

Are You Thankful for the Scars?

On the evening of Easter Sunday, the disciples were locked away in a room, hiding from the Jewish leaders, scared to death by what they had seen that morning. Jesus' tomb was empty. His body was missing. They thought the authorities would suspect them. Besides that, the disciples had abandoned Jesus in his time of greatest need. If he really rose from the dead, He would be unhappy with his faithless friends. Can you just imagine the disciples huddled in this locked room, nervously discussing all the possible disasters awaiting them, and suddenly Jesus just shows up in the room, stands among them, and says PEACE! If I were Jesus, I would have said, "Did you not pay attention to anything I had said? I told you I was going to be arrested, crucified and die. I told you I was going to rise from the dead." No, the loving compassionate sacrificial and very risen Savior greeted his terrified disciples with four little words, but they weren't "I told you so." Instead, Jesus said, "Peace Be with You!" The last thing Jesus said directly to his disciples was in John 16:33. He had just explained that he was returning to his Father, God, and the disciples would be scattered and persecuted for following him. And then he said, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* So, Jesus' last conversation with them was focused on *giving them peace*, and his first conversation with them after his resurrection was about *giving them peace*.

Jesus wanted them to know that they did not need to be afraid. They were not alone. From this day forward, peace would be a defining mark of those who follow Jesus Christ. The peace that Jesus promises us is not based on circumstances, comfort, or even confidence in our own abilities. Jesus' peace comes from our knowledge of God's unfailing love and God's plan for us. Jesus' peace comes from knowing the complete story. That God's plan to redeem all of creation and undo the destruction and distance caused by our sin and separation from Him. That's the peace that Jesus is offering to his disciples then, and that he offers to us now. It is peace provided by the Nail Scared Hands of a Loving Savior!

Jesus had the power to instantly heal and transform His body, but it was Jesus' scars that proved God's love for them, for us and for all the world! Those scars prove Jesus' commitment to his mission, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). There is a song called "Scars" by the contemporary Christian group I Am They. The chorus of the song says, *"So I'm thankful for your scars, Cause without them I wouldn't know your heart and I know they'll always tell of who you are, so forever I am thankful for the scars."* The sight of Jesus' scars instantly turned his followers' fear into joy. Jesus' scars motivated the disciples to unlock that room and go out and spread the good news of his death and resurrection to the whole world. And we're still doing that today. Because Jesus' scars show us the extent of God's love and the awesomeness of God's power. He proved it with his scars.

One night the house of an elderly woman raising her grandson caught fire. The grandmother, trying to rescue the little boy upstairs, perished. A crowd gathered around the burning house. The boy's cries for help were heard above the crackling of the blaze. No one seemed to know what to do, the front of the house was a mass of flames. Suddenly a stranger rushed from the crowd and circled to the back where he spotted an iron pipe that reached the upstairs window. He disappeared for a minute, then reappeared with the boy in his arms. Amid the cheers of the crowd, he climbed down the hot pipe as the boy hung around his neck. Weeks later a public hearing was held in the town hall to determine in whose custody the boy would be placed. Several stated why the boy should come and live with them. The chairman asked, "If anyone else like to say a word?" From the backseat rose a stranger who slipped in unnoticed. As he walked toward the front, deep suffering showed on his face. Reaching the front of the room, he stood directly in front of the little boy. Slowly the stranger removed his hands from his pockets. A gasp went up from the crowd. The little boy, whose eyes had been focused on the floor until now, looked up. The man's hands were terribly scarred. Suddenly the boy emitted a cry of recognition. Here was the man who had saved his life. His hands were scarred from climbing up and down the hot pipe. With a leap, the boy threw himself around the stranger's neck and held on for life. The farmer rose and left. The teacher, too. Then the rich man. Everyone departed, leaving the boy and his rescuer who had won him without a word. Those marred hands spoke more effectively than any words. Of course, this man would care for the boy, he was willing to die to save him and had the scars to show.

Our Purpose is to proclaim this good news of great joy because we have seen Jesus' scars. The scars Jesus received saving us from an eternal fire! And we've been called to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the whole world. Are you living for the resurrected Christ in a way that proclaims that you are thankful for the scars?