

TOUCH ME

Wounded God, disabled and divine: give us faith to perceive you pierced and embodied, standing here among us, feeding us forgiveness, beautifully broken; through Jesus Christ, the suffering servant.

from *Prayers for an Inclusive Church*, Steven Shakespeare

APRIL 18, 2021

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

1 John 3:1-2, Psalm 4, Luke 24:36-48

ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY

EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL

Los Olivos, California

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MAY I SPEAK AND MAY WE HEAR FROM THE HEART OF THE LIVING GOD
WHO IS CREATING, REDEEMING, AND SANCTIFYING US.

I'll let you in on something, a factoid about St. Mark's: there has never once been a Good Friday service that has been larger than an Easter service. (This may be true of every church ever.)

It goes back to the crucifixion. Many fewer people there than those on hand for the resurrection appearances.

So those who encountered Jesus at Easter – in panic and fright – and heard his invitation to peace – were *also* invited to see his wounds – what they missed on Good Friday – and to touch him to understand that *resurrection* was not *reset*.

He showed his wounds *not* so we could see how *he* suffered, but so we could see how *we* suffer – how we all suffer.

As it was for Jesus, our wounds come with us when we enter a new day – as we do again and again through our lives.

Every time we *live* through anything – no matter how gracefully (or horridly) we do it – that is Easter, sacred re-ordering of reality.

Resurrection – for us personally but, more importantly, for our communities – and for our global community – happens in the very real context of our damaged, physical, material lives.

Can we continue to hear "**touch me** and see" from the resurrected Christ today? Those wounds *we are to touch* are not his alone, but ours – and are the injuries of all those around us, those who share life in the world with us – those who suffer and die in illness, in pandemic, in violence, in hunger, unhoused, in exile, in poverty, in neglect, addicted, exploited by greed or lust, put down by others' fantasies of supremacy or superiority, in those who are lonely, isolated, who are exhausted, those who are uncertain, confused, or overlooked, or lied to, those who want to do better, but can't, those who make mistakes and fail – repeatedly, even fatally.

Jesus says, "Touch me." If we won't touch the wounds, we won't touch Christ. We won't have anything to do with Christ.

For God, for whom calendars and clocks mean nothing, this presence of wounded, wounding humanity we touch today or any day is the **exact same** abiding presence of God shown for all to see in that room in Jerusalem among the whole company of Jesus's friends, and in the whole ongoing life of Jesus through the ages.

For each of us today, God wants us to touch and see just as

immediately and materially as any who have ever been shocked to recognize Jesus with them – unimaginably, but really risen from the dead, really present.

Yes, any wound, however small or large – any actual experience of ourselves and others in vulnerable humanity – physical, mortal, limited – is touching Christ risen – is truly, deeply witnessing, perhaps falling into his mangled hands and feet – not an isolated event of wounding in some past era, but experiencing the wounded and risen one now in present pain.

This is the Easter that matters, the Easter that is not on a calendar but is the shape of reality, constantly re-presenting – or re-PRESENT-ing itself now in life we know – our lives....

In his book *The Universal Christ*, Richard Rohr writes: "... the kind of seeing I'm describing is a relational and reciprocal experience, in which we find God simultaneously in ourselves and in the outer world beyond ourselves. I doubt if there is any other way. All you can really do is return such Presence with your own presence. ***Nothing to believe here at all.*** Just learn to trust and draw forth your own deepest experience, and you will know the Christ all day every day...."

What I want to underscore for you in this passage is: "Nothing to believe here at all." It is living. It is loving. It is *not* cogitation.

The Risen Christ is not a belief, a theory, a secret handshake for a special tribe of insiders: a cozy gathering of "our type" (not

any day and especially not on Sunday). The Risen Christ is not a thought in anyone's head that you understand or don't understand, accept or don't accept. The Risen Christ is in every person – of every faith expression and of none. It is God's reality – in others around you – that continues no matter what – not dependent on circumstances.

The Risen Christ is living in the midst of your own and the woundedness of others – yes, perhaps disturbed, panicked, frightened – but discovering the peace of God in touching Christ with eyes and hearts open to the full reality of God's patient and abiding presence in our frailty, God's compassion in our frailty – and in the frailty of others – all others who share this broken life with us.

All day long every day we are invited to the damaged hands and feet of Jesus – watch for them. Touch and see them in a new day, with an Easter perspective, as God is constantly reshaping disorder, damage, and loss *with us* – into a future God and we want to live together.

We hear all about Easter in this gospel story today: don't stand back; reach out (to whoever is there).

Touch me.