

About 10 years ago I was flying home from Chicago with my two children Adam and Alex. We had been flying several hours when all of a sudden the plane flashed bright hot white, for a moment no one could see and then the screaming started. My children started to cry and I said to them both loudly and those around us, do not worry. We have been struck by lightening and it's all OK. And it was. And we all experienced this joy, this gratitude that it hadn't been a bomb, that we were all still alive

I was able to speak calmly in this situation because only that morning driving to the airport Adam asked me, 'what happens if lightening strikes our plane,' and I said there would be a bright flash of light and then it will be OK because it isn't a problem for the plane, just scary for the people in it. So the children and I were prepared and able to enter into the reality of being OK with relative ease.

I will confess to you now, that I had no idea what I was talking about at the time, but I knew that I had to say something comforting because Adam was worried about flying. As it turns out, I was right.

Since that time, I always imagine the scene at Jesus's tomb just like this. The flash of light like a lightening strike, the terror of the guards like the passengers, but Mary and Mary had been told by Jesus that this would happen. They didn't know, couldn't know,

what it would be like but like my children on the plane, when the angel told them, they had a form of reference, a knowledge which was awakened and they could step into this new reality where Jesus truly is the Son of God, where the Son of God can be also human and can be raised from the dead. I had enough trouble with my thinking catching up reality when the lightening struck, the buzz of the epiphany they experienced must have been enormous.

And then the joy of seeing Jesus, and the gratitude which always follows if we let it, causing them to fall on their knees and worship.

Five years ago I was in Rwanda with Tear Fund exploring the power of forgiveness and the success of local projects in a very real situation. 25 years prior People had been through the fastest, the most horrific genocide in history, 1 million people dead in 6 weeks. But during those 25 years deep healing had happened in many places. The words I kept hearing was the blood of Christ is sufficient. We can stop shedding each other's blood.

There were 10 ordinands in our minibus. We had been driving off the beaten path for a couple hours on the rutted dirt roads praying for a dry day when we arrived at ????? Where we were met with the most amazing sight. 100 people singing, waiting for

us, proud to show us the fruit and vegetables they had grown in their cooperative. The joy was palpable, just to see us, people they had never met. And then we went into the church and the joy erupted with drumming and dancing. The 10 of us were swept into the dance, this dance of gratitude for the life of the village, the love of God, the saving blood of Christ. Unbelievable.

Well, we are not going to dance so everyone can breathe. It may be that you are experiencing this morning in pure joy, it may be that you are experiencing doubt or confusion, like the Mary's must have felt.

It may also be that you feel trapped in your own reality which is difficult or painful, But whatever is stopping your heart from singing, however bad it might be, I invite you to lay it down. In this moment it cannot hurt you. In this moment we can be together in joy, we can simply be together in gratitude.

Over these next Sundays we will explore other experiences of friends and disciples who encounter the risen Christ soon after his resurrection. All end in wisdom and in gratitude. We will continue to celebrate Easter for weeks, right up until Ascension Day where we will hold a special evening service and then until Pentecost where we will turn to the joy of the Holy Spirit in us. This is a journey we can all make together. All of us here today.

In our Lent course on contemplative prayer I shared the words of Meister Eckhart a 13th century mystic, 'God is speaking into our soul all the time, but he rarely finds us at home.'

In his poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland* Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote 'I greet him the days I meet him and bless when I understand' When we greet him, he will be there in our lives even as we continue to seek wisdom and understanding.

Jesus is present now, this morning, in joy and triumph. Will you greet him? will you open in vulnerability and attention to allow the gratitude to flood your soul? And like the Mary's will you fall at his feet in the depths of your heart as we prepare to celebrate the Eucharist?