

It's Preschool Chapel, and I'm teaching the Easter Story. I show our students a picture book with an image of Jesus on the cross, hands and feet pierced and bloody, and explain to them that yes, that was blood, and, yes, Jesus bled, and, yes, being crucified made big, big boo-boos on Jesus' body.

Then we get to the page with the illustration of Christ resurrected. And the kids notice that he still had these little red dots on his hands and his feet. I mentioned that they were Jesus' scars from the crucifixion and instantly the kids began a cacophony about scars and blemishes and the marks on their tiny bodies.

"Pastor Katie, Pastor Katie, I have a scar on my arm from when I fell down!"

"I have a scar on my head from when I was a baby!"

"Well I have a boo-boo on my finger."

"This birthmark is from when I was a baby."

"I don't have any birthmarks, but maybe I do!"

Their obsession with scars showed their still-developing sense of their fleshliness and mortality. And scars also gave them a sense of identity. They understood that while every person experiences injury and hurt, no one else has sustained the exact same wounds that they have; no one else has their same marks. The three- and four-year-olds were beginning to understand that their bodies and its scars are a part of who they are. To these little kids, scars were an important part in the story of salvation.

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“Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself,” Jesus says upon appearing to the disciples in Luke’s gospel. “And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.”

Jesus offers his hands and his feet as a way to recognize him. He shows off his extremities as proof of his identity, as evidence that it is really him.

But what did those hands and feet look like? Notice that Luke doesn’t say. Last week in the Gospel of John’s version, the resurrected Jesus did, in fact, have wounds in his hands and his side. But when Jesus tells his friends to look at his hands and feet, the Gospel of Luke doesn't provide us any kind of detail. It’s simply, “*And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.*”

What did those hands and feet look like? What was Jesus showing off to prove that it’s really him?

It’s a question worth asking, because what those hands and feet looked like matters for how we understand the Resurrection.

One possibility is that Jesus’ hands and feet had been made perfect. Christ is showing off pristine feet and supple hands with neither wound nor blemish nor mark. His skin is clean and healed and restored in resurrected glory.

This image, that after the Resurrection Jesus' hands and feet were perfect, suggests that to be resurrected, to be risen and restored like Christ, is to be made perfect and spotless and injury-free. This image ties godliness with perfection, suggesting those who have experienced resurrection, those who've seen the risen Lord, have achieved some kind of perfected state. It imagines that the church is a place for perfect people or a place for perfecting people, and that bodies are the most Christ-like are perfect, blemish-free bodies.

But a smooth-skinned risen Lord would deny the painful death Jesus suffered, omit the vulnerability and humiliation of the crucifixion, and renounce the pain of Christ's passion. And godliness is less about perfection and self-made righteousness and more about humility and forgiveness. And the church is far from a gathering of perfect people with perfect bodies living pristine lives of perfection. No, the church exists for sinners in need of God's mercy, whom God alone molds into saints by grace, and whose bodies still age and wear and weather the storms of sin and life.

So, let's try another image: that Jesus' hands were still wounded. Imagine that when he said, "Look at my hands and my feet," he was showing the disciples bloodied holes and gaping wounds. This image suggests God's solidarity with and concern for the suffering, reminding us how deeply God descended to the depths of human pain. It highlights the fleshly, human nature of Christ, God's Word made *flesh*.

But for Jesus to come back without his pierced hands and feet changed at all, that would rob the resurrected Christ of some of the power of God that raised Christ from the dead, a power that *beat* death, that *won* and was *victorious* over death and sin and its decay. Jesus didn't stay suffering and dead, so for Jesus still to have open wounds may suggest that death somehow lingers upon him.

But what if Christ's hands and feet are scarred? Imagine that they show healed or healing wounds, marks, or indentations where the nails pierced his skin. Jesus showing off scars would show clearly that he was the same one who was put to death and crucified—but the wounds and injury are not the end of the story. His death-dealing damage is not erased, but embraced and encompassed in Christ's resurrected person. The wounds sustained on the cross are not forgotten—the Risen Christ is surely scarred—but are also transformed.

The fact of the matter is that we do not know what Jesus' hands and feet looked like when he showed them to the disciples as evidence of his identity. Likewise, we do not know exactly how we in our bodies will be in “the resurrection of the body.” For as the author of John's First Letter says, “what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him,” even if we still do not know fully what Christ was like when resurrected.

So, here's where I think our preschoolers have the best read on Luke today: our preschoolers know that scars matter. Scars are an identifier of what we alone have suffered, a souvenir of boo-boos-gone-by. Scars are an important part in the story of salvation.

Because it's his scars that make Christ recognizable. Jesus' resurrected body did not *erase* the pain of his death, but *embraced* it. In Christ, God offers us a savior who carries the whole story of human pain and injury and hurt and wounds etched into his hands and inscribed on his feet. The scars make Christ who he is.

And so it is for us too. Scars make us who we are. God doesn't reject us because we have them. Christ didn't die and rise again for the flawless. Christ came and died and rose for those with gaping wounds, and for those who've been hurt, wounded, injured, and scarred, and for those who have hurt, wounded, injured, or scarred others. And our injuries and wounds—the ones we've sustained and the ones we've caused—are not erased, but embraced in the Resurrection. Our scars are inscribed and held in Christ's resurrected hands too. Scars are an important part in the story of our salvation. And in God's hands, even the oldest scars are witness to new life.

AMEN.