Easter 2B 2021 Scars and Peace that heal wounds of unbelief John 20: 19-31

The world was upside down. Their hopes were dashed. Everything was changing so fast. Earthquakes above ground shifted the moral and religious foundations. It looked like evil had triumphed over the good.

Now this could easily describe our world now, but it is also true when the disciples of Jesus saw Him rejected and then crucified. They had nowhere to turn. They could not look back to Judaism for someone greater than Moses and the Prophets had once stood among them and spoke with greater authority than they had ever heard. Jesus spoke as if He were God. Now their God was dead.

They could not look ahead, for there was no point in living anymore. Life had no purpose. The future was too painful to think about and the same religious powers that crucified the Son of God were hot on their trails to do the same to them and squelch the legacy of the Christ.

What’s worse is that the disciples themselves had made a real mess of things. Fighting among themselves over who was the greatest. Running away from their shepherd when He was struck down, they acted more like rats exposed by the light then faithful sheep. Their unspoken yet outspoken leader Peter swore an oath that he never knew Jesus and one of their company, Judas, had become a vessel of Satan, and overcome with guilt, hanged himself.

They too carried wounds of guilt three days after the Crucifixion. Fear and sorrow paralyzed them. They had forgotten the words of the Lord wherein He predicted His resurrection.

When the Risen Jesus appeared to them behind locked doors, what will He do to them? What will he say? Will he punish them, renounce them, or revoke their call as disciples?

When the Jesus suddenly appeared to them in the locked room, their initial reaction was terror and unbelief as if He were a ghost. It wasn’t until the Lord says to them: ***Peace be with you*** that their terror turned to joy and their unbelief turned to faith.

Faith cannot live when there is only God’s anger. When the disciples heard Jesus speak peace to them their hearts were overjoyed because they were convinced He was not angry with them. No bitterness but He blessed them with peace. This was the opposite of war and dissension and any foolish talk of who is the greatest. Peace from the King of Peace lifted their load of guilt by revealing his heart of love and forgiveness toward them. He did not air their dirty laundry but made them whiter than snow. His peace was a most precious gift of a clean conscience toward God.

Their wounds of unbelief were now healed over. But then Jesus showed them his scars from the crucifixion. Marked hands and feet that once were fixed to the cross, now had become eternal scars of salvation. The sacred place where blood once flowed now scabbed over but remains in his body for eternity.

See what the Lord does! He heals our wounds as His scars remain. His scars are the proof of his love by total sacrifice.

With healed wounds of unbelief, the disciples respond in joy. After being forgiven, they were glad to see Jesus and invited to touch his scars; the place where forgiveness was won. Those sacred scars never fade, for the source of our salvation is eternal. As the saints in heaven gaze upon those very scars, a liturgy of praise and thanksgiving erupts that is joined by endless ranks of angels, swelling up in unbounded celestial joy.

But there is more. Jesus reassured them with peace a second time, and then sends them out, as the Father sent His Son out. To send out is what the word apostle means. It is what Jesus does to them. He apostles them. He does not revoke their call but establishes it.

They could only go out as apostles in confidence and joy if they were forgiven first, and so they were. They speak as forgiven sinners to sinners. They go out and tell Thomas. They witness and testify of seeing the Saviour’s wounds, but Thomas does not believe. He says he has to see and feel for himself.

What will the Risen Jesus do with Thomas? Will he be angry, or revoke his call? No, Jesus comes a week after Easter and speaks Peace a third time and offers Thomas to behold and feel His sacred scars.

In doing that, we see what is in our Lord’s heart: divine love and forgiveness. It is a most precious gift that changes us for good. When we are blessed with the Saviour’s peace, we too are no longer huddled in fear and paralyzed by guilt, but respond with joy and gladness.

Thomas kneels down and makes a great confession of the Christian faith when He says in adoration and praise: My Lord and my God. He is confessing the divinity of Jesus and has encountered His gracious God. He is a changed man and now on a mission. His mission brought the good news of the Saviour’s peace as far as India.

Now the Risen Jesus comes to us today here in Oshawa. We encounter the same Lord as the disciples did, in the divine service. Every encounter with God begins in confession and absolution, then we sing with angels the Gloria in Excelsis that peace from heaven has now come to earth, we hear the gospel of peace that heals our wounds, we confess that Jesus is Lord and God in the Creed, but then in the Holy Communion, like Thomas, we encounter the sacred scars of Jesus in his risen body. Take, eat, this is my body given for you.

There is no greater sign from heaven, then in this encounter with the Risen Lord. Eating his body and drinking his blood is the sign that God loves us, forgives us, and that we live in Him. Embedded in the Lord’s body are his blessed scars. That is where our Peace is.

This is what we need to hear and need to eat in this dark and troubled times. An encounter with the Risen Jesus in word and sacrament, gives us gladness and healing and renewed purpose. If our lips cannot sing our hearts can still sing his praise and no one can take that away. In the Holy Communion, we see the scars from when our healing comes and so we rejoice.

See how the Lord leads his church to eternal life. His words of absolution are spoken here and his scars are seen in His supper and by believing you have life in His name. Do not disbelieve but believe as you kneel down before your Lord in Holy Communion and say: My Lord and my God!