

# Peter's Wish and Jesus' Command

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn together to the chapter that we read in Matthew chapter 14. I'm reading again at verse 22, page 989, verse 22.

Immediately, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

When evening came, he was there alone. The boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them, walking on the sea.

But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and said, It is a ghost. And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.

And Peter said to him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. Jesus said, Come. So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. Beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me.

[ 1 : 19 ] Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God.

Amen. Amen. This time of year, lots of visitors come to Stornoway. And you often see them wandering about the streets, streets that you and I know so well.

And as they do so, they're walking a lot more slowly than we're walking. Sometimes a bit annoying when you're trying to get past them. And they're talking to one another and they're pointing and they're asking questions.

And they're discussing and wondering. Sometimes they'll stop you and say, By the way, are you from here? Do you know anything about this building that we're looking at right now?

And it's very embarrassing when you don't know anything about the building and they're more interested than you are. And they've probably read about it and you haven't. We are people from here. The fact is that familiarity breeds contempt.

[ 2 : 32 ] Not always contempt, but it's certainly you lose your edge if you are familiar with something. You lose that sense of the unexpected or the unknown.

The interest is often lost because we're so used to something. And the same is true, I believe, with the gospel. Most of us have read this chapter, I don't know how many dozen, maybe hundreds of times.

And you're possibly even thinking, We've heard all this before. If that's the case, there's something wrong. Because the Word of God is always the Word of God.

And if we've begun to lose that sense of wonder about what's happening, that amazement as to what's happening, then we need to get on our knees and we need to ask the Lord to restore to us that sense of freshness once again.

We're living in a world where there is the most incredible ignorance of the gospel.

[ 3 : 43 ] Where there are many people who have not read this before. And I would love to think that like these tourists that you get so often, so commonly now, that they would be looking at this for the very first time.

And for them it's perhaps an incredibly difficult job to try and get their heads around what's happening. There are all kinds of questions.

I would love to give someone a Bible who has never read the Bible before. And this is probably one of the passages that I would recommend that they read if they've never read it before.

And I would love to see them opening up at this passage, reading through it. I would love to watch their face. Because I would imagine that there would be this confusion.

There would be frowns as all the questions arise. And trying to get your head around what's happening here. Who are the disciples?

[ 4 : 48 ] Where was this lake? What were all these people doing? And did Jesus really feed them? 5,000 people from five loaves and two fishes.

And I guess the first and foremost question that anyone who is logically thinking about this and asking it, reading it for the first time, is this? Is this true?

That's where you start. Because if it's not, it's either true or it's not. If it's not true, then we might as well just relegate the Bible to every other piece of literature you might have on your bookshelf.

There's no difference. There are plenty. There are thousands of books in which fables appear. Wonderful fables.

Traditional stories that go back hundreds of years of the most fantastic accounts given of the most fantastic. And we all know that they're not true. They're there to make a point.

[ 5 : 54 ] To tell a story. Probably to convey some kind of moral meaning. But we all know that they're not true. But what about this?

Is it true or is it not? Did Jesus actually put his foot on the Sea of Galilee and walk on top of the water to his disciples or did he not?

That's the first challenge that anyone is faced with reading this for the first time. Because if the answer is no, then there's nothing more to be said.

We're wasting our time here this evening. There are sadly ministers all over the world who will read a passage like this and the first thing they'll say is, Of course this is not true.

This never really happened. We're not silly enough to believe that something like this could have happened. It's impossible. What we have to see in a thing like this is the meaning behind it.

[ 7 : 06 ] What it tells us. It's rather like looking at a painting. It doesn't matter whether the painting actually happened or not. Whether it's a real scene. What matters is how you read it.

How you interpret it. That's the same here. It doesn't matter, they say, whether it happened or not. Of course we don't. We know it didn't happen. What matters is the good, the meaning that we get out of a passage like this.

I think that the tremendous tragedy in the Christian church over the last couple of hundred years has been those who go out to preach the gospel and yet they don't know what the gospel is because they have no confidence in what has happened.

In God coming into the world in the person of Jesus Christ and carrying out the most incredible miracles. And the reason that we believe is because they are incredible.

They're impossible. That's what makes a miracle a miracle. Something which is impossible. That runs contrary to the norms of nature.

[ 8 : 12 ] I remember hearing a long time ago about a minister who was many years in the same congregation. And every time he started his sermon, if there was a passage in the Bible that he didn't believe, he would just tell his congregation, of course this didn't happen.

Then another passage he'd say, well of course this didn't happen. And then another passage next Sunday, of course this didn't happen. He would go on and on and on like this for years and years and years. And then after many years he went to this home, the home of a woman in his congregation, an elderly woman in his congregation.

