

Come, Lord Jesus – open our minds to understand your Word to us. Amen.

Here we are again, back in the room where it happened – the original “room where it happened” – maybe the most consequential “it” in history, where a murdered man appeared among his friends not only alive, but with his wounds miraculously healed, visible but healed, only three days after his death and burial.

Jesus is at pains to show and tell his followers that he is not some partially dead being – not a ghost, not a zombie – but a fully alive person, perhaps biologically different than other humans, yet very much alive.

To prove it, he invites them to touch his wounds, to feel he has bones.

And he asks for something to eat – If I had been literally to hell and back,

I’d want something more than broiled fish...but that’s what they give him.

And it demonstrates his life.

This life matters because this life won’t quit.

Our natural, human life will quit. Jesus’ merely human life quit. He died on that cross.

But the life of God that ran through him did not quit.

And because we are united with him in baptism, and filled with his life through the

Holy Spirit, this life now runs through us – and this life won’t quit in us either. Ever.

This life is not only something to hold. It is something we give, we pass along, we act on.

It is life that creates, life that generates, life that restores, life that heals.

Of course Jesus’ wounds were healed, because this Life of God can only make whole.

It cannot leave things in wounded state.

So he showed vestiges, traces, artifacts of those wounds – but the wounds were healed.

Our bodies and minds show traces of our healed wounds too. And God can use them.

Jesus told his friends how to pass along this generative life, how to heal.

He gave them a mission: “Proclaim repentance and forgiveness in my name

in Jerusalem and to all nations.” That is our mission, friends: local, and global.

We are witnesses to the kind of freedom and healing that comes when we acknowledge

sin in ourselves and in our world, and accept God’s enormous love for us,

understanding that we don’t have to keep trying harder, or being more productive.

We all know people who are dying from stress or sadness, distraction, anger, addiction,

– and we have a life to share, healing life to share.

We have good news that God gave a remedy in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection:

We have a source of inner peace that can lead to global peace,

of redemption that can lead to reconciliation;

of access to God’s presence that can lead to greater purpose.

That's too big a gift to keep to ourselves. It's like having a cure for cancer and not sharing it because we think people won't be interested.
Who around you needs to know that there's a way off that treadmill of trying harder?
What part of you still needs to know that God made you for freedom, not work?
This is our mission, locally and globally. And you don't need a seminary degree.
You don't need a to be perfect, sinless, completely at peace.
You only need to be you, in all your glory and all your imperfection.
But you do need to be you, the real you, letting God's life and power flow through you.

See, it's not our strengths and skills that make us most effective as proclaimers of forgiveness and reconciliation: it's our wounds. More specifically, our healed wounds. There's this phrase we hear in church, that comes from Isaiah and gets picked up in the New Testament – that by Christ's wounds, we are healed.
That is saying that Jesus' suffering and death effected something for us.
That Jesus' resurrection effected something for us.
Jesus showed up in that room, in a body that could pass through walls yet had substance and reality, with wounds very much present, but now healed.

He gave his friends, his followers, the gift of the Holy Spirit –
by which their wounds could be healed and become agents of healing for others.
That's what we was happening in our reading from Acts – Peter and John were going to the temple, and were asked for money by a beggar who had been crippled from birth. Full of the Spirit just after Pentecost, they said, "Silver and gold have I none, but what I have I give you: in the name of Jesus, get up and walk." And the power coming through them went into the man and strengthened his legs, so that he could stand.
Which amazed and dismayed a lot of people – so where we came in this week, they are explaining how the name of Jesus, the name that awakens faith, brought healing.
They were living out this principle, by his wounds we are healed.

And I have observed that this principle goes further – as God's principles always do. As our wounds become healed, they too become vehicles of healing for others. It's exactly at that point where we were most vulnerable and wounded that we have gifts to give to others – those who've lost spouses or children often draw to themselves people going through that pain, as though they're magnets. People who've survived cancer often encounter others struggling with that disease. People who have suffered trauma or abuse and come out the other side into healing have powerful ministries with people still in the pit. I've heard victims of abuse speak powerfully about how their horrible stories of childhood and spousal abuse had become a gift they could share to help others.
They were passing along the life that can't quit.

This principle is perhaps most visibly at work in the recovery community. People in the grip of addiction need the presence and stories and love of those who've come into freedom – one day at a time – to emerge from that hell themselves. I once read a quote from an addict in recovery, now an addiction counselor in a county jail. He tells this story exactly:

*I had to come to terms with the shame and guilt surrounding the wreckage of my past. The lives I had impacted, the wasted time. In recovery I realized that I can use the most disgraceful, embarrassing moments in my past to empathize with other men who are coming through the program. It was almost magical – the shame became something that I could use. My past has become one of my most valuable assets in helping people today.*¹

“It was almost magical.” No, thought, it was holy! This was how we were saved – Jesus took on human life and human shame, humbling himself so we might be made whole.

Our wounds and woundedness can be the place of greatest healing for others, if we will let them come close enough to see them. But there is a catch: The wounds need to be healed.

Unhealed wounds just make a mess, apt to open and ooze.

Jesus showed up, his wounds visible but healed. He showed up with life that wouldn't quit. And from that witness, through those men and women, we are here today. They were released in power and love, and shared their story and healed others, and on it's gone for 2,000 years, to us. Now it's for us to share it.

We are surrounded by people who need this healing too, now more than ever.

Christ Church can be such a place of healing as we let this life out – a place where we can be honest with each other about the ways we hurt and are vulnerable, and a place where we easily and naturally invite God's power and love into our wounded places, and pray healing for each other.

We can be a community where those who are sick or stressed or lost are prayed for naturally and easily, where we share with each other the ways we've been broken and healed and others find their way into that circle of healing. Such a community will be contagious, as we allow God's amazing power and love to pour into the world through our healed wounds. Life that won't quit.

As a great Easter hymn we'll sing this morning reminds us,

*Love lives again, that with the dead has been
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green. Amen.*

¹ Jason Merrick, director of inmate addiction services at Kenton County Detention Center in Covington, KY. Time magazine, March 5, 2018, p. 51

Luke 24:36b-48

Jesus himself stood among the disciples and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.