

## ASTN

There's a very entertaining scene in the movie *Jaws*, where the old salty seaman and the younger, but daring marine biologist begin swapping stories about scars on their bodies and what they represent. One shows a scar on his arm, another on his leg, one on his chest, another on his back. They drink liquor and they laugh, but they gain respect for each other. The scene concludes with Quint, the old salty seaman, discussing his being on the USS *Indianapolis*, which carried one of the bombs that ended WWI but whose mission was so top secret that no one knew they were at sea. So when the ship was sunk, after delivering the bomb, by Japanese torpedos, the crew spent four days floating in the water, fighting off sharks, exposure, dehydration, and drowning. 1200 were in the water. 300 survived.

Scars. They tell a tale. What scars do you have? And what other lingering injuries are on your body or in your head that drag you down, that won't go away? We all have them, don't we? In my body, for instance, I bear the lingering injuries of a car accident from 1996. My neck, which was fractured, is mostly better now, but I can't turn it as far as I used to – and certain positions cause me a twinge of pain or give me a headache. Just this year I also noticed that my thumb, which was also broken in the accident, now seems regularly affected by arthritis. You see this crook in my finger. That came from a blistering tennis ball from the racquet of Dr. Nathan Jastram. I reached up to catch it, and the catching didn't go so well.

Yes, we have scars. On our bodies, and in our hearts. Things we carry around that remind us of the past – injuries, disabilities, mistakes, regrets, injustices, and the like.

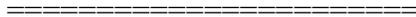
Good Friday is about those. And I would like to take the next few moments and think about four of those scars that are particularly painful – that every one of us carries with us wherever we go.

The first begins with the letter A. It stands for Old Adam. Old Adam is that infection that came into humanity as a result of the sin of our first parents. The Fall wreaked havoc and transformed humans from being pure, perfect, beautiful, creative, and in perfect harmony with God and one another, to carrying around an intense and innate desire to go the opposite of God's way. It made us spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God, whose natural desire, apart from Him, is only evil all the time.

St. Paul describes it in Romans chapter 6:

Rom 3: 10As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." 13"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." 14"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." 15"Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16ruin and misery mark their ways, 17and the way of peace they do not know." 18"There is no fear of God before their eyes." 19Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

We are accountable to God, and the just decree is guilty even before having committed one sin – because this is our nature. Let's think about this scar and it being laid upon our Savior as we sing verses 1 and 2 of hymn 451: "Stricken Smitten and Afflicted."

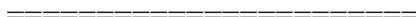


Another scar we bear comes from the actual sins which we have committed day after day, year after year. It's the natural outpouring of the Old Adam in us. He produces thoughts, desires, words and deeds which are contrary to God's Love, God's will, God's ways. There are things we know we should not have done, that we did – and things we know that we should have done, that we didn't.

In the book, "The Picture of Dorian Gray," a vile man has the signs of his own evil transferred from his body and onto a portrait of him on a canvas. In the end, though his actual body looks good enough, when he looks at the canvas, he is horrified. And that's the way it would be for us, too, if we could see the marks of every moment that we made gods of ourselves and lived as we pleased, with anger, lust, hatred, greed, pride and jealousy having their way with us.

St. Paul writes about it in Ephesians 2: Eph. 2:1As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Let's think about this scar and it being laid upon our Savior as we sing verses 1 through 3 of hymn 453: "Upon the Cross Extended."



Another scar that plagues us comes from him who is called the Prince of Darkness. Every day he wields Temptations and Threats to try and lead us away from God and into

misbelief, despair, shame and other vices. So we're not just going out there into a neutral world. Every day we are headed into battle as the raging challenges of the Evil One do battle against the Spirit of God in us.

St. Paul declares in Ephesians 6:

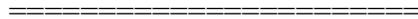
12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

St. Peter echoes the same idea in 1 Peter 5:

8Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

How great it will be when life is not a battle, when we are free to love God and one another without that Prince of Darkness and his henchmen dogging us at every turn.

Let's think about this scar and it being laid upon our Savior as we sing verses 1 through 4 of hymn 452: "O Perfect Life of Love."



The last scar I am entitling "N" for "No Hope." The "no hope" scar comes from the knowledge that death is our ultimate destiny – that no human can escape this consequence of our fallenness, and that there will come a day when we, too, have to face it. And I don't care if you're the richest man in the world, the most powerful world leader, or the most celebrated individual on the planet. Physical death will get you. There is no escape.

St. Peter puts it this way when he quotes Isaiah in his first epistle: "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, 25but the word of the Lord stands forever."

No Hope – Nothing we can do about it. N.

Let's think about this scar and its being laid upon our Savior as we sing verses 1, 2, and 5 of hymn 437, "Alas and Did My Savior Bleed."

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Tonight we go home with these chips in our pocket – these scars on our soul – ANTS – these “ants” in our pants. We carry them home because we don’t want to forget who we are and how desperately we need help. We’re going to hold onto them until we return here on Sunday, when I want you to bring them back and we’ll do something special with them.

But know this. These are the reasons that Jesus came. He fought for us, because He loved us. He stood by our side when we were helpless, held us in our arms when we were broken. And offered hope when we were lost.

He came and He suffered all, so that we might be cleansed, redeemed, and rescued – so that we might have an eternal future with Him.

But, without a doubt, it was excruciatingly painful and unbelievably horrific. But that’s how much He loved us.

Let’s think about that now as we listen to the word of Matthew account of Jesus’ crucifixion and as the church gets darker and darker. Jesus took every scar of the past and every future scar and then the tomb was closed.

But it didn’t stay closed. Oh no. It definitely didn’t stay closed.

The Gospel according to St. Matthew:

27Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. 28They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. 30They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

LIGHTS ONE (TOP SWITCH)

32As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. 33They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). 34There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. 35When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 36And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. 37Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 39Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" 41In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 42"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' " 44In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

LIGHTS TWO (MIDDLE SWITCH)

45From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. 46About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ["Eloi, Eloi,] [lama] [sabachthani?"]--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 47When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." 48Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

### LIGHTS THREE (BOTTOM SWITCH)

50And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. 51At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. 52The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. 54When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

### LIGHTS FOUR (BIG LIGHT SWITCH IS BACK ROOM)

55Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. 56Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. 57As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. 58Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. 59Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

### LIGHTS FIVE (TOP LIGHT SWITCH IN BACK ROOM)

61Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb. 62The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 63"Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." 65"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." 66So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

### LIGHTS SIX (BOTTOM LIGHT SWITCH IN BACK ROOM)