

**We Carry It In Our Bodies**  
**Sunday, January 30, 2022, 11:30 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena**  
**The Rev. Mike Kinman**

*“They rose up and dragged Jesus out of town, leading him to the brow of the hill on which the city was built, with the intention of hurling him over the edge.”*

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We carry it in our bodies.  
Can you feel it in yours?

A few days ago, I went to a place called a Rage Room.

Rage Rooms have been around for more than a decade. The first ones likely started in Japan in 2008, and they have since popped up around the world, including all over the U.S. Basically, they are places where you can vent your rage by destroying objects in a room. They are islands of catharsis in the turbulent ocean of our lives.

Now, like anything to do with anger, rage rooms are controversial. Therapists are at best divided about them. Some say they help create a culture of violence – that if you learn it’s OK to be violent in one place you can decide it’s OK to be violent in others. If you have a history of violent trauma, being in that environment can be triggering and terrifying. They are clearly not for everyone.

For me, I grew up in an environment where anger was not permitted. I have learned for years to suppress it and though I am certainly through therapy and spiritual direction getting in touch with it, expressing it, learning from it and developing healthier ways of dealing with it, I am aware that anger – and all my feelings – don’t just live in my brain, I carry them in my body.

We carry it in our bodies.  
Can you feel it in yours?

For my birthday last year, a friend who knows me really well gave me a gift certificate for 20 minutes at a rage room and said, “I think you need this.”

My therapist agreed and, in fact, added a suggestion. You see, anger is a secondary emotion – behind it is always pain or fear and often both. So, he suggested I find something that represented my pain and fear, something that touched my anger and take it in that room and, along with all the other stuff I was smashing in that 20 minutes, to try smashing that, too.

You see, our wounds are not general, they are specific. They are tied to real things that have happened and are happening to us.

And ... as Alice Walker says, “healing begins where the wound was made.”

So, there I was, Thursday afternoon. In overalls with thick gloves and a helmet and face shield, standing in a room with various breakable items laid out on the floor, a barrel to put them on and a couple of metal pipes and hammers to use for smashing.

I warmed up with a tower from a desktop computer that they had placed on the barrel because they figure most of us have had times when we have wanted to hit our computer with a lead pipe. And I have to admit that smashing up that computer was satisfying ... as was the complete shattering of a glass bottle when I laid into it like Mookie Betts teeing off on a hanging curve.

And then I pulled out my mother's iPad.

I'm not sure why I had held onto it. It was so old they had stopped updating the software so we couldn't even use it or give it away. It was really only good for recycling.

And yet I had kept it. Probably because it held so many memories of her.

I had gone with her to buy it.

It was what she sent her emails to me on and how she read her books.

She had even named it ... "Pinky" because of the pink cover she bought for it.

I placed it on the barrel, and I stood there, looking at it.

I stood there for at least a minute.

And I let myself feel.

Feel the pain and anger of everything to do with her cancer and death ... and not just her death but all the pain and loss of the past two years and everything that had sprung from it.

Of all the people we have lost in this community.

Of the daily waking up and facing days that seem harder and harder with less and less capacity to deal with them ... and knowing that others are taking advantage of our exhaustion to line their pockets and destroy our democracy.

I let myself feel all these things **in my body**.

And I began to cry.

And then I let myself scream.

And I felt the pain wrapped in anger wrapped in the exhaustion.

I felt it in my body.

And I lifted up that pipe, and I smashed that iPad to pieces ... and then stood over it and cried some more.

Cried like I had not been able to cry when we put her ashes in the ground and scattered them in the desert.

It's true about anger.  
It is true about pain.  
It is true about fear.

We carry it in our bodies.

Can you feel it in yours?

This morning's Gospel picks up where last Sunday's Gospel left off. Jesus is in the synagogue in his hometown, and he reads from the scroll of Isaiah. He says the Spirit of God is upon him, and he will bring good news to the poor, release to the incarcerated, restored sight, freedom to the oppressed, toxic debt and disparity swept away.

And the people there are thrilled.

The people are thrilled because they are doing what is most human. They hear these things, and they think of themselves. They think of what it can do for them. What Jesus can do for them.

Because it's human to be more aware of our own wounds than the wounds of others.

