

# Rocky Road: Trust & Walking on Water - Sunday 11th February 2024

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Date: 11 February 2024

Preacher: Kim Thomas

[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Thank you very much, Ruth. Good morning, everyone. Morning. For those of you who don't know me, apparently I am the lovely Kim. So, right, now, with greatest and utmost apologies, but I had to do this. San Nin Fai Lok. Is that all right? In case the rest of you are worrying, it's Happy New Year. San Nin Fai Lok. Anyway, you'll tell me how to say it properly later on. And Happy New Year, and may God bless you through the new year and in everything that we all do, that we all do. So, we are carrying on the series of Rocky Road, looking at the, it says, life lessons from Peter. And boy, do we need to learn some life lessons from Peter. So, that's what we're going to do. We're carrying on looking at the disciple Simon Peter. Now, the problem with doing this as a series is Simon Peter relates,

I mean, he certainly, I can relate to Simon Peter, and I'm sure many of you can. And what I had to do when I was preparing this was to remember that actually other people will be coming along after me, and they will be talking about Simon Peter as well. So, I don't want to steal all the thunder. And last week, we got off to a really good start because Dave kicked off for us. Brilliant sermon, brilliant talk, and he was looking at calling and response.

And he made one, he made lots of really, really good points in his most excellent sermon. But one that stuck with me was that Jesus asks us to work alongside people in his mission, in Jesus' mission, to restore people to life. And he made that point that Matt has made as well. Salvation saved from death for life. You know, Jesus says, I come to bring life in all its fullness. And that's for every one of us. And I wanted to start off with this really positive, positive thing that Jesus came to bring us life in all its fullness, all its goodness, and it's powerful. You know, there is power in the name of Jesus. Thank you. So, we heard last week about Peter being called by Jesus, Simon Peter, alongside some of the other disciples. And it made me think about an issue that is close, I think, to all of our hearts, is trust. Now, I know this is a dangerous thing to do because I know what you're all like. Once you get going, it's hard to stop you.

But I want you just to spend a few minutes thinking about who or what you put your trust in and why. And that's really important, the why as well as the who. So, who do you put your trust in and why?

And then think about it for a few seconds. If you're not the kind of person who likes to talk to people, don't. There is no compunction. There's no, you don't have to talk to it. If my son was here, he'd be going, oh no, mom, please don't make me talk to somebody. So, you know, you don't have to talk to anybody if you don't want to. But I do want you to think about this. Who or what do you put your trust in and why? So, I'll give you a countdown when it's time to come back together again. Go.

[ 3 : 43 ] Four, three, two, one. Back in the room. Excellent. Excellent. So, you know, trust is something I think has to be earned, doesn't it? We trust somebody because they've earned that trust. And not only do we trust people that we know, because I'm sure there's a lot of conversations there about people that you know and love that you've learned to trust, but we put our trust in people that we don't know as well. I get on an aeroplane, which I really hate doing because I really don't like flying, if I'm honest. And I lived in Australia, as many of you know, and I flew backwards and forwards so many times. I didn't care if I died. I just wanted to get there, you know. But I put my trust in the fact that the pilot who was flying the plane knew what he was doing. He'd had enough training and he had enough knowledge and expertise and understanding that if there was a problem on the way there, he would know how to deal with it or she. Because I had some really good women pilots. I loved it when a woman came on and said, I'll be flying you to Australia. And I think, yes. And so, I put my trust in airline pilots and doctors and people like that. And there's lots of people that we

put our trust in, isn't there? And there's lots of things that we put our trust in. I trust when I turn the key in my little old car that it'll go sometimes. Well, it hasn't let me down yet. So, we put our trust in lots of different things. But sometimes that leaves us vulnerable. It leaves us vulnerable to people betraying that trust. And I know probably all of us here have in some way had our trust betrayed.

I just want to tell you one thing about trust as well that, excuse me a minute. One thing about trust. When I was a police officer, I remember walking down the street one day and there was a little girl holding her mom's hand and she was creating something awful. And the mom turned to this little girl and said, see that police woman there? If you carry on being naughty like you are, then she's going to come and arrest you and take you to the police station and she's going to put you in the cell and you'll be there for a long time. And I went, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Because when something goes wrong, who is she going to trust? She's going to trust me. And I was the most trustworthy person that she could have asked help for. But that's the thing, isn't it? You know, we don't want to give people wrong ideas about trust as well as right ideas about trust. So trust can be broken, as we've said before. And the trust between friends is often very, very strong. Now, I don't know if any of you are Big Bang Theory fans. Yeah, but here's a clip.

