

The Story of a Scar

Shirley Lin
Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA

John 20: 24-29

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I have many scars, one of which is located on my left eyebrow. It's pretty small, so you might miss it, but it is there. This scar has a story, as each of our scars do. When I was little, maybe 5 years old, I was chasing my cousin in my grandparents' house. We ran to the top of the stairs, where he slammed the door in my face. I proceeded to tumble down the stairs, step by step. The stairs were cold and hard, some sort of limestone, maybe, covered with metal plates. There was blood involved, but I don't remember much of it, but I have my scar to remind me of the story. I am marked forever by this story, as well as marked by my experience of it.

In today's Gospel, we see the power of the scar; the way that it can identify someone and become evidence for Thomas's faith. Jesus had his scars. He was hung on the cross by the Romans but was brought back to life. These scars told the story of his suffering and his death. But when Jesus came back to visit his disciples, Thomas was not there. Because Thomas did not witness the scars first hand, he did not believe that Jesus had returned.

As residents of the 21st century, followers and/or students of science, we have been trained to view the world through objective lens. We believe in facts. We believe in what we see; the tangible things. We believe in what we can prove through science. If it's not written down somewhere; if it only exists in the memory of a few, we wonder whether it existed at all. If we cannot see it or experience it, did it ever exist?

Scars are not just individual. As Taiwanese people, we have a collective scar.

60 years ago, on February 28, a mass slaughtering took place in Taiwan. This is not an event that you learn about in school, in your history class, or is something that we can point to as truth, because most of the time, our government fights over what happened and what did not happen. But that doesn't mean that it didn't happen, nor does it mean that we are not left scarred. The scar from this event does exist. I could say that I do not know all the details because I was not there. In fact, I was not yet born. Many of you may feel the same way.

Sometimes, we Taiwanese people can be like Thomas.

We can doubt that this tragic event in history happened, because we did not witness it with our own eyes. And if we don't witness it ourselves, it is the norm in our culture to record it by writing it down in the history books. Yet, there are no official records of this event, because those who perpetrated the violence continued to hold power within our society, pushing us to forget.

Jesus understood this. He wasn't angry that Thomas didn't have the faith to trust that Jesus was resurrected. This is why Jesus came back and showed himself to Thomas, even encouraging Thomas to touch his scars, which he did not do for the other disciples. However, though Jesus appeared to Thomas in order to fulfill his burden of proof, Jesus demonstrated that we do not need to be in the presence of the one who suffered in order to know what happened.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

We, the younger generation, are here today to announce that even though we have not seen, we believe. Even if I can't physically touch the scar, I feel its presence. I hear it in the stories that are shared in the memories passed down to me from my parents and their friends. I see it in the pictures and the DVDs that record and reenact the event. I feel sadness in my heart that inexplicably and inevitably arise when I am reminded of this incident.

Because of these things, I know the truth.

The truth is, all those who were affected by this incident were those who gave your heart and your soul for your country. You endured pain that is beyond my immature understanding. It is because of your suffering that we are reminded of our identity as Taiwanese people, of our duty as citizens of Taiwan, and that a land that love, a land that holds our history, our ancestry, and our family is worth fighting for.

After Jesus' death, Christians everywhere were not more popular. The Bible describes several Christians that were martyred. If we study church history, we can see that the early Christians were indeed persecuted, and even blamed for major catastrophes, such as a fire that destroyed much of Rome. For their fervent belief in God, they were repaid with death. Yet, the early Christians remained faithful. They knew that there was something more to life. They lifted their suffering up to the one who had suffered; the one who understood. They knew they were not alone. We still remember the contribution of these courageous Christians. On November 1, every year, many liturgical Christian Community celebrates and commemorates All Saints Day, a day to remember and give thanks to all those who have contributed to the development of our faith, and all those who have died.

In the same vein, today, we commemorate the 2-28 incident.

While I was preparing and planning for today's service, I was asked why it was important for me that we commemorate 2-28 and why we should do it in church. For me, this incident needs to be remembered because it is the single most disruptive and destructive

event in modern Taiwanese history, in my history; in our history. It has shattered families and homes and identities of millions of people. It is the reason that some of us in the younger generations do not know or even care about who we are as Taiwanese people, rather than as Chinese people. Though I was never a part of it; though my family was not a part of it, I feel its repercussion.

All of us who are here today are either Christians, Taiwanese, or both. As such, we are bounded to and with each other. For Christians, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. For Taiwanese people, we are linked by our culture and history. This was a difficult time in many people's personal experience, as well as in our collective experience.

We must ask ourselves, if we don't know where we came from, how will we know where we are going? If we do not know who we are, how will we answer God's call to be who we are supposed to be? As Jesus passed on his ministry to his disciples, we are taking on your love and your battle for the continued prosperity and growth of Taiwan.

Jesus' scar tells a story of redemption. He was persecuted, suffered, and was martyred. But he did not die. He rose again and his legacy became known and lived. So it should be with the legacy of 2-28. We will remember this heartbreaking moment in history. We will know who we are from this moment. We will know that Taiwan is a place that is worth blood and sweat; that it is worth our energy, our love, and devotion.

Like our faith, Taiwan has grown and prospered since that time.

Like our faith, Taiwan has found itself in rocky times.

Like our faith, Taiwan will continue to grow, learn, and change. Our country will be redeemed, because Jesus is our redeemer, our supporter, and our strength.

Marianne Williamson, an inspirational writer, in her book *Return To Love*, said, "We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Let us thank all those who lived through 2-28 for their courage, strength, and endurance, who release us from our own fear.

Let us remember those who passed on that day.

Let us not forget about their experience by forgetting what happened and instead let its light shine on us, liberate us so that we can make changes.

May we be encouraged and strengthened by God and by the memory of those who have gone before us.