It's human to be more aware of how we feel we have been disadvantaged and mistreated than how others have been.

Even though our wounds have the power to move us to empathy, they just as easily ... more easily, perhaps ... can destroy our empathy in favor of exclusively focusing on ourselves. Just as when we are in school, we always know the names of the students in classes older than us more than the names of the students in the classes younger than us, we are more aware of those who have more privilege than us than those who have less. Even to the point where we fail to see our privilege at all.

And the people in that crowd in Nazareth have wounds.  
And they are wounds that are real.  
They are wounds that deserve tending and healing.

Their lives are hard.  
They are living under occupation.

These were not the 1% ... but they could sure see those who were ... and themselves in comparison to the woundless lives they imagined those people led – though that, of course, was an illusion. Everybody has wounds.

And yet there were others who were more marginalized and oppressed than the people in that crowd, but the people in that crowd couldn't or weren't interested in seeing them.

They could not see the privilege they themselves had ... in that moment, they could only see what they lacked.

They could only see their own pain.  
They could only feel their own pain.

And so, when Jesus told the stories of the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian ... stories of outsiders who were more wounded and oppressed than they ... stories that suggested that their pain was not the only pain, that their pain, real as it was, as needing and deserving of healing as it was, did not automatically get priority even though Jesus was “one of them.”

When Jesus, without discounting their wounds, invited them to see beyond their wounds to the wounds of others, they began to feel all the feels.

And Luke's Gospel says “the whole audience in the synagogue was filled with ... and here some versions translate what they were filled with as wrath ... some as indignation. And if you look at the Greek word Luke uses here, you see it is really a lot of both.

The word Luke uses here is *thumos*. It does mean anger and rage ... and the meaning is broader than that. It is a deeply embodied word. It has a physical association with breath and blood, and it is also used to express the human desire for recognition.

*Thumos* is the rage that is expressed in the deep wails

“What about me?”

“What about my wounds?”

“What about my pain?”

We are wounded.

We are offended.

We don't get what we want

... what we need

... what we feel we deserve.

And we get angry.

And that anger is embodied.

It's natural. We see it in two-year-olds collapsing in store aisles, and though most of us learn to control that anger as we age, it is still there in some form.

We carry it in our bodies.  
Can you feel it in yours?

The people were filled with rage and indignation.

They felt the anger in their bodies.

And while anger is a response to pain and fear, it can distract us from feeling the pain and the fear, which is really what we need to do to heal.

And expressing anger can also make us feel powerful, which lets us deny the pain and fear and at least for a while feel better about ourselves in the illusion of power and superiority.

This is why anger is a tool wielded so effectively by people who want to control us. We have pain. We have wounds. They are uncomfortable ... and particularly if we are used to not being uncomfortable. Particularly if, as with many of us today, something like white supremacy culture makes us believe that we are entitled to comfort... when it feels like someone else's wounds are getting priority over or even equal to ours, we become angry. We become indignant.

And that's what happened in that crowd. And feeling this bodily reaction to their pain and anger they did what those with power and privilege so often do when we feel the anger in our bodies ... and that is we visit that anger bodily on the one who is challenging our power and privilege, visit that anger bodily on the one who is suggesting that while our wounds are valid and in need of healing there are others whose wounds need healing too.

And so, the people felt the anger in their body and that anger landed with great violence on the body of Jesus.

*They "rose up and dragged Jesus out of town, leading him to the brow of the hill on which the city was built, with the intention of hurling him over the edge."*

The anger was in their bodies. And when anger is in our bodies, we need to feel it because our anger can be a gateway to the pain and fear that so desperately needs healing.

The anger was in their bodies ... and just as surely as it is evidence of pain and fear and lead to healing, it can also be an instrument of oppression and violence.

And when that happens, the anger in the body gets visited on the bodies of others. Which in turn creates not healing but more pain, more fear, more anger ... and so on and so on and so on.

So, it was then.

So, it is today.

We have claimed the dismantling of White Supremacy culture and becoming actively anti-racist as our generation's work as All Saints Church. And we cannot do this work without being aware of our wounds, being aware of the pain and the fear that springs from the wounds and being aware of the anger that springs from them all. There needs to be space for all of it and all of us ... especially those among us whose anger, pain and fear has been pushed to the side for way too long.