Oh, hang on a minute. Can you stop that a minute? Matt, I've pressed it too early. Thank you. If you're a fan of the Big Bang Theory. Now, the Big Bang Theory is a comedy programme and it's about a group of geeks, basically, scientists, women and men. But the main focus is for men who are scientists and the relationships of the people around them. Now, the most annoying of these scientists is Sheldon. And Sheldon is really hard work. And Sheldon is the focus, really, of the Big Bang Theory. But Sheldon meets Amy, also a scientist. And Amy's a bit of a geek as well. And Sheldon never thought he'd get married. And Amy never thought she'd get married. And they fell in love. And they're getting married. So Amy wants to go and buy a wedding dress. So she takes two of her friends, Bernadette, who is a scientist, and Penny, who's not.

[ 7 : 35 ] She's a wannabe actress. But Penny knows how the world works. And Amy is, she's just like, Penny is her best friend in the whole wide world. So Bernadette and Penny are the two first people you'll see on the screen. And then in comes Amy trying on the wedding dresses. Right. Let's try.

Would you like some champagne? Oh, thank you. Thanks. Sure. This is nice. What, helping Amy find a dress or day drinking? It's just nice, okay?

What do you think? Amy, oh my God. You look so beautiful. I feel beautiful. And look, both clavicles. Take that, Mom. You know what they say. If you got them, flaunt them.

Is it possible that the very first dress is the dress? Don't be silly. You can't buy the first dress you try on. That'd be like marrying the first guy that you... You can't buy the first dress you try on.

Little finger sandwiches, too. This place is amazing. Interesting thing about finger sandwiches, you put enough of them together, you got a sandwich. Uh, guys, we have a problem.

[ 8 : 51 ] Are you okay? What's wrong? I look amazing in all of these dresses! Wow, look at your waist. Where have you been hiding that thing? Bernadette, stop. Penny, you say something nice now.

Boy, you know, when Sheldon sees you in that dress, he's gonna want to methodically take it off, fold it up, carefully place it in a storage box, label it, and then ravish you. Should I try on some more?

Are you having fun? Am I having fun being beautiful? Of course I am! All right, keep going. This is it. This is the one. Do you love it?

Do you? I do! Wow. Also, wow!

Well, that was a successful trip. Yes. Amy found a dress that she liked. She sure did.

[ 10 : 00 ] She found a dress that looked like... like it made her happy. She did look happy. I mean, her face was just glowing. Yeah, we should make sure the photographer knows to just really get in there.

Mm. So we agree it's awful? That dress should be set on fire. Should we say something?

No, we can't. Don't you think she brought us with her because she wants our honest opinion? No one wants that. I do. No. You don't. I don't want her to look back and think she made some awful mistake.

You mean like your dumb cookie monster tattoo? See? Was that fun? Someone's gonna say something. It should be us now instead of everyone at her wedding.

OK, but as long as we do it gently. And together. What about my dress? Don't you like it? I don't. It's beautiful.

[11:12] So that was... Thank you. That was a trust issue, wasn't it? You know, Amy trusted her two friends to tell her the truth about the dress.

But as Bernadette says, you know, no, you don't. When somebody says, should you tell everybody the truth? No, you don't want to hear the truth all the time. You don't want to hear the truth. And trusting someone is a difficult thing at times, isn't it?

It's a difficult thing. But what happened was that they decided to be truthful. And they wanted together, Penny and Bernadette wanted together to tell Amy about the dress.

Because they didn't want her presumably to look foolish or whatever for the wedding. And you can imagine how Amy must have felt. You know, with one friend saying, yes, it's beautiful.

The other saying, no, I didn't like it. And, you know, seeing what happened. Those two friends trusted each other to tell her the truth. That they didn't think it was great. But Bernadette threw Penny under the bus.

[12:21] So what happened? You know, what happened with Amy? How did Amy feel? Well, we'll see the next bit. I guess he was no longer allowed to set foot in...

Wow! You look beautiful. Really? Because I was going to return it.

Why would you return it? Well, you look like a pile of swans. I'm so glad you like it.

Because it's going to be my wedding dress. I can't wait to marry you. Why do you smell like smoke? I was in Vegas. Vegas? I'm sorry. Las Vegas. Las Vegas. So, all ended up well.

[13:29] And spoiler alert. If you decide you're going to watch the Big Bang Theory now, Amy does marry Sheldon in that dress. And it was fantastic. But when you put your trust in somebody, it really is a slippery slope.

Even when you put your trust in yourself. Trusting yourself is sometimes problems. Simon Peter, by the looks of things from last week's sermon, he wasn't really afraid of putting his trust in Jesus.

