

Marked by ...

On that first Easter, when evening came, while the disciples were gathered in insecurity for fear of the Jews, with curtains drawn and doors locked, Jesus came and stood among them. His first words were "Peace be with you", followed by proof that He was the One who had walked with them for three years, was betrayed and crucified, and now stood before them as the Risen Lord. The proof he gave came as He showed them his hands and side. Their response was immediate. They were overjoyed.

Jesus was known by his marks, and so are we.

Each of us is readily recognized by characteristics (marks) which remove all doubt that it is indeed us. For some, they are marked by the noblest of virtues - **love**. They lovingly come alongside those in need of comfort and help and reach out with the very hands of God. Some are marked by **joy**. Their smile dispels clouds, their laughter reflects a heart made glad by God. Their joy becomes our joy. Some are marked by **peace**. Their repose brings comfort to the troubled. Their presence brings encouragement to souls in turmoil. Some are marked by **patience**. They have learned to wait on the Lord and to wait on others. Circumstances are hard pressed to alter their composure. Some are marked by **kindness**. They warm the hearts of others as the sun warms the freshly plowed soil. Some are marked by **goodness**. Their deeds have a countering effect on a world system characterized by "badness". Some are marked by **faithfulness**. They have an unusual confidence in the Person and promises of God. Their life reflects one who with such faith, pleases God. Some are marked by **gentleness**. They tenderly bind up the broken and offer balm to the bruised. And some are marked with **self-control**. In a world given to self-gratification they stand out as individuals committed to self-sanctification as they yield themselves to the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Unfortunately, some are also characterized by less noble characteristics. Some are marked by falsehood, some marked by quick or bad temper, some marked by selfishness, some marked by harshness, some marked by the trouble they stir up and the rumors they spread, some marked by infidelity and an absence of integrity. And by their marks they are **sadly** (compared to the disciples being overjoyed) recognized by others around them.

By our marks we are recognized. By our marks we are known.

May we as Christians so identify with the death of Christ that we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to righteousness; alive with those virtues which bring glory to our God.

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