

What the Hands of Jesus Say From Pastor Daniel Randall

A little boy who sat staring at his mother's hands, asked, "Mama, why are your hands so ugly?" The mother was quiet for a moment. Then, she said, "When you were three years old, you were playing in the backyard. Some older boys in the neighborhood were playing with matches in the alley. They built a fire and left it burning when they left. You toddled up to the fire and fell. The flames caught your shirt on fire. I heard you screaming. I rushed out of the house. I beat the flames out with my hands. You were scarcely burned, but my hands were burned and scarred terribly. That's why my hands are so ugly." Tears welling up in His eyes, the little boy looked up at his mother with and said, "Mama, your hands aren't ugly, they're beautiful."

A poet, looking at the hands of Jesus, wrote: They nailed those beautiful, blessed hands, to the cruel, bitter cross, and there in agony untold, He bore our shame and loss. Beautiful hands of Jesus! I hope someday to see those wonderful, loving, nail-scarred hands that were pierced on Calvary. It is the hands of Jesus which remind us that the cross of Calvary was no picnic. Jesus went to that cross and suffered. Isaiah wrote of the Messiah, "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities." Whenever we doubt that Jesus suffered at the cross, all we have to do is look at his hands. The print of the nails will remind us that "He was wounded for our transgressions."

On that first Easter, Peter and John gathered with the other disciples in that upper room to talk about the empty tomb and the possibility of the resurrection. As they were talking, Jesus came and stood among them. They were frightened, but Jesus reassured them by showing them his hands and feet. How often had the disciples seen those hands of Jesus touch blind eyes so they could see? How often had they seen his hands bless little children? How often had they seen him reach out hands and lift the cripple up and say, "Walk"? They saw the hands of Jesus and they knew that he was resurrected from the dead. That is all except Thomas! Thomas had slipped off to be alone in his grief over the crucifixion of Jesus. Thomas had slipped off alone to grieve the death of Jesus. Consequently, Thomas was not with the other disciples in the upper room when Jesus appeared among them on that first Easter. When the other disciples told Thomas of the resurrection, he refused to believe. Thomas said: "You've all been through a great deal of stress. You were simply hallucinating." "But it's true!" the disciples said, "It is true!" Thomas replied: "I can't believe what you're saying. Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, I will not believe." One week later, on the first Sunday after Easter, Thomas received his proof. The disciples, including Thomas, were gathered in the upper room when Jesus appeared in their midst. Jesus knew what was in Thomas' heart and he said: "Thomas, if it's proof you want, look at my hands ... look where the nails have been." Thomas was overwhelmed. His skepticism and doubt were gone. He fell to his knees and said: "My Lord and my God."

The great hymn writer Fanny Crosby, penned these beautiful words, "I shall know him, I shall know him, and redeemed by his side I shall stand, I shall know him, I shall know him. I shall know him by the print of the nails in his hand."

Let us never forget that down the corridors of time walks one who, by merely raising his hands, reminds us of his claim upon us. Those hands were pierced by nails. Those hands were a sign of recognition to the disciples. Those hands are a reminder that there is one who loves us.

Like Thomas we have to discard our doubts and act on faith. We may have some doubts. We may have some unanswered questions. We may have some things which will remain a mystery. But, like Thomas, we sometimes reach that point where we need to translate our doubts into acts of faith. Faith is coming to that point where we are standing on the edge of doubt and we can see no clear path ahead, but we go on in faith. We go on in spite of doubts. We go on in the faith that God is with us. Doubts are a reality in our lives. We all have occasional doubts.

We all have questions which need answers. We would all like to have absolute proof. But, sometimes, we need to respond as Thomas did. We need to look at the hands of Jesus Christ and act on our faith by falling on our knees and saying as he did: "My Lord and my God."