

Sermon April 12, 2026
Prayer of Blessing

Holy and Compassionate One,
we lift before you these gifts of our community—
food for the body
each stitched with love, each offered with hope.

Bless these **prayer shawls**,
stitched with tenderness and intention.
May they wrap your children
in comfort when grief is heavy,
in courage when the path is uncertain,
in peace when the night feels long.

As these gifts travel from our hands to the hands of neighbors,
let them carry your justice,
your compassion,
your steadfast presence.
May those who receive them
feel seen, valued, and held in community.

Make us, too, into offerings—
people who comfort,
people who show up with love
in a world aching for both love and blessing.
Amen.

John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them

and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may continue^[b] to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

When Wounds Become Witness

We begin in a room where the air is thick with fear. The doors are locked. The disciples are hiding. The world outside feels dangerous, unpredictable, hostile.

And who can blame them? The world feels pretty dangerous, unpredictable and hostile today too.

The disciples saw firsthand what people with power can do: crush, humiliate, silence, disappear. They have seen what happens to those who challenge the status quo. They have seen what happens to love when it refuses to bow to violence. So, they do what frightened people do... They retreat... They barricade... They shrink their world down to something small and controllable.

And into that room... into that fear... into that grief and paralysis— Jesus comes.

He doesn't knock on the locked door. He doesn't demand that they let him in. He doesn't scold them for their fear or tell them that they are worthless. He simply appears in the middle of their locked-down lives and says the one thing they cannot generate on their own:

“Peace be with you.”

Peace that can only come from Christ. “I am here... I have not abandoned you... Death did not get the last word... You are not alone in this room or in this world.”

And before they can process this experience or even breathe, he shows them his wounds.

Christ could come to us fully healed and whole. But he doesn't. He comes back with the marks of violence still visible. He comes back with the evidence of suffering still written on his skin.

We all have scars. Big jagged ones that we try to hide... little ones that fade in time—but never completely disappear. We all have scars and each one is a part of the story of our lives. Jesus bore the scars that tell his story... and he doesn't try to hide them. He lets the disciples see the cost of love. He lets them touch the truth that God does not save us from suffering— God accompanies us through it.

The resurrection does not erase the wounds. God transforms them! God transforms us in our brokenness!

And then Jesus breathes on them. Breathes peace... Breathes courage... Breathes Spirit.

The same Spirit that hovered over the waters at creation. The same Spirit that anointed him at the Jordan. The same Spirit that raised him from the

dead. He breathes that Spirit into a room full of frightened people and turns them into witnesses.

But not everyone has this blessed experience. Thomas, the only one who is brave enough to leave that locked room, misses everything. And the story he hears is unbelievable. "I need to see the wounds... I need to touch the truth..."

Thomas is not a doubter – he's a truth-teller. He knows that if resurrection does not speak to wounded bodies, traumatized communities, and people crushed by the cruelty of others —then it is not a resurrection worth proclaiming.

Jesus understands. He knows that the story is imprinted in the wounds he carried. He does not shame Thomas for wanting evidence. He comes back again for the one who missed the opportunity. For the one who wasn't in the room and who needed more.

Just as Christ comes back to each of us... during those moments we need it the most.

He comes back and says, "Touch the wounds. See for yourself. Your longing is not a failure. Your questions are welcome here." Thomas, face to face with a God who does not hide the scars, falls to his knees and whispers his awe.

"My Lord and my God."

Today we are reminded that resurrection is not proven by perfection... it is revealed through the wounds. Not the wounds that destroy us but the wounds that have been met by love, held by God and transformed into testimony.

Too often we try to hide our woundedness. Our own wounds and the wounds that the church has born through the ages. We stories that show our strength and resiliency. But Jesus shows us another way. In his own woundedness, he shows us that the places where we have been hurt— the places where we have been dismissed, excluded, silenced, shamed— can become the very places where God breathes new life.

Our wounds become witness when we believe that God is still breathing peace into locked rooms, still showing up in the middle of fear, still calling us to be a community of courage and tenderness.

The disciples begin the story locked in a room. They end it stepping into the world with Spirit-filled lungs. Thomas begins the story demanding proof. He ends it proclaiming God.

And we— we begin this Easter season with our own wounds, our own fears, our own locked rooms. Our wounds become witness when we refuse to let them harden into bitterness and allow them open us to compassion. Our wounds become witness when we tell the truth about what we've survived and refuse to let anyone else suffer alone.

Our wounds become witness when we stand with those whose bodies still bear the marks of racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, poverty, violence— and say,

“Peace be with you.

You are not alone.

Your story matters.

Your wounds are seen.”

Sending Forth

May the peace that walked through locked doors walk into your life.

May the Christ who kept his scars teach you to honor your own.

May the Spirit breathed into frightened disciples fill your lungs with courage.

And may your wounds— held by God, transformed by love— become witness to resurrection in a world still aching for hope.

Beloved, your strength may fail but God's Hand never will!

Amen.