

“How good and pleasant it is,  
when kindred live together in unity.” AMEN!

A parent told me once that  
one of the most difficult parts of being a parent  
is seeing their children fight.

They said it's tempting to choose sides and  
find out who was right and determine  
the “at fault party” and sometimes

the answers are clear but most of the time  
both are at fault.

So the parent must be mad at both of them  
and that's really difficult.

The person then said, “Every once in a while,  
the kids will recognize their part in the fight  
and find common ground and make amends.”

That is a time of the great reward of being a parent.

This is such a simple way  
to understand God as a parent.

I don't want to put too many human  
characteristics upon God, but wouldn't it

make sense to see how God becomes  
angry when we fight one another and,

on the other hand, good and pleasant  
when we live together in unity?

Sure, it does.

But, then before we know it we are fighting again. :-)

And we have the scars to prove it.

Have you ever sat next to two veterans  
comparing battle scars?

The human tendency is to try to “one up” the other,  
but there are really profound stories behind  
each scar.

Sometimes they were received in actions of valor  
and there are others received during moments  
the person doesn't want to remember;

times when they aren't particularly proud of  
what they'd done.

Those scars are reminders of  
horrible mistakes or  
lapses in judgment. (Pause)

We all have such scars.

Whether visible or invisible,  
we have scars from horrible mistakes, or  
scars from periods when we  
lacked good judgment and it

hurt someone and/or hurt ourselves, and  
a scar was left.

And it can be hard to forget them. (Pause)

During the next 5-6 weeks of the Easter season,  
we will discover (again) how a dead Jesus,  
one who was horribly crucified,  
came back to harass us.

While he was alive, he was so radically inclusive  
and unimaginably open about God's love  
that people in power put him to death.

He was a threat to them then, but now  
he's even more of a threat because  
he's loose in resurrection. (Pause)  
Jesus is not Fantasyland at Disney World.

Jesus is a way of life.

He was not an advice guru trying  
to make us millionaires.

His way is demanding.

The Jesus way is subculture and subversive  
because humanity on its own drops  
atomic bombs and fuels race wars and  
asks armies attack civilians and  
kill people who try to bring  
medical supplies and food  
to refugees.

His way is selfless while humanity's way is selfish.  
(Pause)

We will be spending in 1 John, too.

It is categorized in the Bible as  
an Epistle or a Letter, but some  
commentators say it is more of  
a sermon written to a congregation,  
because it lacks some of  
the language found in  
most epistles.

None of that really matters! :-)

But, what does matter is that

a lot of our liturgy during worship  
comes from 1 John.

“If we say we have no sin,  
we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins,  
God who is faithful and just will  
forgive our sins and cleanse us  
from unrighteousness.”

It is language we use at our  
Confession and Forgiveness.

It speaks directly to our ability  
to admit (and accept) that  
we are not perfect.

And if no human is perfect then  
no community is perfect and if

no community is perfect then neither  
can any nation be perfect.

It's not really hard to follow the dots. (Pause)

So, the good news is, while it feels like  
Jesus is way over there and people are way  
over here, separated and locked out,

The good news is... Jesus enters and says,  
“Peace, be with you.”

I’m still here.

I’m able to come to you even  
when you think your locked away and in fear.

His scars prove God’s love.  
If you need to touch them Jesus  
offers himself to you.

There’s something deeply intimate about that offer.

To see his love scars and place a finger  
in his side where they pierced him with a spear.

It was really quite an offer to a group of people  
who were hiding and afraid of encountering  
a similar fate.(Pause)

How good and pleasant it is when  
kindred live together in unity.

It was Jesus’ victory rally that occurred on  
the evening of his resurrection when doors  
were locked and followers were hiding.

We don't know where Thomas was, but  
he wasn't there.

Just like us. We weren't there.

Everyone was talking about how they'd  
seen the risen Lord, but Thomas hadn't and  
that must have hurt.

So, he did what the rest of us would do.

He asked for proof.

He requested Jesus's presence and then  
look what happened.

Jesus showed up!

That's what he does.

When we feel like there's a divide separating us  
from God, Jesus comes to us.

These texts are not focused on  
Thomas' doubt or unbelief but on Jesus'  
abundant grace to go to people  
who need God.

Which is all of us because we are desperate

from all the fighting, the greed and lack of unity.  
(Pause)

So you have scars you're not proud of?

We all do.

Jesus comes and invites you to touch  
his scars and be healed.

Maybe we should invite him to touch our own scars.

He's looking for a few more followers  
who aren't afraid to be radically inclusive,  
unimaginably open about God's love  
and abundantly grace-filled  
toward our enemies.

AMEN!