

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

SERMON TITLE: The Stars and Scars of Christmas

SERMON REFERENCE: John 20:24-29

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2452

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Be finding in God's Word John chapter 20. I'm going to give you a test. Are you ready for the test? This is Theology 101. Are you ready? One question on the test: Is Jesus God or man? Alright, the answer to that question is yes. He is the God-man, God in human flesh.

The prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 9 verse 6, "*Unto us a child is born and unto us a Son is given.*" When Isaiah said, "*a child is born,*" he was speaking of His humanity. When he said, "*a Son is given,*" he was speaking of His deity. He is the God-man. Now, as a child, He was born in Bethlehem. As God, He has ruled from eternity. He did not have His beginning, only His birth, at Bethlehem. And the star pointed the way to where the child was in the Christmas story.

But there's a darker side to Christmas. Not only the stars, but the scars, because as a man, He was born to die. As God, He died for our sins. Can you think of a God with scars? You see the little baby there in the in the manger? And you see those little dimpled feet? Those little dimpled feet are going to be pierced with a hideous cruel nail. You see those little chubby hands and those pink fingers? They will one day bear scars.

Now the time for our Scripture is this: Jesus has lived a sinless life. He has been falsely accused. He is butchered on a cruel Roman cross. He is put into a grave and that grave sealed with a stone. Yet, on the third day, He rises. He comes out of that grave a living, victorious Savior.

He has appeared to His disciples and He has shown Himself alive. Thomas was not there when He first appeared. Eight days later, Jesus appears again, and here is the passage I'm reading, John chapter 20 and verses 24 and 25, "*But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples, therefore, said unto him, 'We have seen the Lord.'*" By the way, when you miss church, no telling what you're going to miss, no telling what you're going to miss. There Jesus showed up, and Thomas was absent. I want to have the kind of a church where you dare not miss a Sunday because you'll be afraid of what you might miss if you don't show up. Jesus showed up, but Thomas wasn't there.

And so the next time Thomas is there. Now John 20 verses 25 through 29, "*And he said unto them, 'Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.'*" That is, "I want to see if He was crucified and risen. I want to know it's Him. The way I will know is when I see these scars in His hand and in His side." "*And, after eight days, again His disciples were within and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you.'* Then saith He to Thomas, '*Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing.'* And Thomas answered, and said unto Him, "*My Lord and my God.'*" Jesus saith unto him, "*Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.*" And there, ladies and gentlemen, He's talking about you and me.

Blessed are they who've not seen what Thomas saw, but have believed. Now, Thomas saw the scars and he said, "My Lord and my God." Think of it, a God with scars.

Now, I want you to consider with me the scars of the Lord Jesus. They're not incidental. They are so, so fundamental that Jesus carried those scars with Him to Heaven. Did you know that the only man-made thing in Heaven are the scars of Jesus Christ? Jesus visited Earth and when He went back to Heaven, He took some souvenirs of His visit with Him. Those souvenirs are the scars in His hands and the scar in His side. He has kept those scars as a lasting memorial of His humanity through all eternity. When Jesus comes again, one of the ways that we will know that it is the dear Savior, of the many ways, are the blessed scars. Put in your margin Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 6, "And one shall say unto Him, 'What are these wounds in Thine hands?' And He shall answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'" When He comes again, He will bare those blessed scars.

So I want us to think about the "Stars and the Scars of Christmas." And there're three things, as we think about God in human flesh, that I want you to learn about the scars of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Number one: the scars tell us that, **as a man, Jesus suffered**. Now, it's very important that you understand this; that as a man, Jesus suffered. In John chapter 20 verse 27, Jesus invited Thomas to examine those scars. They were a brute testimony to the fact that Jesus, indeed, was pierced with those hideous nails.

There's a great problem in the world today when you try to testify about God. The problem is not primarily science. The problem is primarily history. The problem is primarily suffering. And people will ask you again and again, how can you believe in a God, if there be a God, who allows so much suffering? And this causes great doubt because here's the way the human mind works: "Well, if God is love, and God is all powerful, why does God allow so much suffering?" And so, they think well, perhaps He is a God of infinite love, but He has no power; therefore, He is a weak God. Or else He is all-powerful, but He has no love and so He is a cruel God. Or perhaps He has no power and no love, so He is no God at all. That's the way people think.