Because Jesus said, come and follow me. And so he did. And I'm sure he really didn't know what he was getting into. Jesus didn't really help the situation. Saying, I'm going to make you a fisher of people.

It doesn't say in the Bible that he explained what that meant. So, we don't know whether he did. But Peter went with him anyway. But Peter just couldn't have had a clue what that entailed.

He just went off, didn't he? He went off. He left everything. He took some of his family with him even. And went off and followed Jesus. So, the events opened up then in a journey of discovery for the disciples.

[14:33] And they all clearly didn't have a clue what they were going to do. And what Jesus was doing himself. Because as you read further on into the Gospels, it becomes quite clear that sometimes the disciples were completely clueless.

They didn't have a clue what was going on. But almost to the end, not quite to the end, they stuck with him. So, Jesus must have had something about him.

That those men could put their trust and their livelihood and everything in his hands. So, we're going to have a look now at this week's passage.

We finally get to this week's passage. And it's from Matthew 14. Immediately, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone.

[15:41] And the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. It's a ghost, they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them, Take courage, it is I.

Don't be afraid. Lord, if it's you, Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water. Come, he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, cried out, Lord, save me!

Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. You of little faith, he said. Why did you doubt?

[17:01] And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God.

So, there are a few things that I want to draw out from that passage. It's a well-known passage. If you've been going to church a while, then you will have heard many, many sermons on this passage.

And you might have thought, oh, no, we're going to hear that old chestnut again. But, do you know what? I always think that even if we've heard the story 100,000 times, there's always something that we can draw from it.

Because we're in a different place today than we were yesterday. In our circumstances, in our faith, in whatever's going on in our lives. Whether we're in a time of calm at the moment, or a time of storm.

So, there's a few things that I think that we could think about here. So, first of all, it starts off with Jesus going off on his own to pray.

[18:11] He goes off on his own to pray. And boy, has he had a busy time before that. Because he's just fed 5,000 people. Well, he hasn't. He's fed 5,000 men.

And then there were women and children as well. And he fed them out of such a small amount. In Jesus' hands, it became a bounteous feast.

But prior to that, prior to going to feed all these people, he'd just heard that John the Baptist had been killed. Now, John the Baptist was kin.

His mother Mary and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, were cousins or cousins-in-law or something. But John the Baptist was kin.

And Jesus knew that John the Baptist was the one who was sent to proclaim the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. So, after he'd fed 5,000 people, he went off on his own.

[19:11] He went back to reconnect with God the Father. He went back to spend a quiet time. He went back to renew his strength.

Those who renew their strength will rise up on wings like eagles, Scripture tells us. So, he went to renew his strength. He went to take a breath.

And do you know what? Sometimes in the storms of life, we forget to do that, don't we? We forget to stop and just take a breath. It doesn't have to be a very long breath. It just has to take us away from whatever the storm is and sit quietly and commune with the one who knows us, who knows our situation, who knows everything about us, who loves us more than anybody we know, the one we can trust.

And that's what Jesus did. He took himself away. He took himself away to renew his strength. So, he went off and he sent the disciples out in the boat.

Now, the disciples, as we know, were fishermen. They would be fine on a boat. And a storm blew up while they were out. And so, they were battling with the storm all night.

[20:33] And then it says in the account we just heard that it was the fourth watch of the night. So, that was like early hours. The fourth watch, there used to be three watches in Hebrew times.

But then the Romans came along and said, no, we'll make it more efficient. There'll be four watches of the night. So, the fourth watch of the night was between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. And it's important because it's the last watch of the night.

This is the watch where Jewish people would put everything right for the day ahead. They would come before God for the day ahead. And they would say, you know, give us the strength to get through this day.

And it was a time to establish the course of the day by speaking God's word. By speaking God's word into the fourth watch of the night.

Between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. I bet they were speaking a lot of prayers then. Because it said that there was a great storm. There was a great storm. And the disciples were fighting against this storm.

[21:35] And they must have been exhausted. They must have been exhausted on that boat. And then, what do they see? A figure coming across the water. Walking on the water.

And they were terrified. They weren't just afraid. They were terrified. And they cried out in fear. You know, was this the ghost of a drowned fisherman? Who's this coming on the water? And it says, and I know you love a bit of Greek, don't you?

You love a bit of Greek. So here it is. Euthios. Euthios. Immediately. It means, it doesn't mean straight away.

Or, you know, in a bit. It means immediately. In that time. Straight away. Euthios. It's absolute immediacy. Jesus comes to them.

[ 22 : 33 ] And he says, take courage. It's I. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. And he spoke in the storm to the terrified disciples. And he said, it was like he was saying, it is I.

