

8 April 2018

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“Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” Ah... our dear friend Thomas, the icon of outspoken doubt. Since Easter fell on April Fool’s Day this year, I find myself particularly grateful to meet this familiar skeptic a week later. His friends had been telling him “we have seen the Lord,” but he wasn’t planning to be fooled by anyone or anything. He insisted on seeing for himself. And thank goodness for that! In this era of purported fake news and conspicuous practices of public dishonesty, doubting Thomas has become is something of a hero to me.

Doubt, author Nora Gallagher has written, is the handmaiden to faith. It keeps it honest. And it worked for Thomas: he got exactly the reassurance he wanted, even if those others “who have not seen and yet have come to believe” got more public praise from Jesus. But being inclined to some skepticism myself, I found myself wondering why the fixation on the wounds? In what way did they help Thomas resolve his doubts?

Surely the wounds were not necessary to authenticate Jesus: there is no indication in this story that he was unrecognizable, as was the case in some other post-resurrection stories. Nor were the wounds themselves proof of resurrection. Everyone knew how he had been killed, and he was standing right there in front of them, for goodness sake. As best I can tell, the wounds were signs that Jesus was... woundable. Which means that—whatever the new life of the Resurrection was—it did not erase the pain Jesus suffered.

A lot of ink has been spilled over Thomas’s doubts. And a lot of paint, too. Some of you may have seen representations of this story; perhaps most famously Caravaggio’s luminous “Incredulity of Thomas,” in which three disciples lean into the exposed side of Jesus while Thomas pushes his finger right into an open wound.

The image is uniquely beautiful and disturbing, but it’s hardly the only one of its kind. In fact, there were so many medieval and renaissance representations of the open wounds of Christ—sometimes with Thomas present, sometimes not—that they actually are their own genre of painting called *ostentatio vulnerum*. Which we translate as the showing of wounds, but the transliteration is ostentatious vulnerability.

Ostentatiously vulnerable. This way of representing Christ resurrected isn’t so popular in 21st century American protestant churches, however. Maybe because our 24 hour news cycle already saturates us with more than enough images of wounded-ness. If it bleeds, it leads, as they say. Or maybe because it’s really very uncomfortable to look at wounds; both our own and the ones we have inflicted on others. *Ostentatio vulnerum* is not our preferred way of communicating Christian faith, in pictures or otherwise.

But maybe it should be. Jean Vanier, a Catholic theologian and humanitarian who invested most of his life ministering with people with developmental disabilities, wrote “Coming to terms with life means embracing the essence of our humanity, which is vulnerable. Life implies death. Loving one another implies the possibility of humiliation or rejection. This is reality. But to live in fear is not to live at all. And so we must be vulnerable so that we are free from fear, free to love.”

You know it’s not just the coincidence of April Fool’s Day and Easter that has left me a bit confused about the calendar this year. This past Wednesday was the day when the Episcopal Church, in our annual commemoration of holy people, remembered Martin Luther King. It was also the 50th anniversary of his assassination, the memory of which kicked me right back into the middle of Good Friday.

How infinite is our human capacity for violence, and how far we as a people` have not yet come in dealing with our national wounds of slavery and racism. To admit that we are complicit in wounding others, and indeed are deeply wounded ourselves, raises deep existential fears for us. Will we be judged and found wanting? Will we be rejected? We can hide our shame and our vulnerability to a point, but fear of being seen for who we truly are can itself become a kind of prison for us. And some wounds don’t heal properly if they are covered up.

But the Gospel teaches that there is more power in the honest acknowledgement of pain than in any pretense of false wholeness. The cries of Black Lives Matter, Stephon Clark’s family, the #MeToo and #NeverAgain movements, refugee mothers and children at our borders, continue show us that there are wounds, deep wounds, in our society. This is hard to hear, and hard to look at. But Thomas knew that God has no interest in hiding the truth of wounded-ness. The Resurrection was not fake news papering over the uncomfortable fact of the execution of Jesus, but rather God’s definitive statement that love is stronger than our fear of wounds. Stronger even than death itself.

If this good news is to be believed, however, we will have to own up to the truth of our wounded-ness, and to allow ourselves to see and be touched by the wounds of others. I’m not going to pretend that this kind of work is easy, but we can do hard things. And in doing so, we may find that we have touched Jesus Christ himself, who empowers us to do the work of healing and reconciliation. His wounds remind us that Easter does not erase Good Friday, but rather transforms it. The resurrected body is the one that can bear both hurt and hope.

Easter, April Fools, Good Friday...what time is it, then, in our liturgical calendar? “The time is always ripe to do what is right,” said Dr. King in his last sermon at Washington National Cathedral. “It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, ‘Wait on time.’ Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through

the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God.”

People of God, whatever doubts we may have brought here with us this morning, may we risk asking for the reassurance we really need, like Thomas did. Whatever scars we may be bearing on our bodies or souls, let us risk revealing them to each other like Jesus did. Whatever wounds our brothers and sisters are willing to show us, let us be brave to look upon them—touch them, even—and let their pain empower us for peacemaking. Let us be co-workers with them and with God. As the Father sent Jesus, so he sends us. And may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Who came into the world vulnerable for our sakes, and who was wounded in order that we be made whole.