

# What is Faith? Faith cries out

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning, welcome everybody. It's great to be able to welcome you for another chance to share God's Word together, to worship together digitally.
- Let me just say again, there's a chance to join with us again at half five this evening. We'll be on YouTube and also you can connect on Zoom and you'll get the details for that on the email or check Galvanto or the website.
- The one other really important thing for us as a church that's going on in this coming week is that we have five days of prayer. We desperately need prayer, don't we? We need God, we need his mercy, we need his power, we need his wisdom, we need his compassion and goodness for ourselves, for our communities, our families, our nation, our world.
- So Monday to Friday of this week, eight o'clock in the morning, eight o'clock in the evening, there'll be a chance to Zoom in if you want to join a larger group.
- There's prayer resources that have gone out. I also encourage you to use it in your family or by yourself as we call on God and seek his help.
- [ 1 : 2 2 ]     Let's worship together. Our call to worship comes from Isaiah chapter 43, words of comfort and hope and encouragement to the exiles that I hope speak comfort to our hearts as well.
- Isaiah 43 at the beginning. But now, this is what the Lord says. He who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel, do not fear, for I have redeemed you.
- I have summoned you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.
- When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned. The flames will not set you ablaze, for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.
- And now let's sing together the hymn, How Firm a Foundation. Now, let's read together.
- [ 2 : 3 1 ]     Let's read some verses from Matthew chapter 8. Matthew chapter 8, and we're going to read from verse 18.
- When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.
- Jesus replied, Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Another disciple said to him, Lord, first let me go and bury my father.
- But Jesus told him, follow me and let the dead bury their own dead. Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake so that the waves swept over the boat.
- But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, Lord, save us. We're going to drown. He replied, You of little faith, why are you so afraid?

[ 3 : 34 ] Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him. When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him.

They were so violent that no one could pass that way. What do you want with us, Son of God? They shouted, Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time? Some distance from them, a large herd of pigs was feeding.

The demons begged Jesus, If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs. He said to them, Go. So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water.

Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

Amen. We're going to focus our attention on those words that we find in verses 23 and 27. As we think about what is faith, let's begin with a statement.

[ 4 : 49 ] Here's our statement. In the storms of life, faith cries out to the storm defeating Jesus.

That's what I hope we'll see as we look at this text. So we begin as our story begins in the storms of life. The setting for this story is the Lake of Galilee, sometimes known as the Sea of Galilee, some 700 feet below sea level, with cliffs, steep cliffs all around, so that winds would come down and would whistle around, and storms would be swept up really quickly.

Doesn't that serve for us, in a sense, as a picture of life? Things can be going along quite fine, and then unexpected storms come, and they threaten to overwhelm us.

Coronavirus seems like one of those storms, with so many waves crashing in at once. For some, it is family grief and trauma.

Trauma for families, and trauma for those who are looking to care and help. There is strain on families, strain on our finances, strain on our emotional well-being, and on our faith.

[ 6 : 13 ] There are the waves of uncertainty and fear that keep crashing as we look to a future, and we have no idea what the new normal is going to be. A quick glance at some of the news reports from the BBC, it tells us that 25% of Scottish doctors are reporting some kind of mental health issue as they cope with coronavirus.

25% of our nation's wages are being paid by the government. 80% of our visitor attractions are threatened with closure because of prolonged lockdown.

The university sector is looking at losses of somewhere in the region of £500 million. And we are seeing care home tragedy after tragedy.

And this is not just true collectively. These storms don't just come nationally. We understand that this happens in our personal stories as well.

Some of you will have had that experience of receiving a shocking cancer diagnosis, perhaps, when you had no symptoms. Relationships that seem to be going well that suddenly come to an end.

[ 7 : 38 ] Redundancies and lost opportunities coming as a bolt out of the blue. Maybe this sailing trip could be a snapshot of our life right now.

More than that, we can understand this sailing trip as a picture of discipleship, as a picture of life following Jesus.

I just want you to notice as we read verse 23 and 24 again, Jesus got into the boat and his disciples followed him. That's a discipleship word, a following word.

Suddenly, a furious storm came up on the lakes that the waves swept over the boat. Following Jesus does not make us immune from suffering.

Following Jesus does not mean life will be plain sailing. Rather, following Jesus presents us with two realities. One, we will know suffering and trouble because we live in a broken world and we see pain all around us.

[ 8 : 45 ] And that comes to us too. But we also know peace when we know Jesus. Jesus, the one who said, I am with you always. Jesus who said, I have overcome the world.

One other thing to recognize about these storms that come into our lives is that they can function for us as a mirror. They can reveal to us where our trust lies.

If we can cast our minds back, and it seems hard to do in some ways, take our minds back to before the virus, perhaps we were quite content in trusting to our resources and natural abilities to get us through life.

and it's maybe only now we're beginning to discover our limits. Maybe like many, we were trusting in our wealth and our technology to be a shelter for us.

and now we feel dangerously exposed. Perhaps we were trusting in what we knew about God when the only thing that matters is trusting in the God that we know.