But, there's a greater question. Not why do men suffer. Here's the great question: why does God suffer? Now, you want a question, friend, the question is not why do we as humans suffer, but those scars tell us that God in human flesh suffered. Isaiah 53 verse 3, speaking of Jesus, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Now I remind you, He was God in human flesh and He suffered. Again the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 63 and verse 9, "In all their affliction," talking about us, "He was afflicted."

And not only did He suffer when He was here, but I have some information for you. God still suffers. God in His glory suffers. You say, "How could God suffer?" Well let me give you a verse, Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30. The Bible says, "And grieve not

the Holy Spirit, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Have you ever been grieved? Grief is a form of emotional suffering. And God in Heaven still suffers. God grieves.

Now you can understand this. Does a father suffer when he has a wayward son? That’s what the story of the prodigal son is all about, that God the Father suffers because He has children away from Him. Grieve is a love word. You can only grieve somebody who loves you. Your lawnmower may vex you; your children will grieve you. Amen? Because you love them. By the way, that verse in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30 is a great verse to teach the personality of the Holy Spirit. Our Jehovah’s Witnesses tell us that the Holy Spirit is not a person; He is just an influence from God. Well you can’t grieve an influence. Only a person can be grieved. And the only person who can be grieved is someone who loves you. Grieve is a love word. God still suffers.

I want to ask you a question: does the head suffer when the body feels pain? Of course it does. Christ is the head of the church. We’re His body. When you suffer, our Lord suffers. He’s touched with the feeling of your infirmity. In Acts chapter 9 and verse 4, when Saul was persecuting the church, Jesus appeared to Saul and said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” He could have said, “Well I’m not persecuting You. I’m persecuting these Christians.” But friend, when a Christian is persecuted, Jesus is persecuted. When the body hurts, the head hurts. We’re the bride; Jesus is the groom. If the bride is unfaithful to the groom, would not the groom grieve? When the church is unfaithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, is not His heart broken? Jesus suffers. As a man, He suffered. The scars tell us. The scars tell us that God has suffered.

Now here’s a big question: Why? Why would God Almighty, who could do anything, whatever He wants, whenever He wants, why would He choose to suffer?

Second point: Not only do the scars of Jesus tell us that, as a man, He suffered; but the scars of Jesus tell us that, **as a man, Jesus sympathizes**. Those scars that we read about in, in John chapter 20 and verse 27 tell us that Jesus understands. When I go into a home, there’s been a death, a tragedy, the loss of a child, or whatever, I try never to say, “I understand,” because it’s an insult to the person who’s suffering. They say, “No, you don’t understand,” and they’re right. Nobody really knows the hurt. Nobody really knows the pain in a human heart except Jesus, but Jesus really does suffer.

When we go off on a trip somewhere, Joyce will pick up some trinkets somewhere. They’re trinkets; it’s mostly what they are. They’re souvenirs. Why do we buy souvenirs when we go somewhere? Well, they’re sort of a reminder I’ve been there, I have been there. Jesus, when He went to Heaven, brought with Him to Heaven some souvenirs from Earth, and those souvenirs are the scars that remain in His hands. And what do those souvenirs of Earth tell us? That He has been there, He has felt, and He understands our pain.

Put down now Hebrews chapter 2 verses 17 and 18, “Wherefore, in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren,” the Him is Jesus; the brethren, that’s us. He’s made like us, “that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered,” underscore that, “He Himself hath suffered being tempted,” that means being tested, “He is able to succor,” S-U-C-C-O-R, that is a, old-fashioned word which means to help, “them that are tempted.” Jesus said, “When you suffer, I suffer. And not only do I suffer, but because I suffer, I understand.”

Hebrews chapter 4 verse 15, “For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tested like as we are, yet without sin.” He’s touched. He knows. He cares. He feels. He understands and He loves.

Dr. Paul Brand was a missionary, a great surgeon, who spent a lot of time ministering to lepers in leper colonies. And Dr. Brand talked about the horrible sin of leprosy. And he said, “One of the debilitating sins of leprosy is that it removes the ability of the human body to feel pain.” And then here’s what Dr. Paul Brand said, and I copied it down for you. Listen to what this great doctor said. He said, “If I had the power to eliminate pain, I would not exercise that right. Pain’s value is too great.” Notice, “pain’s value.” “Rather, I would lend all of my energies in doing all that I can to help when the pain turns to suffering.”

