

Reading: John 20:19-31

On this the second Sunday of Easter we hear the news of the Risen Christ greeting the disciples. It hasn't been widely reported but Donald Trump had a near death experience too. He was walking around the garden of the White House and fell into one of the ponds. Nearby was a boy scout who was on a tour of the White House. He had just done his resuscitation badge and knew CPR. He rushed over and before the president's bodyguards could get to him, he dragged the President out of the water and brought him back from drowning. When he came to, Donald Trump thanked the boy. "I am the leader of the free world," he said. "Name one thing I can do to thank you for saving my life." The boy looked at the President and said, "There is one thing you can do. Please don't tell my father what I have done."

Today we see not a resuscitated president but a resurrected Jesus. It is Sunday evening, and the disciples are gathered together behind locked doors. But no mere locked doors can keep Jesus out. He comes and stands among them and greets them, "Peace be with you." What follows next is really interesting. He shows them his hands and his side. He was of course wounded in the side by the spear of the soldier at his crucifixion and his hands were pierced by the cruel nails as he hung on the cross. What an odd thing to do to show them his wounds. It's odd on two levels. Wouldn't the resurrected body of Jesus be all shiny and new without wounds and, secondly, wouldn't he keep these wounds to himself? Our natural instinct is to hide our wounds, whether they are emotional or physical, but clearly it brings peace to the disciples to see Jesus' wounds. I wonder why?

Well, the Gospel continues. Jesus is there again. His greeting is the same: "Peace be with you." And again, his wounds are on display, but he takes things a step further with Thomas. He invites Thomas to actually put his hand into his wounded side and his fingers in the wounds of Jesus' hands.

I think John is presenting us with a profound truth that would be easy to miss. It is because of the wounds of Christ that we are healed, and moreover, it is through accepting our woundedness that we find peace.

For four years now we have been facing a worldwide pandemic. We are not going to find peace by pretending that everything is alright. But when we honestly face the current woundedness of our community and of our world, we can begin to experience Christ's peace in a new way.

The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, explains it better. Shalom is wholeness, shalom is justice, shalom is love. Finding peace or shalom at this time or any time involves facing into our woundedness. If Jesus was a Kiwi, he could have greeted the disciples with 'kia ora'. Kia ora is really a blessing. It is wishing the other person life. You see with the help of Jesus, we

have stumbled onto a great truth, that peace is to be found in embracing our woundedness, admitting our shortcomings and being honest about our weaknesses.

Kathryn Butler is a trauma and critical care surgeon who left work to home-school her children. Of all people, she knew what she was going through. It was called depression. She writes about how she found peace:

When I awkwardly stepped into that church building more than a decade ago, those present couldn't discern my agony. But they saw me. They beheld me as another image-bearer of God, worthy of love, won by Christ. They offered table fellowship. They opened their homes and their lives to a stranger. They shared books, baked pies, and offered unconditional embraces. They inquired. They listened.

When I finally had the courage to admit to them my depression, they loved me even more. The table fellowship continued. The books still exchanged hands. The embraces just lingered a bit longer. The house visits increased in frequency. The prayers became more pointed, more fervent. They didn't reprimand me or offer advice. They simply partnered with me, holding on to me while the waves of grief ebbed and flowed.

Their efforts didn't chase away the darkness. They didn't cure my depression or jolt my mind awake with a burst of hope. But they *did* reflect Christ's love, and in so doing they buoyed me through turbulent seas. They reminded me, even while I was steeped in hopelessness and shame, even when I couldn't believe their words, that Christ lived and died and rose for me. And like a shaft of light glittering through inky waters, that truth—that love—penetrated through.

I wonder what wounds you have. When I confessed to being allergic to dogs at St Peter's, a number of people came up afterwards and confessed to being allergic to cats, dogs and even Presbyterians.

Henri Nouwen in his classic book *Wounded Healers* writes how rather than expecting ourselves to be perfect, we can offer others empathy and understanding precisely because we have our own shortcomings and hurts.

He writes: "Nobody escapes being wounded. We are all wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not 'How can we hide our wounds?' so we don't have to be embarrassed, but 'How can we put our woundedness into service for others?' When our wounds cease to be a source of shame and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers."

Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you" and showed them his wounds. Today the risen Christ greets you.

I do not know what wounds you bear but I do know this. I know that together, as we face them, the Risen Christ offers us something that no one else can, a deep peace. It is the peace of our needs and the peace of our longing.