

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
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Touching the Scars of the Lord

John 20:26-29

20:26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

20:27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

20:28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

20:29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

1. Resurrection of the Lord

After the resurrection, Lord Jesus showed that he was alive to his disciples for forty days. The disciples reassured the resurrection of Lord Jesus by hearing his voice and watching his appearance.

People who do not believe the resurrection of Lord Jesus, think the resurrection of Lord Jesus is just spiritual thing. They say, the disciples were so depressed because of loss of their lord, and the disciples tried to encourage themselves by taking over Lord Jesus' will. People who do not believe the resurrection take the recovery of the disciples as the resurrection of the Lord. It was true that the disciples were recovered from the depression. They were afraid of Jewish and tried to stay away from them; however, on the day of Pentecost, they said "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom

you crucified.” (Acts 2:26) These disciples built many churches all over the world by their bold missionary works. Even the people who do not believe the resurrection of Lord Jesus admit that the transformation of the disciples and the birth of churches came from the faith in the resurrection of Lord Jesus. “Early churches were built on the faith in the resurrection of Lord Jesus” Then, where did this “faith in resurrection” come from? Why did they believe in the resurrection? From the desire that Lord Jesus was still alive? or from the illusion came from the shock for loss of their Lord? No, there is no good explanation that “faith in the resurrection” came from “the fact of resurrection”.

Then, what is the resurrection? It is different from “being back to life”. In the Scripture, it is written that Lazarus came back to life after four days of his death by Lord Jesus . Even in these days, people are back to life after their short death. Even though their internal organs are not working, they can be back to life if their brains are still alive. However, after four days of death, his body had started to decompose and it was impossible to be back to life. But, Lazarus was back to his life from his death, which was the one of the most biggest miracles Lord Jesus has done. However, that was not the resurrection. His life was extended on the earth; but he died again. The body of Lazarus was the same as the one before he died, it will decay no matter what he did.

However, the resurrection is different from bring back to life. Lord Jesus came back from the tomb with the different body from the one before he was hanging onto the cross. The body will not die, will not become corrupted. It is the body of glory. Lord Jesus did not just

escape from death, but he overcame the death. He does not need to die anymore. This is the resurrection. The resurrection is not, that dead people are back to life or people remember the dead people. But to become new existence, to receive the body which will not become corrupted or die. It is beyond our knowledge, we can not imagine this happening; however, Lord Jesus resurrected and became like that.

2. Resurrected Body

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 says about the resurrected body as followings: “So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.” Jesus had the glorious, strong, and spiritual body after He was resurrected. We don’t know the details of the resurrected body. However, we are sure that we will have the same body Jesus has when the day of our resurrection comes. We, who believe in the Lord Jesus, will become like Lord Jesus. 1 John 3:2 says, “Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” And, it is written in Ephesians 5:26-27 that “he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” The phrase, “in splendor, without spot or wrinkle” means that we will have such outward form as well as inner spiritual character. We will be changed

to “holy and without blemish” one both in spirit and body.

These are beyond our daily life and understanding. We can only understand the things on the earth and in a limited time span. But these things of eternity are not unrelated to us. Every human has the consciousness of eternity. Our daily life is led by the idea about our future. Our life on the earth finds the meaning and purpose by knowing our eternal life. People talk to the dead saying, “See you in heaven” at the funeral service. But if Lord Jesus was not resurrected or we don’t believe the resurrection, heaven becomes the groundless hope.

We don’t know our future, even what will happen tomorrow. But Lord Jesus gave us the knowledge and hope of the life in heaven through his resurrection. Since Jesus Christ overcame death and was resurrected, He can promise us the life in heaven. He stayed on the earth in forty days after His resurrection in order that the believers might have confidence of the hope as well as they might confirm the resurrection of the Lord. The life on the earth is not all. There is another life beyond our life on the earth. And, the coming life is greater than the present life. With this confidence, all believers live their lives bravely. Early century Christians could endure the persecutions and were bold even for the martyrdom. Our hope comes from the resurrection of Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus declared saying, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” (John 11:25-26) “ Though he die, yet shall he live” shows the promise of our resurrection. “Who believes in me shall never die” means that the

believer of Jesus Christ has the eternal life. We, the believers of Jesus Christ, already have the new life even before the day of their resurrection. The believers walk with Jesus through their lives. This walk is never interrupted by death. Even after death they will continue to live with the Lord in eternity. Do you sincerely believe this statement of Jesus and experience the life of Jesus in your daily life?

3. The Scars of the Lord

Today's reading describes the event when resurrected Lord Jesus came to Thomas. In fact, in the evening of the day of resurrection, Lord Jesus had come to the disciples and showed them his hands and his side with the scars from the Cross. Now, Thomas was not there when Jesus came. Thomas did not believe even other disciples told him that they had seen Jesus; instead, he insisted saying, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." (John 20:19-25)

That's when Lord Jesus appeared to Thomas and showed him his hands and his side. Moreover, He told Thomas to put his fingers on his hands and put out his hand in his side. The Bible did not describe if Thomas actually touched His wounds, but I imagine that Lord Jesus came to Thomas who bowed down, saying "my Lord, my God", and took his hands and had him touch his wounds. 1 John 1:1 says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands." I think this tells us that the disciples actually touched the wounds on resurrected Lord Jesus. The resurrection of Lord Jesus was

so sure that the disciples could confirm by seeing with their eyes and touching by their hands.

But this is very puzzling that the marks of nails were left on the glorious body of resurrected Jesus. Why does Lord Jesus, who makes us scar-free and spotless, have a body with wounds? That is because Lord Jesus is the King of Glory as well as the Suffered Servant and the Wounded Healer who heals us with his wounds. To do the sign language for Jesus, it is shown by touching the tip of the middle finger into the center of the palm. This shows the nails through His hands while on the cross. The nails and wounds of the cross on the body of resurrected Lord Jesus is his identity itself.

Since Thomas did not believe other disciples, he became to be called “Doubting Thomas”. But his love for Lord Jesus was as deep as other disciples nonetheless. The reason why Thomas insisted “unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe” is because he wanted to confirm the resurrection of Lord Jesus by himself and he wanted to see him again. For Thomas, Lord Jesus was so precious that he could never have peace until he was able to see the Lord.

We would also like to seek for Lord Jesus as hard as Thomas. We don't want to just feel satisfied when we read the Bible and find the verse that we like. We don't want to just feel happy and relaxed to come to the service every week. We have the verse of the year, which is “Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD” from Hosea 6:3. We would like to come near to Lord Jesus, repeatedly saying “Lord, I want to see you. I want to believe you. I want to follow you.” When

we reach out our hands to Lord Jesus, he also reaches out his hands to us. When we open our heart to the Lord, he also opens his heart to us. And we will see the nails in his hands and wounds in his side. We feel his love through the nails in his hands and we find peace through the heartbeat coming from His wounded side.

“Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Lord Jesus is speaking to us right at this moment. Let’s respond to his words quietly. Let’s walk this week by saying, “I want to touch His wounds from the cross.”

(Prayer)

Dear Father God, I thank you that Lord Jesus has wounds from the cross on his body. Although we cannot see them with our eyes, you’ve made it so that we can see them in the bread and the cup of the Lord Supper. Please make us see and touch the wounds of Lord Jesus through our faith. Please give the decision in faith to those who hesitate to receive the grace. Please lead them the baptism or repentance so that they may have the Lord Supper together with us. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.