[ 10 : 08 ] Here's what I want for us today. I want it that you and I would see that when all is said and done, we should trust Jesus.

In the storms of life, faith cries out. As people, we are born with an instinct.

We have a new baby that's due to my brother and his wife coming any time in the next couple of weeks. And when that baby is born, as we pray it will be healthy, we know what babies do.

When they need help, when they need attention, when they need food, they will instinctively cry out. That's true when we are children.

If you need help, if you're in trouble, if you're afraid, it's natural, it's instinctive to cry, help me to parents. But that instinct, it never leaves us.

[ 11 : 11 ] There is a reminder to us constantly of our dependence. There will be different times in our lives where we are asking someone, save me, help me.

Today and in the last few weeks, we have become as a nation increasingly grateful to our NHS, to our frontline workers, to our key workers, because we recognise, wow, we desperately need their help.

We desperately need the service that they so lovingly and helpfully provide for us. We have found ourselves, maybe for the first time, looking to our government leaders for help in how to navigate through these circumstances.

circumstances. But the question we ask when storms hit by instinct is, who or what do I believe will get me through this trouble?

Where should I place my trust? Who or what will I ask, help me, save me? And the Gospel of Matthew and indeed all the Gospels and the whole Bible would have us to see ultimately at the end of the day Jesus is the only proper object for your faith.

[ 12 : 36 ] He is the only one, the only thing that will not disappoint, that will not leave you. He would have us to grow in our trust of Jesus and to act out of that trust in Jesus.

this kind of faith, this faith that cries out, it requires us to know certain things about our God. So hopefully if you're in our church you know that we're learning a new song.

Boys and girls, I hope it's a song that you'll be able to really enjoy from Colin Buchanan along with City of Light. It's called Jesus Strong and Kind.

And for our boys and girls this is a truth that we would love for you to learn early in your life, to go through all your life knowing that whether life is easier, whether life is hard, you would know you could trust in Jesus, you can always run to Jesus, you can pray to him because he is strong and he is kind.

God, Jesus is the son of God, he is God, God is your creator, God is the sustainer of life and God in Jesus is your only saviour and Jesus is compassionate and good and kind as we see all through the gospels.

[ 14 : 04 ] So the disciples in the boat, in the storm, they come to Jesus with urgency. Verse 25, the disciples went and woke him saying, Lord, save us, we're going to drown.

This is no carefully rehearsed speech, this is coming at a point of desperation and urgency and honesty. Here are some of them seasoned fishermen, they know they're in a storm that's beyond their capacity to cope with and it's outside of their control and so they ask Jesus to rescue.

They say, Jesus, help me. Gripped by fear, faith cries out, Lord, you are my only hope in life and death.

Will you save me? Will you help me? Will you be for me? Here is the disciples in their cry of faith.

Yes, Jesus says they have little faith. Their faith is weak and it needs to grow, but still it is faith. And these fearful men who are also men of faith, what is it that they discover?

[ 15 : 21 ] And by the end they're amazed at Jesus. As Don Carson puts it, they discover Jesus is far more wonderful than even these closest followers suspect.

So they cry out, not even fully confident of what kind of answer they're going to get, but they get this wonderful answer. But faith cries out. Last week I was listening to an interview of a Christian minister with terminal cancer.

And he was talking about having received that diagnosis and going through the treatment process as being a time where his faith became, and his praying rather, became real.

Where there was a new honesty. Gone was any sort of pretense or show, now was raw, honest, before God, his Father.

Psalms 62 in verse 8 encourages us to pour out your hearts to him, for God is your refuge.

[ 16 : 38 ] God knows everything about us. There is no point in us putting on a mask. God knows how you feel today.

He knows your fears today. So be honest with him. Pray to him out of that place of honesty and desperation if that's where you are.

Again, Colin Buchanan, the children's songwriters, they stop what you're doing and pray to Jesus.

That's wisdom, not just for children, that's wisdom for all of us. Stop and recognise who is on the throne, recognise his goodness and love that is for you.

Lean on that, cry out to him in faith. Notice in verse 26 that Jesus doesn't object to their cries.

[ 17 : 37 ] He replied, you have little faith, why are you so afraid? He wants their little faith to become stronger. Ultimately, Jesus would have faith in him to drive out paralyzing fear.

Matthew and all the other gospel writers, they are honest about the disciples. These followers of Jesus, just like us, they're on a journey, they're on a journey of faith and that faith would grow and that faith would grow as they would come to see more and more of the identity of Jesus.

As they would understand more and more of Jesus as the son of God who would come to be the saviour. So here they're about to see Jesus has power and authority over nature.

He has power and authority to save. He can deal with the forces that come against his people and threaten to overwhelm and later later they will see how Jesus has come to rescue from sin and judgment.

Jesus is sitting with them in a storm so that in the fullness of time he would go to the cross and he would defeat their greatest enemies, your greatest enemy.

[ 18 : 55 ] Sin that leads to death, that leads to eternal separation from God. Jesus will rescue and the disciples will come to discover as they see Jesus three days later risen from the dead that there is life and there is victory in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Faith cries out and the more that we know of our God and the more we can trust him and cry out to him.