I want to tell you something. Our Lord suffered, and our Lord sympathizes, and the pain that He allows us to have is really proof of His love. The pain that He allows us to have is proof of His love. After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden in the book of Genesis chapter 3 verses 17 and 18, God said, “Cursed is the ground,” now listen to this, “for your sake.” He didn’t say for your punishment, but for your welfare. “For your sake, thorns and thistles will it bring forth to you.” God put a curse on the environment in which we live because the worst thing could happen to us would be for us to have the sickness, the infection of sin, and to feel no pain. There is the protecting purpose of pain.

When you and I walk, we stand on one foot, then on another. When we sit, we shift our weight around. But a leper doesn’t do that. Dr. Brand said that a leper doesn’t limp when his leg is hurt because he feels no pain, so he walks on the wound. Injured legs never get any rest. When you turn your ankle if your body is healthy, the nerves immediately order your body to take the weight off of that ankle. It happens so fast, it’ll happen just like that.

I was walking down a mountainside with my bride, Joyce. It was a beautiful day, a beautiful mountain. And suddenly Joyce was on the ground, just like that. What had happened, Joyce had turned her ankle. And when she turned her ankle, the nerves in her body, caused this muscle to relax and she went down just like that. Now, the reason, for that was to protect her leg, that she would not walk on that twisted and stretched tendon. And, thankfully, that before long, she was feeling good

again and, and could walk. **Pain has a protecting purpose.** Thank God for pain. It tells us something is wrong.

Pain has a unifying purpose. It is pain that draws us together. Your whole body comes to the aid of a suffering member. I've often used this illustration. Do you ever hit your thumb with a hammer when putting up a picture for your wife on a wall? I'm talking about one of those that turns your thumb black. I know what you did. You grabbed it with this hand. The second thing you did, you stuck it in your mouth and sucked on it. The third thing you did is a little dance. Now why did you do that? What do your knees have to do with your thumb? I don't know, but you've got to do that dance. Friend, pain has a unifying factor.

Do you know what unifies a church? Suffering. Do you know what brings people together? Suffering. The Bible says when one member suffers, all members suffer with it. Dr. Brand said, "I can tell the health of a human body by its reaction to pain. If it doesn't react to pain, there is something wrong." You can tell the health of a church by its reaction to pain. How much does a church care for the homeless, the sick, those with broken hearts and broken hopes and broken homes? A church is unified by pain. Pain has a protecting purpose. Pain has a unifying purpose.

And **pain has a correcting purpose.** Dr. Brand said that the lepers who would smoke cigarettes sometimes would smoke the cigarette right on down until the fire in the cigarette would burn their fingers, and they'd continue to smoke and burn their flesh because they could feel no pain. God allows pain to protect us. And if it weren't for the pain, we would never know that we're being hurt. You put your hand on a hot stove and there's a message that goes immediately to your brain and says, "It's hot down here." And the brain says, "Well, move," and it moves just like that. Now you don't realize that you're doing all that thinking, but you're doing that because that pain says that you need to protect yourself.

Pain comes in all kinds of forms. There's physical pain. There is emotional pain. There is spiritual pain. And Americans want to kill pain at any cost. That's the reason we have so many sedatives. That's the reason kids get on drugs, to kill the pain. That's the reason some adults are on drugs, to kill the pain. Now there is a legitimate use of medicine, but many are trying to dull their sensibilities. They don't get along with their parents and they turn to drugs. And I want to tell you, when kids get on drugs, they really don't care what their parents think. They are in another world.

Some turn to alcohol. And, it's kind of pathetic to see adults addicted to alcohol criticizing young people addicted to drugs. Why do people turn to alcohol? So many times to kill the pain. A man's drunk, he says, "I'm feeling no pain." He says, "I'm going to drown my troubles." Well, his troubles can swim. The Japanese have a proverb, "First the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, and then the drink takes the man." Why do we do this? Why do people have an affair? Why do they commit adultery? Many times trying to kill the pain of insecurity and loneliness.

One of the biggest sedatives that we have today is television. People watch television because they can't face themselves and they live in a make-believe world. The problem is that many people take a sedative when they need a Savior. The pain is to tell us that something is wrong. Now, Jesus gives us peace and joy, not primarily to remove the pain, that'll be done at the rapture, but to help us to endure the pain.

