

## “Mark of the Nails”

John 20: 19-31

Here we are on the second Sunday of Easter and things are just a little different. There is no trumpet announcing the resurrection. No Hallelujah chorus greeting us. There is no Special Sunday hoopla like there was just a few days ago. It is just a typical Sunday. It is like every other Sunday. And we are not sure how comfortable we are with that fact.

We want to stay in the excitement the renewing the energizing moment of Easter. We like the feeling of Easter morning. We like the fact that on Easter morning, everything seems right with the world. We don't want the world to intrude and break up the joyous feeling of Easter but even we as believers will admit that is exactly what happens!

Think about it: Last Sunday, Easter Sunday was a great day! Good music, great service, we left this place feeling energized, ready to go out and spread the good news that Jesus has risen!

How long did that feeling last? Did we make it to Monday morning, when we got back to work? Or was it sooner? How long did the Easter joy last? Until the family went home; until the leftovers were put away? Until our alarm clocks that went off the next morning?

The world has a funny way of creeping back in and bringing us back to reality. Good or bad: the day after Easter reminds us that we can't stay at the empty tomb forever! The world starts creeping back in and our Easter joy begins to diminish.

Sometimes the world creeps back in in small ways: a pile of paperwork waiting for us as we come into the office door; a sleepless night worrying about the future; a leaking pipe that drips constantly, reminding us that we need to get it fixed; or maybe it is as simple as our to do lists that never seem to get done. Small ways the world comes creeping back in, reminding us that we can't stay at the empty tomb forever.

And sometimes the world comes crashing in on our Easter joy, sometimes through a phone call that brings us some life changing news, or maybe through a difficult medical diagnosis, or maybe the world came crashing in on our Easter joy through the images of storm torn homes, flooded communities, and wildfires running rampant and we began to wonder where is God in all this chaos.

And just like that: we find ourselves wondering if the hope of the resurrection is real and is the promise of new life really something that we as persons of faith can cling to or was it all just wishful thinking? And just like that, in those moments when the world comes creeping or crashing in, it is hard to believe that we've even experienced the promise of the resurrection because in all

honesty in those moments it feels more like we are in a constant state of Good Friday rather than in the joyous glow of the Easter season, the state where pain and suffering are real; the state where despair is tangible, the state where all we can see is the hammer hitting the nails one by one, nailing Jesus to the cross, wounding our precious Lord and Savior.

In those moments when it feels like the resurrection was just a dream, we will admit as believers that it is easier to focus on the marks of the nails, wounding, hurting, breaking rather than the life giving body of the risen Christ.

In moments when it seems like this world has the last word, it is easier to focus on the marks of the nails than the hope of the resurrection. And just like the disciples, in these types of moments of pain and suffering, we run and hide, trembling in fear, in an upper room, behind locked doors, waiting for the world to keep crashing in upon us, waiting for reality to come and drag us away from our Easter joy, waiting for the darkness to overtake us once more.

And that is exactly why it is Christian tradition to read this story from the Gospel of John on the second Sunday of Easter. This story of doubt. This story of uncertainty. This story which powerfully reminds us that the marks of the nails, the ways that this world wounded Jesus, are transformed and now have become powerful testimonies to God's saving love and grace, powerful testimonies to God's triumph over death.

This story which begins in fear with the disciples huddled in an upper room moves this same group of fearful disciples to remember the promises of new life by sending them out to share the Good News of their encounters with the risen Lord. This story which speaks to us as believers and gives us the same peace that was given to the disciples, also calls us to go out just like the disciples and heal the marks of the nails, marks that have scarred and wounded God's creation, marks that were left by the hate, the hurt, the anger of this world, marks that try to break the Body of Christ once more.

The wonderful thing about this text is that the Gospel of John is the only one that mentions the marks of the nails. All the other Gospels assume this knowledge or think that the marks of the nails play a minor part in the resurrection scene. But for John, these marks of the nails are the key to understanding and truly experiencing the Risen Christ because for John, Jesus, the one we claim as our Lord and Savior, is the Word made Flesh, living among God's people, the Word made Flesh who all things came into being through him, the Word made Flesh, that was life and that life was the light of all people. For John, Jesus is the Word made Flesh who was in the beginning with God.

And for John, the key to the resurrection is that Jesus who is the Word made Flesh felt the pain of the nails, suffered on the cross, the Word made Flesh that was

wounded and broken by this world is the same Jesus, the same Lord and Savior who rose on Easter morning.

That's the key: Jesus who is life and is light for all the people, who knows our pain, who knows our suffering, who knows our doubts and our worries who has been marked just like us by the wounds of this world is raised from the dead. The same Jesus who was crucified is the one the disciples now experience in that upper room. The same Jesus who was wounded and marked by the nails of the cross is the same one that through those wounds, through those marks of the nails, brings us new life.

That is why Jesus invites the disciples to see the marks of the nails. He is inviting them to see that the resurrection did not erase these marks or remove them. Instead he wants the disciples to understand and to realize that the resurrection is a chance to experience new life in spite of these wounds, by embracing them, by telling their story, by allowing them to become testimonies to God's power to overcome death and darkness, by allowing God's healing love to bring wholeness to all of God's creation through those very same wounds.

That is why Jesus says to the disciples, See the marks of the nails. These marks are where the world tried to break me. These marks are where the world wounded me. These are the marks where the world said it had the last word. Jesus invites the disciples to see the marks of the nails and to hear the Good news: God

transformed these marks of death and hurt into marks of new life and hope. God overcame these marks that brought darkness and pain through love and grace. God took these marks of despair and pain and changed them into signs of hope and peace.

The power in this story can be found these marks of the nail. They are not gone or erased. They are still there and they now have become signs of new life. And that is the good news for us this morning as well. Just like Jesus' wounds, we as followers of Jesus Christ, are invited to realize that the story of the resurrection and the promise of new life does not remove or erase our wounds, our marks from the nails, given to us by this world. No the good new is that through the power of the resurrection, just like Jesus' marks from the nails, our marks, our wounds become part of the story, become part of who we are, become signs of hope for us and for all of God's creation because we now understand that although there is pain and suffering in the world, we are called to put our trust in God and to embrace the fact that God has the last word.

The Good news for us this morning is that we begin to understand that by embracing our wounds, our marks from the nails, we will experience the healing and wholeness of God.

Jesus showed the disciples the marks from the nails to show that he understood the hurt and the hurt that can sometimes threaten to destroy our world.

He also showed the disciples and us today his wounded hands and side to remind us that this world has left marks from nails on all of God's children, seen and unseen and that we are called as wounded healers to bring healing and wholeness to all of God's children.

We are called as disciples, as people of the resurrection, to transform the wounds of this world into marks of new life, to change the marks from the nails into marks of hope and healing. As the people of God who practice resurrection through our faith and through our testimonies, we are called as part of the "day to day lives as the church in ministry to put our hands on the wounds of this broken world and to also witness to the hope that sustains us in knowing that we are going to rise again, in knowing that God has the last word, in knowing that we proclaim and worship a God that has the power to overcome darkness, overcome despair, and most importantly, overcome death.

As people of the resurrection, we are called to transform the marks from the nails, to change our focus from despair and darkness, and to really see and experience the Risen Christ by not living in fear but by living with Easter joy always.

May we like the disciples see the marks from the nails and believe the good News that our Lord and Savior has risen indeed! Amen