

Easter Day
Matthew 28:1-10
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A man named Michael Ramsey was the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury. He served in that capacity from 1961 through 1974. Before that he had been Bishop of Durham. And then he became Archbishop of York, and then he became Archbishop of Canterbury, so Michael Ramsey is one of the great Christian leaders of the twentieth century. He wrote a number of very influential books. Michael Ramsey remains a towering figure in the history of Anglican Christianity.

At one point Michael Ramsey led a retreat for a group of ordinands. So picture a young group of seminary graduates about to be ordained and begin their lifetime ministries in the church. You've got this very learned scholar leading your ordination retreat, Michael Ramsey. At one point in the retreat Michael Ramsey said to these young ordinands, about to be ordained clergy in the Church of England, "Every time you celebrate the Eucharist, your knees should knock a little, because you're standing on holy ground." Imagine hearing that from one of the great church minds of the twentieth century. So practical. It's memorable. It's brief. "Every time you celebrate the Eucharist, your knees should knock a little, because you're standing on holy ground."

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb on that first Easter Day heartbroken. Imagine the depth of their grief. We know the depth of our grief when a loved one dies. Imagine living in the first century and believing with all your heart that this man Jesus is God's Messiah. And when he entered into Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday, his followers thought, 'This is the inauguration of a political revolution that will throw off the yoke of foreign oppression.' That first Palm Sunday was a celebration. And so imagine the heartbreak just a few days later when the Messiah was betrayed by one of his own followers and arrested, put through a mockery of a trial, and then crucified – humiliated in the most painful, excruciating death a human being could experience. I'm just trying to get us all to think – just imagine the depth of the despair that these two women would have been feeling when they went to the tomb to grieve. And then they found the tomb empty. Matthew describes in vivid detail the holiness of this moment. And then Matthew writes,

"Suddenly Jesus met them." The risen Christ met them and said, "Greetings." And then Matthew tells us, "And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him." Imagine the depth of sorrow that these women were feeling, and then this moment that really is too good to believe. Suddenly Jesus met them and greeted them, and they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Every time you celebrate the Eucharist, your knees should knock a little because you're standing on holy ground. Imagine these two women named Mary experiencing something they had given up on, Jesus back with them. What was their reaction? They fell to the ground, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.

The most familiar Easter declaration in the Western Church is "Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!" Familiar words. But are we really listening? Amen.