Now, when we see scars in the hands of Bethlehem's babe, they are a testimony to His humanity, a God with scars. They tell us as God, He suffered; as man, He suffered. As God, He sympathizes; as man, He sympathizes. He knows how we feel. He understands. And Jesus will hear the cries of a blind beggar before He hears the cries of a proud Pharisee.

Now here's the third thing. Not only do the scars of Jesus tell us that as a man, Jesus suffered, and not only do they tell us that as a man, Jesus sympathizes, but the scars of Jesus tell us **as a man, Jesus saves**. That is so important that you understand this. Why was He nailed to that hellish cross? Why did He step out of glory? Why did He allow Himself to be pierced? Why were those nails put into his quivering hands and to those precious feet? Why? Well the Bible says in Hebrews 9 verse 22, "*Without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.*"

Now I want to remind you of something, friend. Jesus did not have to suffer. He could have refused the cross. Jesus said in John chapter 10 verse 18, "*No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself.*" Jesus was the only man who ever chose to die. You say, "What about a suicide?" He doesn't choose to die. He only chooses the time of his death. He's going to die anyway. There's a new statistic out on death: one out of one people die. Jesus was the only one who had no sin in Himself. He could have refused death. He said, "*No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself.*" It was not those nails that held Him to the cross. It was love. He did not have to suffer. But He did suffer.

May I ask you a question? Those of you who have children, and those children suffer, those children are in trouble, those children are in pain, would you rather not know about it, or would you rather know about it so you can move in and do something about it? Suppose you and your wife are celebrating an anniversary. Suppose you've taken your money and saved it and you're taking that once-in-a-lifetime vacation and you're in a hotel in Hawaii and you have a child here left at home. And that child is in an automobile accident. Question: would you want your vacation interrupted to know your child was in an automobile accident? I mean, after all, if nobody told you, you didn't know, wouldn't you just rather be over there in paradise, not knowing that your child was suffering? Because when you know your child is suffering, then what does that do to the vacation? Immediately you pack. You leave everything and you go back home. Which of you would say, "Well, I had rather not know. I'd just rather live in my oblivious happiness." Of course not. Of course not. There's not a parent, there's not a mother or father in this room who would say if my child is suffering, I don't want to know about it.

You see, theoretically, you could say, "I'm going to Hawaii. Nobody call me about anything. I don't want to know about anything. We're just interested in our joy, our felicity, our good time." No! If you love somebody, when they hurt, you hurt. And when you can do something about it, if you can, you want to. And if you can't do anything about it, you still want to be there to hurt with them and suffer with them.

The question, I say, is not why does man suffer; why did God suffer? I'll tell you why God suffered. John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life.*" Isaiah 53 verse 5, "*He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.*" He loves us.

There was a wayward boy, who had so disgraced his parents, and they'd given him chance after chance after chance and he had failed and embarrassed them and hurt them and wounded them and refused them and rebelled against them. One man, this was his son, was talking to another man. And the other man gave this suffering father this advice. He said, "I'll tell you what I would do. If that were my son, here's what I would do." And this man giving advice to the brokenhearted father was telling him how he should just cast this son off and be done with him and seal him off. And he said, "If that's my son, that's what I would do." And this father said, "Yes, and if he were your son, that's what I would do, but he's not your son, he's my son and I can't do that. He is my son!"

And, friend, God loves us. There's no one here that God does not love; there's no one that God does not want to save. And, you see, He's God in human flesh. And the question is, why does God suffer? We might say that He does suffer that He might be a sympathizing Savior, but He suffers that He might be a Savior who sympathizes, that He saves.

Phil Donahue, discussing Christianity, said this. He could not understand the cross. And here's what he said, and I quote, "How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow His Son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sins? If God the Father is so all-loving, why didn't He come down and go to Calvary?" And the answer is, of course, He did. That's exactly what He did. This was God in human flesh. Put this Scripture down, Second Corinthians 5:19, "*To wit, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.*" God was in Christ.

Why did God become a man? Our dominion was lost by a man; it must be legally regained by a man. First Corinthians 15 verse 21, "*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*"

You say, "Well, I didn't vote for Adam. I don't think I ought to be held responsible for his sin." You ought to be so grateful, dear friend, that God, who not only counts the human race guilty in Adam, also counts the human race, by faith, justified in Christ. I'm so grateful that I have, in Jesus, a redemption, that Jesus did

for me what I could never do for myself. And I had rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. *“In Adam all die, but in Christ shall all be made alive.”* Listen to this, Hebrews 2 verse 9, *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.”* The scars tell me that Jesus saves, that Jesus saves.

