

## IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The Reverend Stephen R. Haynes  
Sunday, April 22, 2022

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### John 20:19-31

‘When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “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.”

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.’

Holy wisdom, holy word.

**Thanks be to God.**

Linen wrappings lie rolled up in a place by themselves in the tomb. The earth rotates, and the sky shifts to evening. Disciples hide from death-dealing authorities. Jesus finds the disciples, speaks peace, and immediately shows them his hands and his side.

The path of life comes to the disciples wounded, and there is fullness of joy in Jesus’ presence as the disciples respond with speechless rejoicing in what they are seeing and perceiving. Speechless rejoicing. The disciples offer no words in our text’s first five verses.

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Instead, their jaws drop as they see their pierced, nailed, and resurrected friend standing and breathing among them. Gifting them with the Holy Spirit and sending them into the world to forgive.

Thomas arrives, and the disciples finally speak. “We have seen the Lord,” they tell him. Thomas speaks his need. I will not believe “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...” Either the disciples told Thomas what they saw, or Thomas intuitively knew that the broken and the holy belong together in the same body. A week passes as the earth rotates seven more times. Jesus comes and stands among the disciples, and invites Thomas to put his finger in the nail marks and his hand into the pierced side.

I am captivated by Jesus’ willingness to allow Thomas to reach out and touch those wounds. Jesus’ willingness to be touched, felt, held. Hand to hand. Body to body. It is a vulnerably tender moment that causes me to cry out with Thomas, “My Lord and my God!”

What does it mean for us to follow a Savior whose wounds are visible and who invites us to touch those open and weeping wounds? In a world in which wounded bodies and souls are so easily dismissed, de-humanized, and destroyed...in a world in which people’s deaths appear as bodiless and soulless statistics in our headlines, I need the fleshy particularity of Jesus’ resurrection.

I need – we need – a crucified and resurrected God. We need a God who contains the broken and the holy – a God who not only shows up in our wounding but shows up with wounds. A God who intimately knows what it means to embody tortuous hurt and pain.

Last September, an Austin Seminary professor who I deeply respect and admire preached in our pulpit, and I recently came across her wise words in a journal article titled, “Preaching Graveside,” in which she expresses why Jesus’ post-Resurrection wounds matter. The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Lord writes that we need this crucified-risen God because the nails’ marks and the pierced side “confirms that [Jesus’] resurrection continues to hold our woundedness, our sufferings, and our death.”<sup>1</sup> Resurrection holds our full humanity.

Of the many signs that Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, the author of John’s Gospel writes down these two instances of the resurrected Jesus making himself known to the disciples through the showing of death’s wounds.

Our flesh will live in hope, our bodies will rest secure, and we will continue to believe because these signs were written – these signs that point us to the work of forgiveness and to the truth that resurrection holds brokenness. These signs that move us from doubt to belief.

Do not doubt, Jesus says. While reading Jenny Odell’s book, *Saving Time*, last week, I came across an etymology of the word “doubt” that opened me to a better understanding of what

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Lord, “Preaching Graveside,” *Journal for Preachers*, Easter 2023, 8.

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Jesus says to Thomas and to us in this portion of Scripture that is all too often used to shame us for doubting.

The word “doubt” comes from a root that means “of two minds, undecided between two things.” Doubt’s meaning arises from a root that describes the struggle we face when we must choose between two things.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus tells us that we do not need to doubt. We do not need to choose between wounds and resurrection. Because in the risen Christ, wounds and resurrection become one. Do not doubt, because in the risen Christ, the power of resurrection becomes present in our wounds – transforming them into wombs of new life. Do not doubt but believe.

Thomas and the other disciples had the great gift of seeing Jesus’ hands and side. We have not seen Jesus, but we see each other, the body of Christ, the Church. As the Church, the body of Christ here on earth, we – like Jesus – hold both wounds and resurrection in our flesh. Our bodies hold lacerating breaches in our physical and psychological tissues. Our flesh holds trauma and misfortune that cuts and cracks. Wounds both visible and invisible – collective and individual – mark us.

But we do not need to doubt – we do not need to choose between our brokenness and our holiness. For resurrection marks us, too, offering us a gateway to reconciliation – a gateway to peace and forgiveness.

Resurrection moves through our confused evenings and fear-driven decisions and comes and stands among us, offering us peace and freeing us to offer peace to ourselves and to one another.

Every week in worship, we practice this juxtaposition of wounds and resurrection through our rituals of confessional prayer and the passing of the peace. In our confessional prayer, we say together, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side.”

In our passing of the peace, we embody the resurrection as we share Christ’s peace “from one baptized person to another in a room deeply marked by the wounds of the world.”<sup>3</sup>In the tension of this both/and of confession and peace, the mystic Julian of Norwich tells us that we encounter the fall and the recovery from the fall and begin to notice how both are the mercy of God.

So, do not doubt – but believe. Our wounds are Christ’s wounds. Our healing is Christ’s healing. The broken and the holy become one in us as they became one in Christ. Do not doubt but believe that we are wounded and resurrected at the same time. And when our painful

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<sup>2</sup> Jenny Odell, *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock*, 272.

<sup>3</sup> Gail Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New: Images in the Lectionary*, 77.

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brokenness threatens to drag us to the pit, may we feel Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit upon us and birthing us into a living hope.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, may we – as the body of Christ – breathe peace into our fear-filled rooms and forgiveness into the lives of all whom we encounter. And may we risk showing our wounded hands and sides, trusting that we are not alone in our woundedness and hoping that the body of Christ responds with the balm of reconciling resurrection.  
Alleluia. Amen.