

Blessings In Brokenness When Scars Become Beauty Marks

Genesis 32:22-32
John 20:19-29

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Faith Community

In the interest of demonstrating the need for better communication, here are some actual signs from hotels and businesses around the world -- written in English by non-native English speakers:

In a Bucharest, Hungary, hotel lobby: "The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable."

In a Paris hotel elevator: "Please leave your values at the front desk."

On the menu of a Swiss restaurant: "Our wines leave you nothing to hope for."

Outside a Hong Kong tailor shop: "Ladies may have a fit upstairs."

Outside a Paris dress shop: "Dresses for street walking."

In a Bangkok, Thailand, dry cleaners: "Drop your trousers here for best results."¹

Clarity is obviously a big deal, but something else is needed as well, and that is *credibility*.

The Department of Social Services in Greenville County, South Carolina, sent this form letter to some poor unfortunate soul:

"Your food stamps will be stopped, effective immediately, because we received notice that you passed away. May God bless you. You may reapply if there is a change in your circumstances."²

So clarity and credibility are both important. On that first On Easter morning some people, including people of faith, refused to believe the news that was rattling around, thinking it was too good to be true. The news was clear enough, but the credibility was in short supply. Even one of the disciples had a hard time with it.

His name was Thomas, of "Doubting Thomas" fame. The news of Jesus' resurrection came to him with great clarity, but he wasn't around when the others saw the risen Christ,

¹ <http://www.preaching.com/newsletter/subscribe.html> (accessed January 3, 2007)

² Preachingplus.com, March 31, 2002.

and as much as he respected his colleagues, he still had to see it for himself.

Here is where it gets especially wonderful. Look at where clarity and credibility come together.

Jesus shows up again. What's his calling card? How does he identify himself?

It's not his accomplishments, however fantastic they may have been.

Neither is it his wisdom, as phenomenal as that was.

Instead, he stands there with nothing to show for himself, other than his scars. As with everything else in his life, this turned conventional wisdom on its head.

Turn it around now. The scars by which he identified himself are the very things we try to hide, cover up, or pretend they're not even there. Whether it's warts, zits, failures or shortcomings, we don't want people to know who we really are.

All Jesus had that day were his scars. Those were the very things he used to communicate hope to his doubting disciple.

Is it possible that we can be that way with each other here? No pretense. No pretending. No cover up.

Almost forty years ago Father John Powell wrote a book entitled, ***Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am?*** He answers that question by saying, "You may not like who I am, and that's all I have."³ What might life be like if we didn't have to worry about that around here?

Your marriage may be in deep trouble, and it feels like everyone else is perfect, and you don't know what to do.

You're out of work and others around you are safe and secure, or so you think, and you just don't want to talk about it.

You feel plagued by constant anxiety or dark clouds of doubt and despair, and all you see at church are happy faces, and how can anyone understand, let alone care?

Upon hearing the news, Thomas said:

Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it. (John 20:25, NIV)

³ John Powell, *Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am?* (Chicago, Argus Communications, 1969), p. 20.

And there's the point, friends. So much of what holds us back is a matter of the will. It's not that we cannot believe. Instead, we choose not to believe.

We choose to hide behind multiple layers of pretending we're other than who we really are, and it never works.

We choose to think we're captains of our own ships, and of course we're not.

Some of us lose ourselves in endless activity. We think if we could just get that promotion things would be OK. Or maybe lose ten pounds, or make the team.

Some of us have been terribly hurt, and in response we try to deaden the pain with alcohol or a thousand other self-destructive habits. It has never worked and it never will.

The very things we try to hide could actually usher us into wholeness.

Friends, your brokenness is now part of the cross of Jesus Christ. It's where his greatest victory is found. It's where yours can be found as well.

"In 1972, NASA launched the exploratory space probe "Pioneer 10." Its mission was to reach Jupiter and send back information about it. It was a bold plan because at that time no satellite had gone beyond Mars. Pioneer 10 accomplished its mission and so much more. In November 1973 it swung past Jupiter, and then it passed the rest of the planets of our solar system. By 1997, Pioneer 10 was more than six billion miles from the sun.

"Despite that enormous distance, it continued to beam back radio signals to earth. The most remarkable thing was that those signals were powered by an 8-watt transmitter, which radiates about as much power as a bedroom night-light. Not even the most optimistic scientist could have ever imagined what that little 8-watt transmitter could do. (Bill Bouknight)⁴

Friends, you may feel like an eight-watt bulb in a six billion mile universe. Brokenness of whatever kind may have hit you hard. The message of Easter is that thanks to the living Jesus Christ the scars of your life can become beauty marks, because that's where God does his greatest work.

And there are clarity and credibility.

⁴ [PreachingNow](#) (2-27-07): Preaching Big Ideas