And ... we cannot do this work without knowing that this is not just about changing minds or even transforming hearts. This work is about bodies. What has been done to them and what they are carrying right now.

Ta-Nahesi Coates in Between the World and Me writes:

*"All our phrasing – race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy – serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body."*

What has been done to us and what we have done to each other must not be sanitized. Healing begins where the wound was made, and the wounds are many and deep. And two years into this pandemic our exhaustion is making it more and more impossible not to feel them.

We carry them in our bodies.

Can you feel them in yours?

And ... while we all carry our wounds in our bodies. While we all have anger that springs from our pain and our fear, those of us who continually benefit from white supremacy culture continue to have the power not only to center our wounds but to anesthetize them with the exercise of our own power over those on whose bodies this culture and economy has for centuries been built and sustained.

This is not a new thing ... and ... it is reaching a higher and higher crescendo with every passing week, month and year.

Coates writes of the past, "For the men who needed believe themselves white, the bodies were the key to a social club, and the right to break the bodies was the mark of civilization."

Only it's not only past. It happens still.

When white people vent our anger on people of color through legislation, incarceration, discrimination, and state sanctioned violence in ways that wound and kill real bodies we are excused and even lauded for our efforts.

When black and brown people vent their anger even on a piece of property that cannot feel the wounds ... or even when white people are gripped with the fear that they might damage a piece of property that cannot feel the wounds, black and brown people are castigated, tear-gassed, imprisoned and killed.

Dr. King famously and truthfully said, "a riot is the language of the unheard." And so, continually we have to ask ourselves when the anger that springs from the wounds of the bodies of black and brown people emerges ... "What is it we are not hearing?" And what we are not hearing is the embodied lives and stories that Jesus is pointing the crowd toward this morning.

But instead of listening, we ignore, we castigate, obfuscate, re-center the conversation on our own feelings, tear-gas, imprison and kill.

We shift the focus and push back the timetable because the truth is, we who are the beneficiaries of white supremacy culture and are already so aware of our own wounds, too often don't want to hear about the widow in Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian.

And white resistance has roots as ancient as the wounds visited on black and brown bodies. As Resmaa Menakem writes in [My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies](#):

*"The deadliest manifestation of white fragility is its reflexive confusion of fear with danger (...) and comfort with safety. When a white body feels frightened by the presence of a Black one – whether or not an actual threat exists – it may lash out at the Black body in what it senses as necessary self-protection. Often this is a fight, flee or freeze response triggered by the activation of ancient trauma that began as white-on-white violence in Europe centuries ago."*

Our resistance is so deeply rooted that when we have begun to do as Jesus does in this Gospel, when we begin to center the stories of the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian through things like the movements for black, brown, indigenous, Asian and Pacific Islander lives, white supremacy culture has gone so far and with great effect to not only discount those wounds but to blame the widow and Naaman for our ills.

And to encourage us to visit our rage on their bodies yet again ... and again ... and again. That is where we are as a nation right now. And even with Trump out of office, it is getting worse, not better.

And yet the Gospel message this morning is that it is precisely the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian – to those who are most on the margins of the crowd and whose bodies have been most beaten and who utter the most unheard cries – to whom Jesus points the crowd ... and us. Not to deny the wounds of those of us who enjoy the greater power and privilege ... but in recognition that our healing is inextricably bound up in the healing of each other.

We all have wounds. And they are deep.

The crowd was not wrong or bad for getting angry. Our wounds create pain and fear. And that pain and fear can lead to anger. And that anger can be our teacher if we let it lead us back to the wound. If we do the work of speaking clearly and listening deeply that leads to real change in the real lives of real people. If we remember that Love. Heals. Every. Body. ... and healing for another does not mean less healing for us ... it actually means more.

We all have wounds. And they are deep.

And we carry the pain and the fear ... and the anger.

And Jesus looks on us with deep love and compassion.

And Jesus knows we carry it in our bodies.

And Jesus invites us to feel it in ours.

And Jesus longs for our healing.

And then Jesus tells us the stories of the widow in Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian and points us to the question that breaks the cycle ... the question that leads to the healing and salvation of all.

Not just “Can we feel the pain, the fear, the anger in our body.”

But, “Can we feel it in each other’s bodies, too?”

Amen.