

All Saints Anglican Church, Birkenhead

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The Dutch Catholic Priest Henri Nouwen in his book 'The Wounded Healer' tells a short story. One day Rabbi Yohua ben Levi came upon Elijah the prophet while he was standing at the entrance of Rabbi Simeron ben Yohai's 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 a time and binds it up again, saying to himself, 'perhaps I shall be needed: if so I must always be ready so as not to delay for a moment.'"

The Messiah, the story tells us, is sitting among the poor, binding his wounds one at a time, waiting for the moment when he will be needed.

Wounds. They are not something we would generally want to have much to do with. Let alone, as our Gospel details today – put our hands into. I doubt I would even want to put my finger into Jesus wounds as Thomas is invited to do. Poor Thomas has become known as the doubter, yet none of the disciples believe when they are told Jesus is risen. They all have to come to faith as they see and experience the Risen Christ.

This resurrection is not an easy concept to grasp as we well know. It was also difficult for the disciples. But Thomas is more forthright about his belief than the others. He asks to see the proof. He wants to touch the wounds. Maybe he says to us "Have you put your finger into Jesus wounds?" Ah! But putting my finger into wounds is something I don't like doing. Yet Jesus seems to tell Thomas and us that this is the way faith works. There is something here about wounds, and there is something here about faith and somehow the two are connected.

Perhaps the next step we need to take is the one the disciples took. They don't stay with the wounds, as precious as those wounds are. They go out to witness to what they have seen and heard. The Acts of the Apostles tells us the stories of the actions that follow from knowing the risen Christ. The

apostles go out to those who are wounded. And to those wounded they heal them by bringing them into their community where they are accepted and loved.

Wounds happen to all of us, they are part of the human condition. Life sometimes causes them unasked for. Sometimes we bring them on ourselves. The wounds are there, sometimes large, sometimes small, but we are all wounded. And when we are wounded what do we want? I think we want to do what Jesus did. He went to those he knew and loved. He did not choose to go to the authorities and show them his wounds. He chose his intimate friends. When we are wounded we want to show our wounds to those closest to us. The few we trust and respect are the ones we go to and talk to.

Exposing our wounds takes time. We need to learn it is alright to be wounded. Yet for some the wounds are so great that it takes an extraordinary amount of courage, time and work to begin the healing process. For it requires gentleness and care to reveal those tender parts of our being. To invite someone to put their finger in that place requires a soft touch. We only invite those we know and trust who have this soft touch to do such a thing.

In time, healing can come. When we trust others enough to be there with us in this delicate place, we find their touch can help the healing process. When the healing occurs, then we are scarred. The scar remains to remind us what has happened. We too have been wounded but we have found new life. That scar may lead us to be the one who can be a healer for others.

And we can be the healer for others because we have been accepted and healed by God. And therefore we are called to be healing people. People of hope, people of care and people of love. People who carry the battle scars of faith, in the hope that others may in turn see them and begin the process of healing.

Like the disciples we know the wounds of Jesus and those wounds draw from us the same cry as that of Thomas, "My Lord and my God." And then like the disciples we have had to go out of the locked room and become wounded healers ourselves. Wounded healers are those who live a resurrection life. Living this life shows in the way we hold on to our faith

in adversity. It shows whenever we try to get rid of the things which spoil life. It shows whenever we offer forgiveness, as Jesus gave his disciples the power to do. It shows by inviting others into our circle, when we care for them in need, when we share the breaking of bread and the prayers. In our daily living we are already being these wounded healers living the resurrection life into which we are called.

Rabbi Joshua Ben Levi approaches the Messiah at the gate.
“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 YOSHUA 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 listen to His voice.’ Not tomorrow, today.”