

“SCARRED FOR LIFE!”

Luke 24:50–53

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

It's not something to be proud of. But it's sort of human nature to look at someone who may have a disfiguring scar or a missing limb. Your eyes are simply drawn to it. You can't help but notice. That look isn't intentional; in fact one feels a bit of guilt for even focusing on that rather than on the person. But about everytime you think: “DON'T LOOK”, you've already taken a glimpse.

We're pretty much used to the amazing science of prosthetics for our veterans severely injured in Afghanistan or Iraq. They are brave men and women who do not let their loss of limbs keep them from a normal life. We've known people who show just a little stub of a finger or thumb on their hands. Perhaps you know someone who was severely burned or disfigured from a car accident or has a particular skin condition. Some are scarred for life and will never change back to their previous appearance. Once again you try not to notice, but for a split second – you do notice someone who is **scarred for life**.

It's **ASCENSION DAY** – the forgotten festival of the church year, a festival that carries as much weight as Christmas and Easter. But as you can see, the décor isn't as festive and the attendance doesn't demand two services today. And yet we see our Lord leave our world and return to His. But as we see him go today, we see Jesus leave:

“SCARRED FOR LIFE!”

1. Whose scars?
2. What life?

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We've seen portraits of Jesus from artists' imagination of what Jesus might've looked like. These portraits usually show a handsome man. Jesus' face and hair are painted smooth and soft-toned—there's a gentle back lighting to lend peace and tranquility to the portrait. Today on Ascension Day, that's the picture of Jesus that comes to mind. The Savior standing on a high place, the picture of confident authority and divine glory about to ascend into heaven.

St. Luke writes: **WHEN HE HAD LED THEM OUT TO THE VICINTIY OF BETHANY, HE LIFTED UP HIS HAND AND BLESSED THEM.** What would you suppose my eyes would have stared at when Jesus lifted up his hands? Like someone missing a finger, I would have locked onto those gaping nail holes in Jesus' hands. Seeing light come through those scars in his hands would probably make me stare. Jesus was scarred by nails in his hands and feet, scarred by thorns poking into his forehead, & though I couldn't see it - scarred by a rusty spear thrust into his side. Humanly speaking, those hands, feet, and head disfigured an otherwise perfect picture. But Jesus didn't hide his scars. In fact, he raised His hands for all to see. And with those scarred hands, Jesus bestowed his blessing upon the disciples.

Here is the Crucified and Risen Savior giving all the divine blessings He had won for them by his atoning death and resurrection. Through his work, Jesus had completed his mission of redeeming sinners from the clutches of Satan, the curse of sin, and the pounding fear of death. With Jesus' scarred hands, he was blessing them with the Holy Spirit needed to enable them to be witnesses in Jerusalem Judea, and the utter parts of the earth. With hands scarred for life, Jesus blessed the disciples with his promise and guarantee of future blessing for their lives on earth and ultimately with life in heaven!

It took Jesus' scarred hands to save us from a common scar that disfigures our hearts and souls. That scar is sin. Every soul that ever lived since Adam & Eve's crash from God's image has been scarred for life in eternal damnation. That is God's judgment upon all who do not live according to His will, God's eternal sentence for all who defy his commandments and walk away from him. And those scars are there every day in thoughts, words, and actions that are not pleasing to him. Whether in the open or behind closed doors, we deserve nothing from the Lord than to be scarred for life in eternal hell.

That's why Jesus had to be scarred for life in my place. It was for *my* sin-scarred life that holes were punched in my Savior's hands. You need not get what you deserve, because Jesus already suffered what you deserve. Our forgiveness is found in Jesus nail-marked, scarred hands.

The very fact that Jesus lifted those hands tells us that the risen Lord has earned our redemption. From the cross, Jesus loudly proclaimed, “It is finished.” His mission was completed. His sacrifice accomplished what it set out to do. With those scarred hands, Jesus says, *“I am the One who died for you; I have completed your salvation.”*

We know whose scars attract our attention. Christ our Savior – he was scarred for life. But for what life?

WHILE HE BLESSED THEM, HE PARTED FROM THEM AND WAS CARRIED UP INTO HEAVEN. Jesus' glorified body now went back to heaven in glory forever. As our exalted King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus now lives and rules over all things for the good of His church. Though his visible presence is gone, His real presence is assured. **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.** (Matt 28:20b) I am with you in the Word, **the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.** (Rom 1:16) I am with you as droplets of water are used with the name of Trinity to bring a soul to faith. I am with you as you eat and drink my very body and blood for the remission of sins. I am with you **interceding for you to my Father at his right hand.** (Rom 8:34) I am with you in those beautiful Gospel promises that say **I will come again to receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.** (Jn 14:3)

This is the **LIFE for which Jesus was scarred – HEAVEN:** the life which is to come, the life which many of our loved ones already share in, the life which only Jesus, our Savior can bring us because He is **THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.** (Jn 14:6)

The new bride stood on the dock in the misty rain watching as the ship pulled away. Her husband, a sailor in the Navy, was on that ship. She said good-by a 100 times, and now he was sailing away. She stood there gazing on the horizon until she couldn't see the ship anymore. She had no idea how long his tour of duty would last. Six months? A year? Because of terrorist attacks, that could change. Fortunately, he left her a farewell love letter. She read it and reread it everyday as his promise that one day, he'd come back.

Today Jesus ascends into heaven and we just stand & gaze wondering when he's coming back. His Word is his farewell love letter to us promising his return to reunite and live in glory with him forever. **That's why the disciples worshipped Jesus and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple praising God.**

Notice a pattern here? That's why we're in this temple today – worshipping Jesus with great joy! Pray that God would keep Christ's scarred hands always raised before our eyes. Don't be ashamed of them, but rejoice in being "**scarred for life**". Because of Jesus' **scarred hands, we have life. Amen**