

*19When 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." 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So 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."*

*26A 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." 27Then 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." 28Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." 30Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31But 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.*

Hands.

His hands.

The hands that had washed their feet.

The hands that had held the bread and the cup that he shared with them.

Hands whose touch had opened the eyes of the blind, and held the the five loaves and the two fish that fed thousands.

Hands that had blessed the children.

The hands forever marked and marred by the nails of crucifixion.

They did not recognize him when they heard his voice.

They did not know him by the shape of his nose, his eyes, his face.

No, on that evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were gathered in fear behind locked doors, and Jesus appeared suddenly there among them, and spoke to them, "Peace be with you," they knew him only when he showed them his hands, his side. Then they rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Isaiah had spoken the prophecy: "He was bruised for our transgressions, he was wounded for our iniquities, upon him was the punishment that made us whole and by his bruises we are healed."

What would it be like to see for the first time a person scarred by my carelessness? Imagine this scene in a hospital: the driver of a car encountering the person his car had struck - seeing scars that would not go away, scars that were the fault of the driver. How much I would give if I were that driver, never to have to see what my sin has done? How much more I long to not to have to look at the ways I scar those I love.

Jesus who stood before them, spoke peace to them, showed them scars that were his because of their sin. And they had joy.

He showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Rejoiced. Joy. There would have been no joy had Jesus held out those hands as accusation. Look what you have done to me. Look at what your sin has cost me. Their eyes would have dropped, their spirits sagged.

But I believe he held out those hands to say, "I endured this for you. I gave my life for you. I'd do it all again for you. See how much I love you."

Let's go back to a hospital room, meeting one who has been scarred. How different that meeting if those scars are on one who has rushed into a raging fire to carry you out - to save your life.

Here is Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth creator of all, Son of God, holding out to you the scars of his saving love. His body, his blood, offered in love for you upon the cross. Jesus' body, his blood - offered to you - Jesus' own self given to you.

Yes, the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

And then Jesus' words: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

Jesus does not leave us huddled behind locked doors but sends you out to declare: Jesus is alive.

Then tell them of Jesus' hands, let them see Jesus hands through the very words you speak. Tell them of the love of Jesus who endured the cross for them, gave his life for them, that every sin would be forgiven, and death overcome. Tell them of Jesus.

Like the disciples did with Thomas.

And if they doubt bring them here on the first day of the week, where our Lord has promised to be present in his word, and in the meal. Bring them that Jesus might show his

hands to them. If they can see those hands as Thomas did, see the love that is in Jesus dying for them, then their whole life will bow down before Jesus, confessing, “My Lord and my God.”