



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

April 19, 2009

Easter 2 B

By Reverend Donna Barr

"Put your hand into my wounds", said the risen Jesus to Thomas, "and you will know who I am". Thomas wanted to know and Jesus wanted us to know. He wanted us to be very sure. When Jesus rose from the grave his wounds were still visible. The marks of self giving love forever found a place in his glorified body. As Thomas touched Jesus' wounds he was then, and only then, able to truly trust in a God who could know and understand our pain, brokenness....our woundedness. Today we live in a world where our wounds have become all too visible. There are physical wounds of pain and disease, disability, starvation, aging. There is spouse abuse, elderly abuse, child abuse, and sexual abuse. There are psychological and emotional wounds...anger so violent that children are now killing other children and parents claiming they had no clues. Fear, loneliness, betrayal, rejection, addition, isolation and worldwide injustice. Yes, we know something about wounds. As a minister, I see far too many people in crisis ...I see their wounds. Not only physical but emotional and spiritual. Where do I go now? Who do I turn to for help? How can this be happening to me? These are the times when we begin to question the meaning of life and pay close attention to our own wounds and those of others. Thomas was paying attention to the wounds of Jesus. He wanted to see and feel the agony that his Lord had endured. Is this the connection that Jesus wanted to make to Thomas? Did he want Thomas to understand that by his wounds we would be healed?

There is an old legend in the Talmud which may suggest to us the beginning of an answer: Rabbi YOSHUA ben LEVI came upon ELIJAH the prophet while he was standing at the entrance of a cave....He asked ELIJAH, "When will the Messiah come?" ELIJAH replied, "Go and ask him yourself." "Where is he?" "Sitting at the gates of the city." "How shall I know him?" "He is sitting among the poor covered with wounds. The others unbind all their wounds at the same time and then bind them up again. But he unbinds one at a time and binds it up again, saying to himself, "Perhaps I shall be

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needed: if so I must always be ready so as not to delay for a moment." The Talmud story suggests that, because he binds his own wounds one at a time to prepare himself, if asked to help someone else, he would be ready to help. Jesus has given this story a new fullness by making his own broken body the way to health, to liberation and new life. And so I am called not only to care for my own wounds and the wounds of others, but to make His wounds into a major source of his healing. Now for the important conclusion to this story. When Rabbi Yohua ben Levi went to the city gates and found the Messiah he said to him, "Peace unto you, my master and teacher." The Messiah answered, "Peace unto you, son of Levi." He asked, "When is the master coming?" "Today, he answered. Rabbi Yohua returned to Elijah who asked, "What did he tell you?" "He indeed has deceived me, for he said, "Today I am coming' and he has not come." Elijah said, "This is what he told you, "Today if you would listen to His voice." Can we have trust that Jesus is sitting among the poor and that his wounds are signs of hope? "The master is coming - not tomorrow but today, not next year, but this year, not after all our misery is passed, but in the middle of it, not in another place but right here where we are standing." Are we listening to his voice and understanding that his wounds were received for us. That the wounds of Christ are his identity. They tell us who he is. Those wounds went down into the grave with him - visible and tangible. Rising did not remove them. He who broke the bonds of death kept his wounds. And so he is ready to bind up ours....and so we must be ready. If sympathy for the world's wounds is not enlarged by our anguish, if love for those around us is not expanded, if gratitude for what is good does not flame up, if insight is not deepened, if commitment to what is important is not strengthened, if aching for a new day is not intensified....then death won and Jesus' wounds diminish faith and my hope is gone. For I know we are marked by our own wounds. So if you want to know who I am...put your hand in.

When Thomas put his hand in Jesus' side - he was not only sure - he was then and only then able to go out and bind up others wounds. Our wounds which causes us to suffer now, will be revealed to us later as the place where God enters into our humanity. Thomas said, "My Lord and my

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God!"

Alleluia, Alleluia, The Lord Has Risen Indeed!

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