

<sup>36b</sup>Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” <sup>37</sup>They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. <sup>38</sup>He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup>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.” <sup>40</sup>And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup>While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate in their presence. <sup>44</sup>Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things.

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Many of you know that my Lenten journey this year took an unexpected detour. The day before Ash Wednesday, my dermatologist removed a small mole from near my left knee. At the time, neither of us thought there was anything to it, but a week later that same dermatologist called to say the lab found some melanoma in the mole. “I’m pretty sure I got it all,” he told me, “but we are going to have to cut more to make sure.” He referred me to another dermatologist who specializes in the Mohs Procedure. A couple weeks later, around the middle of Lent, I walked into the second doctor’s office thinking that there would be minimal cutting and only a handful of stitches: No. It was far more extensive than I had imagined. I was unable to bend my

left knee for a long time. It's been over five weeks since that day, and only in the last one have I been able to walk normally. I still can't sleep on my left side without causing discomfort. I showed the scar to Ginger the other day and I asked her if she thinks the girls should finally see it. "No, no, no, no, no," was her response.

Our gospel lesson today deals with scars. Jesus' scars, to be exact. This resurrection account comes from Luke. Early Sunday morning the women had an encounter at the empty tomb. They are told by messengers that Jesus is not there. They go back, tell the disciples all of that, and Peter runs to confirm for himself that the tomb is indeed empty. Having heard of this, two followers of Jesus set off on the road to Emmaus. While traveling, a stranger joins them on the path, who discusses all the events of recent days and how they fulfill scripture. Those two invite this new companion into their home, where he breaks bread and they realize it is Jesus. He vanishes, and they run back to tell the disciples about it.

So it is now night time on that Easter day, and that is where our gospel lesson picks up. Enough has transpired during the course of the day that there is an intriguing – though certainly unlikely – possibility that Jesus has returned. As they are talking about this, he appears in their midst. "Peace be with you," Jesus says. They are left startled and terrified. So he shows them his hands and his feet. Then, to drive home the point that it is really him in the flesh – and not an apparition of some sort – Jesus eats some fish. (That might be my favorite obscure detail in any of the resurrection accounts.)

When Jesus offers them his hands and his feet to see and touch, his point is to prove that it is really him. Standing before them is not an imposter of any sort. This is not a previously undisclosed identical twin who has been lurking in the shadows all

along. No. To let them know that it is truly him, Jesus shows them the parts of his body that have been torn open by nails. His body is his witness. His body still has a story to tell. His body testifies to his experience on the cross. The story of that experience remains with him even as he makes the transition into his resurrected glory.

I think you and I need to sit with the idea that Jesus still bears wounds even in his glory. We need to sit with it because there are a lot of messages outside and inside the Church that would lead us to think that God must cringe at our blemishes. That doesn't seem to be the case, though. The story of Easter is not about the creation of a triumphant, idealized body. Rather, God finds a place in the Easter story for the scars that we carry. There is a place in the Easter story for the parts of us that are broken or damaged physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. Just think of the shame that so many people feel because they have been explicitly or implicitly told that their body is unwanted, or it doesn't adhere to social standards, or it is weird, or it is trash. God has something to say about that. Or what about the emotional losses that we endure, or the pain we carry from past ridicules and insults. Those invisible bumps, bruises, and boo-boos that we have picked up during life all somehow contribute to the story of who you and I are. God has something to say about that, and that message is that scarred, damaged, sick, and weary bodies still carry the image of God. Those scars don't detract from the good news that God has for us. I am certain that God is not in the business of ridiculing someone for the scars they bear. Rather than brushing blemishes aside or dismissing them, God embraces them. Like Jesus showing his hands and feet to his followers on that Easter evening, the scars of our bodies give testimony to God's glory.

When I look at the scar on my leg in the coming weeks, months, or years, it will likely remind me of this past Lenten season: the surprise I had upon hearing the word “melanoma,” the appreciation I have for medical care I received, the relief of being given the all-clear, and I will definitely remember the difficulty I had moving around as well as the help from others that got me through it all. I will look at that scar and perhaps on certain days it will remind me of God’s message that the damaged parts of myself – some of which are invisible – and give testimony of God’s glory. Like the grief that remains over the loss of my mom. Or past heartaches. Or the continual wrestlings. Or even the days when I go to bed thinking that a real dad would have handled a situation better than I did. The scar on my leg can be a physical reminder of the Easter story, which reveals that God willingly and lovingly enters the painful parts of life and does the best work there.

I invite you to think of your own scars as well. All of them are part of the story of the life that you have in your body. Yet, the good news for me... and for you... is revealed in today’s gospel lesson: God is not interested in achieving idealized bodies. Rather, God looks deeply at the blemished, scarred, and broken parts of us and allows the image of God to shine through them. There is a lot in this world and – frankly – within some faulty Christian proclamations that would lead us to conclude otherwise. So I need to be clear, because this good news desperately needs to break through and be heard: God does not hesitate to embrace our wounds and reveal something divine through them. I hope that you and I can look at those parts of ourselves – and of others we encounter – and see in our scars the image of the one whose strength is revealed in weakness.

Amen.