

The scars of loss

By [L. Gail Irwin](#)

December 13, 2012

I casually asked a parishioner the other day how he lost his hand. I knew it happened when he was a young man, so I didn't expect him to get emotional. But as he told the story, his demeanor began to change.

"It was a corn picker," he said quietly. "I remember when it cut to here, and then here, and then here," he said, making imaginary slices in his invisible hand. "But after that, I don't remember anything." He went on to tell me that, as the corn picker sucked his body inward, it also ravaged his face. Afterward, he was told by his nurses not to look in a mirror. But being young and curious, he looked anyway. Here's where his face went ashen as he retold his story. "That was a mistake," he said. "I shouldn't have looked."

All this happened 40 years ago. I can see no obvious scars on his face today, and he has adapted well to life without a hand. But it doesn't take the loss away. Loss is a wound that fades, but if you dare to look close, there it is.

And that's the problem: I wanted to preach to the congregation the message that we have nothing to fear. When the storm takes your house or the tornado takes down the barn or the corn picker takes your hand, God is still with you and you will be okay. But "okay" is not the same as "good as new". I didn't know if I had the courage to say that, when you truly lose something, you never get it back.

Thank God, loss is not the end of any of our stories. The scars we all bear are the evidence of healing. It hurts to remember what got them there. But it shouldn't hurt enough to take away our gratitude for God's power to heal and make something new of us.

Originally posted at [From Death to Life](#)