When my first son was born, Steve, my pastor said to me, “Adrian, you will understand something different now about the love of God. Before you have a child of your own you think of the great love the Savior had when He died for us, but when you have a child of your own you think of the love of the Father who gave His Son.” And that is so true, that is so true. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”* God was in Christ. He was God, but He was man. As a God He was sinless, but as a man He suffered because there needed to be a sinless substitute. *“Without the shedding of blood is no remission.”*

Think not only of the stars, but the scars of Christmas. Listen, Jesus came to Earth that we might go to Heaven. Jesus was born of a virgin that we might be born again. Jesus became the Son of man that we might become the sons and the daughters of God. Jesus died that we might live. The scars tell us that as a man, Jesus suffered. The scars tell us that as a man, Jesus sympathizes. The scars tell us that as a man, Jesus saves. And hallelujah, He does.

Now let me come to the conclusion of this message, and I want to lay several things upon your heart. Listen carefully now. Jesus had some scars, and if you follow Jesus, so will you. God had only one Son without sin, but He didn't have any Son without suffering. Philippians 3 verse 10, *“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering.”*

If you think you're going to get out of this world unscarred, you're not going to do it. There's no fine print in the contract. And there is the suffering that comes with serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Galatians chapter 6 verse 17, the apostle Paul says, *“I bear in my body the scars of the Lord Jesus.”* Now Paul could say that literally because the lash had been laid upon his back, but he's using the word here stigmata; *“I bear the nail prints in my body of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

May I tell you friend, listen carefully now, those of you who are going to a sedative rather than the Savior, your scars may be your greatest ministry. What was it that caused Thomas to believe? Thomas said, “Except I see the scars, I'll not believe.” Jesus said, “Alright, Thomas, put your finger here. Put your finger here. Put your hand there.” Do you know what a scar is? A scar is a wound that has healed. And when Thomas saw the scars, Thomas saw Him crucified, but now Thomas sees He is raised, He's victorious, He has overcome. And Thomas believed. Did you know that there are people who are going to believe in Jesus when they see your scars? Did you know that? When you can testify that Jesus has healed me, here are my wounds; red and raw and bloody, but Jesus has healed me. I've seen it happen so many times.

As you know, Joyce and I have a little boy in Heaven. When our son died, to us it was like a crucifixion. And deep and red was the wound, but we carried it to Jesus and Jesus healed it. The first Scripture that I saw after our son died, I never even noticed it in the Bible before, Second Corinthians chapter 1 verses 3 and 4, *“Blessed be the God of all comfort, the Father of all mercies, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort others with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”* I’ve seen Joyce put her arms around mothers who’ve lost little ones and give comfort. Do you know how she could do it? With her scars, with her scars, with her wound that has been healed.

Are you hurting today? Is there a pain? Is there a problem? Is there a heartache? Listen to me, bring your wounds to Jesus! He understands! He cares! He has been there. Bring your wounds to Jesus and use your scars for Jesus. Use your scars for Jesus. That may be your greatest testimony. Not that you’ve sailed through life without feeling any pain, not that God has protected you as His little darling, but that God has been with you, and, *“We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we, yet without sin.”* Hebrews 4:15.

I want you now, in your mind, to imagine our risen Savior. I want you to see Him on the throne of His glory. And I want you to see in His hands the print of the nails because He bears them for all eternity. And I want you to see those nail-scarred hands reaching to you right now. And if you’ve never done it, would you not like to put your hand in that hand and say, “Save me, Lord Jesus. Thank You that You are the God-man. Thank You that, as a man, You suffered; as a man, You sympathize; and, as a man, You save. Save me, Jesus.” Pray it and mean it.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. I want to guide you in a prayer and in this prayer you can ask Christ to save you. And I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that He will save you and He will keep you. Pray this prayer, “Dear Jesus, thank You that as a man, You died on the cross for me, though God of very God, You did not have to suffer, and yet You did. You chose to suffer because You love me. Thank You, Jesus. Now Lord Jesus, I open my heart, and I receive You by faith as my Lord and Savior. Save me, Jesus.” Pray it and mean it. Did you ask Him? Then pray this way, “Thank You for doing it. And Lord, if You’ll just give me the strength, I’ll make it public. I’ll not be ashamed of You because You died for me. In Your holy name, Amen.”