



TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

on the Branford Green

May you find Christ, Community and Compassion within these historic walls.

Second Sunday of Easter April 3, 2016

The Rev. Sharon K. Gracen

My favorite episode of the original Star Trek series (fully aware of how that dates me!) was called The Empath. The intrepid crew of the Starship Enterprise go to a planet in a dying solar system to locate a research team with whom they have lost contact. Of course, all sorts of strange things happen to them and they encounter a young woman, who is mute and unable to communicate with them, Dr. McCoy gives her the name Gem. And they discover that she has an extraordinary ability. Captain Kirk has been injured and Gem touches him and the bloody wound disappears from his forehead and reappears on hers, and then disappears as it is healed.

The beings that are pulling the strings in the episode are testing Gem, by torturing and injuring Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy repeatedly to see if she is willing to sacrifice herself to save them. There are Gospel themes running through the story. She bears their wounds and ultimately saves her people.

Thomas, the doubting disciple, would only be convinced that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead if he saw the evidence of his torture, the marks put upon him by human cruelty. Those wounds are indeed the evidence of torture but they are also the evidence of love. In American Sign Language, the sign for Jesus is made by touching the palm of each hand. By his wounds we are healed and by our wounds he is known.

These wounds are rich with meaning. In the story of the Garden in the Book of Genesis, the generic human, the *adam*, is wounded in the side and divided so that the one becomes two and in relationship, humanity is complete. In the wounding of Jesus' side, we might see a parallel, in humankind made new by the incarnation and the sacrifice, a worthy companion for the divine being is created. A new relationship between divinity and humanity is forged and the completion of all life is now possible. And that completion is the unfettered intercourse between God and all of us. Wounds become powerful places of new life.

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But we have to go even further to understand the power of wounds, all the way into the heart of God and the act of creation. Frederick Bauerschmidt is a professor of Theology at Loyola U. in Maryland. He is the author of many books and scholarly articles - I know because I have been carrying one of the them from the Journal of Literature & Theology around for over 15 years, it is called *The Wounds of Christ*. He is part poet when he says "The wound is the emptiness that is God's own self which God withdraws in order to make room for creation. But that emptiness is at the same time all that is or was or will be. All that is stands in gracious emptiness. God makes room eternally. It is the space provided by God's eternal renunciation of being, before all time and throughout all time. And out of this space, this gracious emptiness, which stands like a tear, a gaping hole in creation, flows all existence, all presence." He is talks about the process of creation as beginning with a wound in the very being of God. In the mystery of God, until the Word was spoken, there was nothing else but God. In the speaking of that Word, the *logos* that was in the beginning, God made room for creation. God tore the divine presence and into the empty wound, God spoke the light and all that followed. The divine wound that becomes creation is the continual self-limitation of God, God continues to allow something other to exist; it is self-imposed divine humility. Creation needs the empty space of a wound in order to be. This tear in the Divine self is replayed on the day of the crucifixion when the curtain of the Temple is torn in two. Jesus had worked to open the way to God by reframing the laws and how they were enforced, by telling his disciples to pray "Our Father", he challenged the exclusivity of the Temple and said that everyone has access God, if they only knew it, if those in authority would stop getting in their way. The death on the cross opened a wound that revealed God. No longer hidden by a curtain or a doctrine or our blindness, God and humanity meet in the space of the wound.

The apostle Paul speaks of the resurrection body as a perfected state. I find myself wondering why the resurrected body of Jesus is still wounded. Perhaps we have to bring all of these pieces together to understand the necessity and power of wounds to unravel that mystery. God's wound is the place of creation, the wound in the *adam* is the source of human relationships, Jesus' wounds from the whip, the thorns, the nails and the spear are the evidence of his self-giving love. Wounds are the marks of the incarnation – one cannot be human and avoid being wounded. As new creations in Christ, we can begin to see the bruises and cuts of life in a new and holy way.

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So let us consider our own wounds, the ones we carry in flesh and in memory. How often do we consider a broken bone or relationship only as a cause of suffering? A broken bone or a laceration can be a reminder of the awesome power within our own bodies to heal or of the power of a loving community. The body is a miracle producing healing machine that knows what to do, nothing that you do will cause your bone to knit together better than the natural processes. Our wounds can be a reminder to get out of the way of healing. Give the body what it needs, eliminate what hinders healing and be the place of creation. At its best, a wound or a sickness may be telling you of something that needs attention.

Think bigger, think of attitudes and estrangement as wounds. What new creation awaits in such a void of wholeness and love? The fact that Jesus continues to carry our wounds tells me that humanity's refusal to fill wounds with love and creativity is an ongoing divine concern.

Think bigger still, injustice, poverty and war. These are not merely stains on human history, but gaping wounds in the trajectory of human life. If we allow the fabric of human society to continue to be shredded and pulled apart, without choosing love as a response to a neighbor or an enemy, we will miss the new creation that awaits. The wounds that are strewn across the globe are devoid of compassion and generosity. We have the means to feed and educate everyone and stop all wars. I don't know what we are to attend to first, the private, personal wounds that keep us estranged and indifferent or the big systemic wounds that seem to be magnified collages of so many wounded hearts and bodies. Perhaps all we need to know is that every wound is a potential miracle, especially when we are willing to enter into someone else's suffering. The stories of Gem, the Empath and Jesus are stories of the power of love told through wounds shared and transformed into new life. Thomas encountered the wounds and doubt was turned to belief. In the wounded hands and feet of Jesus he saw the space created for all things to be made new.

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