Trust me. Believe in me. Trust. It's okay. Now, in Hebrew scripture, the sea was often portrayed as a place of torment and chaos.

And I should think in the middle of the storm, with a strange person walking towards you, they felt that very much. This torment and this chaos. And then, I wonder if they then remembered what Hebrew scripture said.

His wisdom is profound. His power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed? He moves mountains without their knowing it.

And overturns them in his anger. Oh, no. Wrong way. God overturns them in his anger. He shakes the earth from the place and makes its pillars tremble.

[ 23 : 40 ] This is all about the power, the might, and the strength of God. Thank you. And it says, he speaks to the sun and it does not shine. He seals off the light of the stars.

He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. This was written before Jesus was born.

This is the words of Job. The words of trust. I trust in God because he does this. He even walks on water, does God. And here is God walking on water.

Now, it raises one question to start with. What storms of life have you had or are you having where you need to hear the words of Jesus that say, Take courage.

Take courage. Do not fear. It is I. Don't be afraid. What's going on in your lives that you might need to hear that? What's happened in your life in the past that you need to remember that?

[ 24 : 50 ] Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid. This is the same God that Job put his trust in. If anybody had storms in life, it was Job.

But take courage. Do not be afraid. It is I. So, okay. Back to Peter. So, what he does next. Is that an example or is it a warning?

Is Peter an example or a warning? And I know that you've probably heard many, many sermons about Peter getting out of the boat. And there have been books written. I don't know if any of you have read. If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat.

Yeah? Few people have read that. It was doing the rounds in the 90s. And it was, you know, it really was about getting out of the boat.

Don't sit in the boat. Don't stay in the boat. Don't stay on the shore. And we need to step out in faith. But do you know what?

[ 25 : 55 ] My question was, as I read this passage, as I've been preparing for this talk, was, did Peter need to get out of the boat? Did he have to get out of the boat?

Or was this another example of Peter being impetuous? Because sometimes we think we have to get out of the boat. We think we have to leave the shore. We think we have to do this for God.

And actually, God hasn't told us to do it. You know? We're doing it because we think we have to. And we're not doing it because we think God's called us to do it.

And somebody told me very early on in my Christian journey was just because something is a good idea, it doesn't make it a God idea. So I don't know why Peter decided he would get out of the boat.

I don't know why he said to God, if it's you. He challenged Jesus, didn't he? If it's you, tell me to come out. And Jesus was like, okay, come out. You know?

[ 26 : 58 ] I don't know. Because the Bible doesn't tell us how he said things. But, you know, was Jesus telling Peter to come out of the boat?

Only once Peter had offered that challenge to him. If it's you, tell me to come out of the boat. So, okay, come out of the boat. So, as we know, Peter came out of the boat.

He walked out of, he got out of the boat in a storm. You could see in that film that he was holding on for dear life to that, to the boat.

So he got out of the boat. And as we know, he was fine to start with. And then he took his eyes off Jesus and he started to sink. So he called out to Jesus, help me. You know, help me.

And he did. Jesus did. He grabbed hold of his hand and he pulled him out of the water. He got in the boat and immediately the storm stopped.

[ 27 : 59 ] It was that same word again, immediately the storm stopped as soon as he got in the boat. So I wonder if Peter, in his impetuous act, thought, right, okay, I'm getting out of the boat.

I'm going to follow Jesus. I'm going to do what, you know, I'm going to show that I trust him. And got out of the boat. And all the time, as we've probably heard many times before, he had his eyes on Jesus.

He was okay. But the minute he took his eyes off Jesus, the minute he looked at the storm around him, very, very understandable thing to do. He started to sink. And then he panicked. And then he panicked.

And he called out to Jesus and must have put his hand out to him. And Jesus put his hand out to Peter as well. And he lifted him up and stopped him from drowning.

Stopped him from drowning. I wonder when Peter thought about that. I wonder if he thought, how on earth did I get into that situation? How come I've got here again?

[ 29 : 06 ] And I wonder if you think that sometimes. I do. You know, I am quite an impetuous person. And I'll see a need and I'll go, I'll do that.

I'll do that. I don't think about whether, A, I can do it, B, whether I should do it, or C, whether I've got the capability, and D, most importantly, whether I've got the time to do it.

That's always the last thing, actually, and it should always be the last thing. Because if it's what God is asking you to do, you'll find the time to do it. But I get myself, and I'm in the middle of a situation.

I think, how did I get myself into this again? Did I learn nothing from the past? Nothing from what I've done before? But do you know what?

