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PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

## Nailmarks, Scars & Doubts

### QUESTION

It is really amazing to read the life of Jesus and the incredible pushback he received from, of all people, religious leaders. It seems the religious leaders were more inclined to doubt him. Of course, I know that I too doubt him all too often. What is his message for those of us who doubt him?

### RESPONSE

Immediately after Jesus was resurrected, some of his own disciples found it hard to believe that Jesus really had been resurrected. Most of the disciples who believed were those who saw him, and as a result, they believed that he was now alive again, resurrected from the dead. Most of those who did not believe he had been resurrected were those who had not personally seen him since his resurrection—so they remained unconvinced, even though their friends gave glowing reports of the resurrected Jesus they had seen and talked with.

When some of the disciples excitedly reported that they had seen their resurrected Lord, here's what Thomas said, as we read from John 20:25:

*“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.”*

One week later (John 20:26), Jesus did just that! The scars of his torture, beating and crucifixion were the very evidence Jesus offered as he communicated hope to Thomas and the others. This was the sign—Jesus was the one they had seen brutalized—they had seen him die on his cross—they saw his lifeless body taken to a tomb.

In effect, Jesus said, *Here I am—I am alive, and I was*

*the one you saw die, and here are my scars to prove it.*

Jesus showed up to help them in their dark time of disbelief—and he shows up in the same way during the dark nights of our soul that we endure today.

Jesus comes into our lives at times when we don't know why something so terrible has happened to us and our family and our loved ones... and he says to you and me:

*Feel me. Put your fingers on my nail marks, in my hands and wrists—take your hand and feel the scars on my side. I know you—I love you. Here's proof. I will not take you away from the challenges you face, but I will stand with you as you deal with them. As God in the flesh, I suffered for you and I still suffer for you. My scars tell you that I know and I care. Come close to me—examine my body—discover for yourself that I am not immune to human suffering.*

*I know betrayal and I know abandonment.*

*Here are the scars in my wrists and hands where the spikes were driven in, and here's the scar where the spear was thrust into my side.*

*These scars assure you that I have overcome death and the grave—these scars tell you that one day I will wipe away all tears and there will be no more abuse.*

*I am with you right now—I will walk through this dark valley with you. You grieve the losses you have experienced, and believe me I grieve your grief—I hurt when you hurt.*

This is what Jesus says to you and me today:

*I am God who suffers with and for you—you are not alone. Here's the proof—take a look at the scars on my hands and wrists and in my side. My scars tell you where I've been, what I've been through and demonstrate my everlasting love for you. □*

***“I am God who suffers with and for you—you are not alone. Here's the proof—take a look at the scars on my hands and wrists and in my side.”***