

We are pretty much at the same distance in time from the resurrection as the disciples were when Christ first visits them. For us, perhaps, the memory of it is fading as our lives move on at their rapid pace. I imagine the disciples, however, still trying to make sense of what's happened; not really knowing what the next step should be. Amazement and relief mingled at Christ's appearance. Even though we hear this scripture every year on the Sunday after Easter, there is a part of it I never paid much attention to. As soon as Jesus greets them, he shows them his wounds. These are the proof not that this is Jesus, but that this is the Messiah.

Thomas, who famously missed Christ's first visit wants to see Christ's wounds as well. I've always thought this desire was about proving the resurrection, but I'm not so sure. After all, it was not so long ago that Thomas saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the grave, Thomas wants to see so he can answer what has long been a question on everyone's minds – is this the Messiah or not? And what kind of a Messiah is he? How can someone be a Messiah and still be arrested, stripped, mocked, executed and buried in a stranger's grave? How can one so wounded have anything left in his arsenal to be our Messiah? This was perhaps a more difficult question to wrestle with than the Resurrection itself. Can one so wounded be our savior? Shouldn't the Messiah – Thomas' Messiah, our Messiah – shouldn't our salvation come in the form of advanced weaponry wielded by someone without wounds? No earthly King or Emperor would show his wounds - not to his followers, not to the whole world. Yet from the beginning, Jesus put his humble station on display for all to see – from birth to death. In fact, it is in Christ's wounds where the power is. They go to battle for us, not by facing off with another but by inviting us to embrace our own wounds.

The wounding we do to one another happens when we cannot tolerate our own wounds or we cannot see the wounds of others. If we separate ourselves from our own wounds, our own weaknesses and fears, we become isolated. Keeping our wounds hidden, we hide ourselves as well. And if I'm hiding who I am, well then I suspect you might be hiding who you are as well. Showing only the scrubbed up parts of ourselves puts distance between us, in our heads and hearts; and in actual physical distance – banished with the click of a remote control. I'm convinced that this reluctance to own and make plain our own wounds is at the root of all sin. It is the desire to overlook wounds – our own and those of others which separates us from one another, which makes it possible to nail a human being to a wooden cross, to fill another human's veins with a lethal drug, to strip a landscape of its beauty.

When we have shown our wounds to another, when we have seen another's wounds, we draw closer. It is in offering up of our wounds and acknowledging the wounds of others, that we form community. And community is the cauldron and the container of faith – doubt leading to faith, timidity leading to trust. It is in tending to the wounds of another that we touch Christ's wounds. "When you did it to the least of these you did it to me". It is in a kitchen in Woburn, or the streets of Cambridge that we feel Christ's wounds. In a building in Lawrence or a shelter in Lowell we connect to the wounded, Risen Christ. It is in a pew in this room, where we linger after worship listening to another – hearing their woundedness – sharing our own, that is placing our finger on the hole in Christ's side, then, there, by touching another's wounds and

allowing others to see and touch our wounded places, we too are offering up Christ's wounds for others.

It is no different when we seek to form a world community. We have been used to thinking we show our strength to the world with weapons and a willingness to use them. Christ has shown us a different strength. When Christ died, how Christ died, when he let himself be arrested, and tried, and executed – when he received his wounds and when he showed them to his disciples, when all of this happened it was Christ resting on a strength that is more dazzling than any military parade; more effective than threats or denigration. Christ showed that even the most powerful regime on earth – the Roman Empire – could not overcome the power of love. Christ's wounds are not battle scars, they are a guide to creating something no one dares hope for. Our completeness our wholeness – the entirety of who we really are meeting the entirety of who another is – this is the building block of humanity, the ingredients of compassion and communication; the creation of the kingdom.

It feels to me like the world is at a watershed moment, one I never thought I'd see in my lifetime. It reminds me of when I was 7 or 8 and every plane flying overhead was a possible enemy attack. The image of Khrushchev banging his shoe on the table at the UN vowing to bury us was never far from our thoughts. It doesn't seem like much has changed in the intervening years. Still we think we can stop violence with violence. Still we think that killing is prevented by killing.. Still we think that people with a different language, or religion, or culture are different from us; only to be dealt with by force, by separation, by telling ourselves we are acting to bring stability, to bring peace.

Peace be with you, are the words Christ greeted the disciples with - peace and exposing his wounds. I feel like we are at a place in history that begs us to try that. To see another's wounds, to understand their violence against us – or maybe not to understand, but to respond with our wounds, not with violence.

Even as I was thinking about this, I wondered what we could possibly do with North Korea. I searched for a pacifist response to North Korea. Almost all of what came up on the Internet was about Japan abandoning its pacifist stance, but one site, while not addressing the 'problem' went into some detail about the history. They showed propaganda pictures of GIs with rifles and snarling dogs confronting a small Korean village. This is a common perception about us, Americans setting wolves on the North Korean people. The legacy of the Korean war was devastating – at one point the Communist forces had captured almost the whole peninsula – at another the UN forces had captured almost all of it. Each incursion leaving a trail of destruction, grief and bitterness. The war ended with the boundary in almost the same place as it had been when it started. For the first time, I thought of North Korea as a traumatized country. I saw their wounds and I knew their humanity. And, I grieve that their trauma continues.

Christ stood among his disciples and showed them his wounds and breathed the Holy Spirit into them, using the same language that was used in Genesis when God created man and breathed life into him. Jesus is breathing new life into the world; new life where we show our wounds and tend to those of others; new life where strength comes not from anything outside us; but comes from our relationship with Jesus, and his abiding relationship with us. Peace be with you, alleluia he is risen.