I think Peter was putting his utmost trust in Jesus. He called out to him and held his hand out, and we can do the same.

[ 30 : 08 ] But do you know what? I also know that when we put our hand out for Jesus, he will hold our hands, but the storm might not stop. We won't die, but the storm might not stop.

We won't drown in the situation, but the storm might not stop. But what we do know is Jesus will be holding our hands in that time, just like he did with Peter.

Impetuous, wonderful, lovely Peter, who trusted Jesus so much, who gave everything.

He just poured out everything, didn't he, of himself. And I don't think he was either foolish or foolhardy. I think he really trusted Jesus.

And just like we saw in the Big Bang Theory clip, we trust those around us because they've earned our trust. We trust those around us because we want them to tell us the truth.

[ 31 : 12 ] And the one who is the most trustworthy of all is Jesus. And I think Peter knew that. I think Peter knew that. He couldn't get himself out of that mess of his own making. But in his compassion and his love, Jesus held his hand and pulled him out.

Stopped him from being overwhelmed by all that was around him. So I'll finish up now with a few thoughts.

A few thoughts. Let's see if my technology wizardry will work. And if it doesn't, it doesn't matter. Oh, no, it doesn't work. This was all supposed to swoop in nicely at various things.

But I've obviously pressed the wrong button. So acting on impulse is not always the guy with the light thing. Acting on impulse is not always a bad thing.

But we have to ask ourselves, why are we doing this? What's our motive? Is it a good idea or is it a God idea? And you can always go with the God ideas.

[ 32 : 17 ] There's nothing wrong with the good ideas as long as you make sure that God is with you in whatever you're going to do. What's our motive? So acting on impulse does not make us superheroes, the ones in the top corner.

We are not superheroes. Jesus is our superhero. If the kids were here, I don't know whether they know that song. But we used to sing it all the time when I was in church.

Jesus is our superhero. And they loved it. And he is. Jesus is the superhero, not us. So the bottom is a picture of a storm.

And life is full of storms, isn't it? Life is full of storms. We've all got storms. Every life has got storms. Trusting somebody is a risky business.

The person with the heart and your trusted friend. Trusting somebody is a tricky business. But use wisdom, love and the guidance of the Holy Spirit with those you know and those you trust.

[ 33 : 22 ] Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom. And the picture of Jesus in the middle. Pray for wisdom to know when to stay in the boat and when to get out. We're not called to a safe life.

But we also need to discern the voice of God. And that's really important. And sometimes that voice of God will come in places where we didn't expect them.

In the voice of a trusted friend. Or a trusted somebody we trust. That voice might come from God. In the voice.

When I was called to ordination. And I struggled against it. So much. Struggled against it. And I said to God.

If you want me to be ordained. If you want me to go and work in the Church of England and be a priest. You have to tell other people. To tell me. This was after six years of struggling.

[ 34 : 25 ] And in that week. Five people told me. That God wanted me. To work in the Church. As a vicar. And I nearly crashed the car.

In the last one. Because I'm driving along with my mum. Who loved God. But didn't really. She didn't go to church. She didn't talk about him very much. She just loved God.

And she knew that he was there. And her faith was a very private and personal thing. But we grew up knowing. That you know. God was there. And he loved us. And we need to ask him for help.

When we get into trouble. And I'm driving along. And all of a sudden. She turns to me. And she said. You know what Kim. God wants you to be a vicar. And I went. Like this. She'd never said anything like that before.

But I trusted her. And she obviously. Was hearing from the Lord. God. And. So you know. The rest as I say. Is history. Sometimes.

[ 35 : 26 ] God's calling will come. From. Somewhere. Where we haven't got. A clue. But it. Might be through. A trusted friend. So if you're going to be impetuous.

Ask God first. Ask God. In your impetuosity. Whether or not. It's what he wants you to do. Whether it's a good idea. Or a God idea. And. But.

Even if you get yourselves. Into a situation. You think. How did I get here again? Know that God is there with you. Jesus will hold your hand. Jesus. Will be with you.

Always. Amen. Let's pray. Shall we? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 36 : 21 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Do the things you want us to do. The people you want us to be. So come Holy Spirit. Come and speak into our hearts now.

Give us wisdom. Understanding and faith. Holy Spirit come. Come and show us how we are loved. Come and show us that through our characteristics. Whether we are impulsive or considered. Or frightened. Or cautious.

[ 37 : 17 ] Whoever we are. Whatever we bring with us. We know that you will hold us in your loving hands. Father we trust you.

And I pray that this week we will know to trust and love you more than we have ever done. For we know we are in the hands of our Lord and Saviour Jesus.

So in his name we send our prayer. Amen.