

Reflection for 8am Communion

Matthew 28: 1-10

Jesus has risen

Perhaps you can remember hearing about the death of Princess Diana. I remember it very clearly. I was on holiday in Devon and read the headlines in the site shop. Shock reverberated around the entire campsite. It was one of those moments that stay with you; a moment of national angst. Though the two Mary's were possibly dumbstruck on seeing the empty tomb, it was very likely that this first day of the week was a day they remembered for the rest of their lives.

It is not hard to empathise with the shock and awe that grip the women who visit the tomb, expecting to see the huge stone rolled across the entrance. They knew they were not going to be able to shift the stone as it would have been far too heavy for the women to roll along the grooves, so it seems that the women just wanted to be near Jesus, to grieve in the peace and quiet of the burial site. I see this in churchyards fairly often. It is a normal, even necessary human response to death.

Peace and quiet is not on the agenda. An earthquake, an angel and fainting guards contribute to a sense of awe and wonder. It all sounds rather dramatic. But, before we dismiss these details as products of Matthew's over-active imagination, we should recall that within Jewish tradition, angels appeared at the most pivotal moments of salvation history. For Jewish readers of the Gospel, mention of angels (messengers from God), would not have been unexpected.

The real action, of course, is in what God is doing. For God is starting something new. The disciples are sent to Galilee, but are then commanded to go to the ends of the earth to share the Good News of the Resurrection. A new age is beginning.

Before the women reach Galilee they meet Jesus. He comes to greet them soon after they have left the tomb. The encounter is revealing; the relationship between Jesus and the women is changed. We read that they 'clasped his feet and worshipped him.' Jesus is now the Risen Christ. Everything that Jesus tried to explain to them prior to his death will come about; God's purposes will be fulfilled. The appearances of the Risen Jesus that his disciples come to experience will involve a commissioning – a commissioning to a new way of life. The Resurrection changed the world for ever. It announced that the Kingdom of God had arrived and that the Son of Man had been vindicated. Without the Resurrection there is no Gospel, no Good News of God to share.

We cannot meet Jesus in the way that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary did that morning, but we can worship the Risen Lord. We can live the resurrection life by responding to Jesus' commandment to love; by responding to the call to generosity of living, a becoming of who were created to be. In this life Jesus is always one step ahead of us, beckoning us to follow him. While the women were on their way to the tomb, Jesus had already risen. When the women start out to share the Good News with the other disciples, Jesus comes to meet

them. The Risen Jesus does not hide from us. He is waiting to welcome us into his kingdom and he is within reach even now.

A question to end: *When did you last feel truly alive, and what does that tell you about your relationship with God, others and yourself?*