So just before we leave this remember that there's that week of prayer coming up and I hope we all see that we need prayer don't we? Our family and our friends they need our prayers, they need the prayers of the church, our nation needs for the people of faith to cry out for God's help, God's mercy and God's compassion.

So will you join with us in the storms of life? Faith cries out to the storm defeating Jesus.

Boys and girls, I know that some of you are enjoying different aspects of homeschool and some aspects not so much but maybe you're all enjoying bits of science.

[ 20 : 13 ] Well here's a little bath time experiment for you and let me just apologise to parents for the suggestion but fill a bath and make that bath a stormy sea and I know that you know how to make a stormy sea in a bathtub.

And then after a point when it's all really churned up, stop splashing and see how long it takes for the water to grow calm. You see even in a little bathtub it will take a while for those waves to halt.

But here in our Bible we have this amazing demonstration of the authority of Jesus. Listen to verse 26 again. So having said to his disciples you of little faith why are you so afraid?

Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves and it was completely calm. Here is first of all a simple rebuke as if Jesus was a parent talking to the storm as a child.

You need to stop that. And this whirlwind storm ceases and there's instant flat calm. There's power. In ancient cultures and we see this in the Psalms as well, the sea was regarded as an uncontrollable force except by God.

[ 21 : 28 ] God alone could control the storms. Psalm 107 is really helpful here. In verse 23 onwards we discover God spoke and stirred up a tempest and God stilled the storm to a whisper.

What's happening here? What's the point that the disciples are beginning to discover and are amazed by? Jesus has power over a storm. Therefore Jesus is God.

Notice he doesn't appeal to a higher authority because Jesus is ultimate authority. So these disciples who are amazed and terrified by the power of the storm, verse 27, they're amazed and ask, what kind of man is this?

Even the wind and the waves obey him. they're more amazed by the greater power of Jesus over the storm. There is this profound contrast.

There's the powerful and majestic Jesus and there's powerless disciples. And what they need is to be connected to the power of Jesus, their Lord.

[ 22 : 37 ] And do you know that's true for us in every situation? Our faith is to live daily in humble dependence. Sometimes we can sort of get into that state where life is just sort of trundling along and we think we've got it covered.

And then there's a bump in the road or a storm comes and we cry out. We are not just to call Jesus in a storm. Jesus, I need your help.

But in everyday life, we are to acknowledge that in everything we do as we seek to live for God, we need Jesus and his power and his love and his grace for us.

So the disciples see and we see an all-powerful Jesus and that's who they cry out to. That's good news. But remember too, in verse 24, a detail that's perhaps a bit surprising.

So we discover the furious storm comes and the waves are sweeping over the boat but what's Jesus doing? Jesus was sleeping. We see resting Jesus.

[ 23 : 49 ] Now what's significant about this detail? Well, on the one hand, it reminds us that Jesus, the Son of God, became one of us.

and he gets tired, he gets exhausted from his work of teaching and healing. And also, it reminds us that Jesus knows suffering by experience.

He is able to sympathise. He's not distant, remote, disconnected. our God knows because Jesus experienced suffering.

But this rest also reminds us that Jesus is in control. John's Gospel has Jesus saying a lot, talking a lot about his hour, his hour which had not come and then his hour which had come.

That hour that Jesus talked about was the time of his suffering and death before his resurrection and return to the glory of heaven. That was all his hour. Jesus knows this is not his time to die.

[ 25 : 01 ] No storm is going to get in the way of God's eternal plan to save sinners through the death of his own son on the cross. So there is comfort for us here.

The saviour that we cry to is a saviour that has been through storms. And a saviour that has power and love to keep you in yours.

And even more remarkable than that, Jesus, as we read on in the gospel, will face another storm, this time not with his disciples, but for his disciples.

There is one storm that Jesus goes through for his followers. and that is the storm that we see at the cross, the storm of God's eternal justice against sin, falling on Jesus.

Jesus is thrown into that storm. He throws himself into that storm, that one storm that could overwhelm us all. Jesus takes our sin, takes the just anger of God against that sin, and he comes through the other side.

[ 26 : 24 ] So that if your faith is in Jesus, that is the one storm that will never come your way.

there, when you look at the cross, you can know God loves me. God will not abandon me.

God is extending to me security for now and for eternity because Jesus defeated that storm.

Jesus entered that storm for you and for me to bring us peace. So in the storms of your life, cry out in faith to the storm defeating Jesus.

Tim Keller, the New York minister, puts it this way, if Jesus is Lord of the storm, then no matter what shape our world is in, or your life is in, you will find Jesus provides all the rest, all the power you could possibly want.

[ 27 : 44 ] So when it comes to this virus, when it comes to any other storm in our lives, we won't always know what he is doing. We won't always know why.

We won't always understand his timing, but we do not need to be overwhelmed by fear. we can trust in Jesus. We can cry out to him.

We can know that he will not abandon us. Ihy