

# Second Sunday of Easter

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By Glenn Jordan

## Introduction

Sometimes we imagine since we are wounded that somehow those wounds must be hidden and undeclared because otherwise we would be unworthy or disqualified. But this story invites us to imagine the possibility of that we can live a resurrected life with our woundedness. This is countercultural in a context where so much of our faith practice is designed to ensure we overcome the injuries with which we learn to live. In this story Jesus appears with healing in his wounds to bring his disciples out from the darkness they inhabited in the traumatic days following his death.

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## Text

### John 20:19–31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked 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.'

### Jesus and Thomas

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, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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## Comment

In his poem "The Definition of Love" poet Andrew Marvell dares to say, speaking of love, "Magnanimous Despair alone/ Could show me so divine a thing/ Where feeble hope could ne'er have flown,/ But vainly flapped its tinsel wing."

This chapter of John's Gospel begins in darkness. In verse 1 it is the darkness just before dawn. This is, paradoxically perhaps, a kind of promising darkness that brings the hope of change, just as the night concedes to the day. And there follows a second type of promise which comes in the form of a tomb from whose entrance the shuttering stone has been removed. It is clear that the tomb is empty because the murk of the closed grave has been penetrated by light.

But not so in the reading for today. There is a different form of darkness here. The Gospel tells us that it is evening and therefore the night is closing in. Instead of the world expanding joy of encountering resurrection, there is the inhibiting sneak of fear.

And the doors are locked, so this room has become a closed tomb for these disciples.

Fear, disappointment, failure, loss, exclusion, all have a way of making a tomb in the space of our head, or our body; our career; our faith community; even in our families or local communities. It happens like a suffocating darkness closing in and wrapping itself around us.

The resurrected Jesus appears in the darkness as if to say that not all darkness is to be feared. Sometimes darkness opens up new ways of knowing and perceiving that in our previous 'enlightened' state we had no knowledge of nor any need.

In her book "Learning to Walk in the Dark," Barbara Brown Taylor argues that there are no dark emotions, just unskillful ways of coping with emotions we cannot bear. "The emotions themselves," she says, "can be conduits of pure energy that want something from us, to wake us up, to tell us something we need to know, to break the ice around our hearts, to move us to act."

And therefore it may be important that we note from this reading that the resurrected Jesus appears and shows them his wounds. Richard Rohr remarks that this is not a story about believing in the face of the facts, but "a story about believing that someone could be wounded and also resurrected at the same time." In this way we may learn the truth of what Rumi said, "the wound is where the light enters."

There is something similar in Carl Jung's term the 'wounded healer.' He wrote, "The analyst must go on learning endlessly...it is his (sic) own hurt that gives the

measure of his power to heal.”

Our wounds live a shadowed existence but can emerge in particular times and places or in the presence of certain people. Those who have suffered any kind of traumatic experience can be triggered in unexpected and overwhelming psychological, emotional and physical ways. It can seem like that trauma is inescapable, just like a tomb.

The appearance of resurrected Jesus in that locked room, openly displaying his wounds, offers hope to the disciples, and to us, that the wounds we bear need not be confining or constricting. Our wounds need not disqualify us or make us unworthy. It is possible to live resurrected and wounded at the same time.

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## Response

It takes faith to believe that darkness can lead us to new forms of perceiving and new ways of knowing, and that our wounds can guide us to wisdom. Jacques Lusseyran was a French author and activist born in Paris in 1924. As a result of an accident in school at age seven he became totally blind. His autobiography “And There was Light” describes how he learned to live with his blindness.

Because of his concerns about the rise of Adolf Hitler prior to the beginning of World War Two he studied German to be able to understand German radio broadcasts. During the war he joined the French Resistance movement and spent time in Buchenwald concentration camp but was liberated in April 1945.

He claimed that he could identify a species of tree by the sound of the wind moving through its leaves. He wrote, “The problem with sight is that it naturally prefers the outer evidence, it attends to the surface of things, which in essence makes it a very superficial sense.”

If you rely on the light for the majority of your perception, take some time to sit in the dark and pay attention to what is around you. Learn to become aware of what is around you, what sounds are there, the feel of your clothes on your skin, the kinds of things that are often peripheral to your awareness when light is present.

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## Prayer

Jesus, bringer of peace  
Who steps into our darknesses  
And shows us your wounds.

Come in, come in,  
to the closed and locked  
Places of my life  
In the wonder and mystery  
Of your resurrected newness.

Teach me the worth  
Of living both resurrected

and wounded

That I may in turn  
be the bringer of peace  
To the dark places of my world

Amen

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Season: Ordinary time

Themes: Inner Journey