? Lazy? Indifferent? Unloving? Thief? In fact, we can use many different sin titles to describe each of us. Imagine if every sin we commit or thought left a scar on our bodies? Multiply that by the number of days and years you live, how do you think we would look before God? Oh, we may try to cover up our sin scars with cosmetics. We may pretend they are not there. But imagine how disfigured and ugly the sinner must appear before God. God would have no choice but to tell us to depart and go away to the place he made for the devil and demons.

We all have scars. Some from accidents. Some emotional. But we are also sin scarred.

But we are not the only ones who are scarred. Jesus Christ is scarred too. We are told: 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. This one passage shows us that Jesus will have for eternity nail wounds in his hands and a spear wound in his side. It is this passage that justifies every artist that depicts Jesus in statues and paintings with such wounds. But did you ever wonder why God did not clean Jesus up after his resurrection? Why does God leave such wounds on the permanent body of our Lord? Was it for Thomas' sake? That is one reason. God already foreknew that Thomas would doubt and thus he used these scars to erase his doubts.

But it is more than that. God is telling us here that one cannot see Jesus without also seeing the wounds. We need to understand the resurrected Christ is also the crucified Christ. He who lives is also the one who died.

It is like Holy Communion. You not only hear about the forgiveness of sins in the words of institution, you can also taste it, feel it and see it. In a similar way, these scars are the gospel in a visible way. A picture is worth a thousand words, what kind of sermon is preached when we see our risen Lord with the scars of the cross still on his body? Look at Ephesians 5 where God uses the picture of a bride and bridegroom to describe the relationship between Christ and his Church, the believers. Husbands, love you wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the water, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Remember, we, the bride, his Church, are scarred. We are literally as ugly as sin. We are wrinkled, blemished, a sight that must make God turn away in disgust. But what does God do for us? He sent Jesus to be our Savior. And how does he do that? He gave himself up for us. That is the gospel in the scars Jesus bears. By his wounds we are healed. More than healed, we are transformed from ugly to beautiful and from sinner to saint. Because of his wounds we are radiant, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, holy and blameless.

Friends, what sweet gospel this is and what a joy it is to see the scars still on Jesus’ body. Your scars, every one of them, are removed by Jesus. Though guilty, you are blameless. Because of his wounds, we are perfect, radiant, a joy to God. Your lies, your impure thoughts, the sins you committed, are all gone. Maybe some of your sins have had
long lasting effects. Maybe people here on earth will remember some of the sins you committed, but not the Lord. That man who ruined his marriage and bore the scar not only on his finger but also in his conscience, because of Jesus and because he turned to God with a humble and penitent heart, is not know as the marriage wrecker before God. He is known as holy and blameless.

Christ ascended into heaven. He may not be standing physically before us now. But we still see him in the Word and Sacraments. John writes: **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.** In the Scriptures we do not just see and hear about God, nor do we just learn about his resurrection. We also see the scars on his body. You cannot see Jesus if you do not see his scars. But if we see both – the risen Lord and his scars – we will have life forever in his name. Look closely at the next Baptism or recall your own. Watch and listen as communion is served today. Listen to God’s Word. See Jesus there. See his scars. See your forgiveness. They are there.

In the movie **Jaws** two men compared scars. But all three had them. The third, the police chief, decided not to show or share his. We all have scars. But in Christ we are holy and blameless. God removes those scars. In fact, in a sense, we now wear different scars – the scars of Christ. Those who have been baptized have died with Christ. When people talk about the scars they have, do not shy away and hide the scars of Christ that now are a part of your life. Show them. Share them. Tell others that their scars of sin and shame have been washed away and removed by the scars of Christ. Amen.

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