

The Lutheran Church of the Atonement  
Florissant, Missouri  
Third Sunday of Easter  
April 17-18, 2021  
Acts 3:12-19; First John 3:1-7  
St. Luke 24:36b-48

There He stood before them. They didn't know Him, but, of course, they did. How could they not know Him? That confident, self-assured bearing that had drawn them to Him. That winsome smile that had won them over. That penetrating gaze that seemed to understand them better than they understood themselves. It had to be Him. How could it be anyone but Him? Except, of course, that He was dead. They knew He was dead. Those who had been there had assured them that He was dead. The women had seen His body wrapped,...in fine linen,...from head to toe,...and, then laid in a tomb. It couldn't be Him. But, then, who else could it be? Not even the most convincing imposter could replicate that confident, self-assured bearing, that winsome smile, that penetrating gaze. Yes, they were joyful. Yes, they were terrified. Yes, they were disbelieving and wondering. "And, He showed them His hands and His feet."

What little we know of the resurrection body, we know mostly from Paul, who describes it as "imperishable, ...immortal,...raised in glory and power,...and animated by the Spirit." The Gospel writers suggest that it is recognizable, yet totally transformed. So, the last thing we might expect, much less hope for it to have, is scars. "And, Jesus showed them His hands and His feet."

We might expect -- of all things -- for Him to be delivered, once and for all, from these tragic and ghastly reminders of His suffering, His degradation and humiliation. Now, in His resurrection, He could surely put all that behind Him. He had paid the price. He had endured the pain. He had emerged victorious. Why couldn't that be the end of it? "And, He showed them His hands and His feet." Not only did He retain His scars; His scars became the means by which they could know Him.

Even in this new life, He still bore the marks of the old.

But, then, don't we all! Where are your scars? Perhaps they are like His, a physical reminder of wounds from years gone by, in my case, as minor as a chicken pock scratched by a friend from above my eye, or as major as an incision from a surgery for cancer. But, not every scar can be seen in a mirror. What are the scars that you still bear? Perhaps, some of us still bear the scars of a marriage that went awry, of a betrayal by a friend, of an accusation unjustly made, of a promise needlessly broken, of an opportunity wrongly denied, of a rumor cruelly repeated, of a cry for help ignored with indifference. Where are your scars? Like physical scars, they never quite heal over. Like a childhood pock-mark or a surgical incision from years gone by, they are still there. We still bear them. And, without them, we would not quite be who we are.

I suspect that it is no accident that, of the three Gospels which report appearances by the Risen Lord, all three mention His feet, two of the three mention His hands and His feet, and one even mentions the wound in His side. Do they all want us to understand that even as Jesus enters a new life, a resurrection life, He still bears the marks of the old, that the scars of the old are the means by which we may know and recognize Him?...that the Risen Lord is still...no less...the crucified Jesus?

Even in this new life He still bears the marks of the old.

St. Paul famously reminds us that we who have been baptized and have been buried with Christ in our Baptism have also been raised to new life. And, perhaps we assumed, or perhaps we were told, that our Baptism into this new life should heal all the scars of the old. And, yet, if we are honest with ourselves, we know that the scars remain. We may not dwell on

them; we may only occasionally even notice them, but they are still there, nonetheless.

Even as we live the new life, we too still bear the marks of the old.

But, in that, we are far from alone. For those who sat in that room, startled and terrified and thinking they were seeing a ghost, bore scars of their own. Scars of denial and doubt, scars of confusion and disbelief, scars of disappointment and fear, scars of misplaced hopes and selfish aspirations. How often had they questioned Him, disappointed Him, even abandoned Him! Dare I suggest that He knew them for their scars? And, yet, He stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you," and "He showed them His hands and His feet."

Today, we have gathered in this place, perhaps not startled and terrified, but each of us with our own concerns and uncertainties, and each of us bearing our own scars of doubt and disbelief, of disappointment and denial. Dare I suggest that the Risen Lord knows us for our scars? And, yet, He comes among us, as He has come so often before, by means of His Word and His Sacrament, and He says to us -- as He says to all those who have been Baptized into His death and Resurrection -- "Peace be with you!"...and He shows us His hands and His feet. Amen