

“Scars that Speak” JOHN 20:19-31:22

a reflection from Leone Fairweather

Our focus for today is ‘scars that speak’.

If they speak, what do they say?

In the gospel of John’s account of Thomas, the doubting disciple, they say, “Here is the evidence! Look on and cringe at your lack of faith!” Rather like the mum who accuses the children of eating all the chocolate biscuits although they vowed and declared their innocence, only to find that her husband and his best friend ate them “because they got the munchies,” Apologies all round!

John’s account of the story of doubting disciples is the only one of the 4 gospels giving such a detailed account of Thomas’s unbelief and his need to be convinced of Jesus’s suffering with hard evidence. The other 3 gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all speak of doubters in general terms.

John’s gospel records so many wonderful conversations of Jesus and the people to whom he teaches, ministers and heals. Thomas is left chastised for his lack of faith, having to be specifically visited by Jesus only a week after the other disciples told him of Jesus’s resurrection and scars. This scene fulfils Isaiah’s prophesy of 53:5, “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities and the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed.”

Right here, in John’s account, Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit of God upon his disciples, charging them with the right to forgive sin in his name(v23), because they are now functioning under his Holy Spirit!

ACTS 2:22-32

Written by Luke, the book of Acts records the disciples’s, carrying out the Great Commission of Jesus, as recorded by MATTHEW 28:19,20, ”Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always , to the very end of the age.”

In this passage from Acts, Peter is explaining to the Jewish citizens of Jerusalem that Jesus, the promised Messiah, came to them first to fulfil prophesy but that he was the Saviour of the whole world - Gentiles included. But that the Jews forced the hand of Pontus Pilate the Roman governor, to have him crucified and the grave could not hold the Son of the living God, their King and Saviour as he was a direct descendant of their prophet and King, David, who had forecast in his PSALM16 that Christ would be raised to life and that God would not abandon his son, Jesus.

1PETER 1:3-9

Here Peter is talking to the scattered Christian community of Asia Minor, now Turkey, warning them to expect suffering and even death, as part of their severe testing of the strength of their faith. As the Old Testament prophet, Zechariah, attempted to comfort the Judean survivors, who were merely a small part of the Medo/Persian empire about 400 years prior to the early Christian church. At that time , they were trying to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem, he too, stressed that God continues to test us all, to better increase our faith and “stickability”. Back then Zechariah said in his book 13:9, “I will purify them and put them to the test, just as silver and gold are purified and tested. They will pray on my name and I will answer them. I will say, “You are my people!” And they will reply,”You Lord, are our God,”

As the old hymn goes,

“The flame shall not hurt you, it’s only design
Your dross to consume, your gold to refine!”

So the scars of Jesus speak to us of his suffering and death upon Calvary’s cross, to achieve eternal life for all those who would take up their cross and follow him in faith and love, in tough times, like now, as well as smooth times, for which we have hope!

Prepared by Leone Fairweather