

## **“THEY TOOK HOLD OF HIS FEET”**

Matthew 28:1-10

If we stub our toe, how do we know it? It is because of the pain sensation sent from the toe to our brains via our nerves. Otherwise, we could do a lot of self-inflicted damage to ourselves before we knew it. But how do we know that pain represents something real? We can look at our toes and see the bruises that develop.

The women who went to the tomb on Easter morning were going there to finish the preparation of Jesus' body for burial. They didn't have time to do that on Friday because the Sabbath begins at sundown, when they are no longer supposed to be touching a dead body which would make them unclean. They didn't find the body. Instead, they saw an angel who told them that Jesus was not there; He had risen from the dead! These women were both joyful to hear that news, but also frightened by what had happened when they ran into Jesus, Himself. Matthew in his Gospel tells us that the women ran to Him and “took hold of His feet.” They had heard that He was alive. They saw Him alive. But they also needed to touch Him. Doing that told them that He was real! He wasn't some apparition or ghost that was fooling them. He was real flesh and blood, alive!

What is real in our world today? We flip through images and videos shown on the internet and often we can tell the difference between what is AI and what is real. But not always. So much has come out from the conflict in the Middle East that you could believe that the war will end tomorrow or that the US has lost all its aircraft carriers. The “Matrix” movies are science fiction, but how much of that will be fiction in the future. Even more confusing is the reality that is being described by those who explore the science of the whole cosmos and how it came to be. One of the best ways they can explain our universe mathematically is by saying that we are just bits of information from a two-dimensional disk that are projected like holograms. What we see and experience then, it is just images.

That may seem far away from our daily lives, but we do so much to control our senses so that we can make our lives seem better from the heat and air-conditioning that keep away being cold or hot to the medicines which dull our pains, to the images on screens that entertain us so we don't have to have bad

thoughts to the cars that turn hard effort into a little diversion to get from one place to another. So is what those women experienced at the tomb real or just something they made up to make their lives “feel” better?

If Jesus rose from the dead, we have hope beyond death. Death is no longer the end, but a transition to a new life and world. But is that real or just a story to make us feel better when we stand by the graveside of a loved one or consider that we too will die?

If reality is just what we experience with our senses, then we can never be sure. Is it really pain or comfort or just what our brains interpret from the message sent to it by our nerves? There has to be something we can anchor into, something that is true no matter what.

And that is what we have in Jesus. Those women grabbed Jesus' feet. If they had made it up, then why would they have been so shocked about seeing the tomb empty? Why would they be so determined to complete the burial of a body that they knew was not there? No, they truly experienced Jesus risen from the dead. And we see that in how they reacted to Jesus—they grabbed His feet to be certain He was real and not a ghost, and then they worshipped Him. Matthew makes sure this is worship, not just obeisance to a great man. They realize the reality that Jesus is nothing less than the Son of God! In John's Gospel we see Jesus appear first to Mary Magdalene. She first thinks He is a gardener. But when Jesus reveals Himself to her, she is all over Him. That is why He tells her to stop grabbing Him. It is not like He isn't saying, “Don't touch Me!” but “Don't cling to Me.” She is both seeing that he is real and worshipping Him. She has found true reality.

Reality is found in Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God. It is the Word of God that created us as the crown of all God's creation. It is the Word that brings us back to God in Christ Jesus. We need something to cling to, we need feet to grab! That is what we have in Christ Jesus, the Word of God.

We tend to think of our Christian faith as involving “spiritual” matters. That tends to put it apart from our everyday, physical lives. But Jesus did not rise from the dead as some ghost-like image. He rose with a physical body which He still has as a human being. That is why the women could hold on to His real, physical feet.

And what He promises to us is a real, physical resurrection on that last day so we can truly experience, not just pretend or dream, a real eternal life with Him.

C.S. Lewis wrote the book The Great Divorce to describe the difference between heaven and hell. In the transition between both people noticed as they went to heaven that what they saw there was not clouds and nothingness, but a world more vivid and concrete than what we see on earth now. The people walk on grass that is so real that it goes through their feet, which are unreal compared to it. And what makes it all so real is the God who creates and redeems, the God who gives us true reality in His Word, Christ Jesus.

“They took hold of His feet.” The women at the tomb experienced reality, not some dream or vision. It is what led them to go and tell Jesus’ disciples. It is what led them to continue to gather together as His people. It is what held them in love with each other even when they faced persecution. And it is what we can hold on to. We take hold of Jesus’ feet as we gather together to hear His Word, as we join in the supper of His true body and blood, as we hold on to the feet of other people to show our love to them knowing that what we do to them, we do to Christ Jesus. We take a hold of Christ Jesus and worship Him.