And he said to her, I would like to read the Bible with you. Do you have a Bible? So the woman went to the shelf and she got this Bible out, but it was about that thin.

He opened it and there were only about a few pages in it. And he said, this is not a real Bible. He says, there's something happened to it.

It's damaged. And she said to him, well, every Sunday, when you would say in the pulpit that this is not true, I just went home and tore the page out. And that's what's left.

[ 9 : 25 ] That's what happens when you deny the truth of God's word. That's why you end up asking the question, well, where do you draw the line?

What can you believe and what don't you believe? What is true and what's not true? Is anything true in the Bible if you're not going to believe that God is the God of the impossible?

And that's why we believe it tonight. What is so strange about the Son of God himself coming into this world and being able by his own power and authority to do what he wants with anything that he

wants?

This is the God who spoke the universe into being by the word of his power. Is anything too hard for God? If God wants to change the chemical properties of water in order to serve him, in order so that he puts his foot on it and it bears his weight, so be it.

That's not difficult for the Lord at all. If you want to explain it scientifically, of course it's not normal. But who made what is normal, normal?

[10:39] God did. If he wants to change that, that's up to him. And by so doing, he showed and demonstrated his own power and authority.

And you look at the miracles. Jesus doesn't do a miracle at random. He is able to do miracles as a sign of who he was.

And so if you're a person tonight that is, perhaps you might even never have read this passage before. Who knows in a church like this there may be someone who's never read this before for whom this is a new thing.

Or maybe it's ages since you've read it. You're coming back with a fresh mind. Maybe you've reached a point in your life where you're saying, well, maybe I should take a fresh look into the gospel, into the Bible.

And I come to it in a different way. Well, I really hope that that's true for you tonight. And I hope you're looking at it with fresh vision, asking the right questions. Is this true?

[11:39] If Jesus is the Son of God, then of course it's true. But then once you get to that stage, you begin to read the passage in an entirely different light. Because you begin to understand that these things happened in a particular context.

And the context, for one thing, is the way in which the Christian life is full of different experiences. Because what Jesus was demonstrating in this passage, and all the way through his ministry towards those who followed him, was what it meant to follow Jesus.

That's why the Gospels are so important. Because they give us a picture of what it means to follow Jesus and to live the Christian life. And if there's one thing true about this passage, it's how varied it is.

You do not know what's around the corner. Look at what's happening in this passage. After the death of John the Baptist, Jesus withdrew by himself in grief.

Because John, of course, was his cousin. And the most outrageous thing had happened to him. He had been beheaded by Herod. That's what it means to live in this world. And anybody that thinks that Jesus is not familiar with our sorrows, is just not reading the Gospels right.

[13:03] He was. He withdrew to a certain place by himself. His disciples followed him, but so did crowds of other people. They sat down and they listened to him for hour after hour after hour.

There was no preacher like Jesus Christ. You couldn't get enough of him. If they had watches, they would never have been looking at their watches. Because they wanted to hear more and more and more.

He opened up God to them in a way that they had never seen before. That's what Jesus does. You see, when you think about God, you're thinking about God with your own interpretation of what you think God is.

You've made up your mind already. And it's, let me guess, a negative interpretation. You've written them off. But then when you come to the Gospels again, you get a fresh understanding of the reality and the truth of God.

And this is what these people got for the first time. They probably had been totally put off God because they had, because of all the corruption that there was in formal religion at that time.

[14:13] But now this man was different. He spoke with authority. He spoke simply in parables. Helping them to understand. Showing them how to be right with God.

And that's what it's all about. It's not just that there is a God. God, the fact that there is a God is not really good news to me at all. Unless I can be right with God.

And so a Christian is not somebody who just believes that there is a God. A Christian is someone who has met with God through Jesus Christ. That's what it's all about. In order to meet with the Lord, you have the separation that comes between us and God has to be taken away.

That's why Jesus came into the world. And it was only by his death he had to die in order for what separated us from him to be taken away. So that we could be reconciled.

That's what the Bible is all about. And I hope that you are reading it. And if you've never read it in that light before, don't ever read the Bible just as a routine. As an empty routine.

[ 15 : 20 ] Thinking that somehow or other this is your duty. Ask the Lord to show you himself. To open your eyes so that you may see the marvelous, marvelous truth of the gospel in Jesus Christ.

You know, if you do that, I believe you'll answer. Asking you tonight to take a fresh look at God's word. And what you find is, in a chapter like this, is how, like I said before, how varied the Christian life is.

It must have been absolutely marvelous for the disciples and for all those crowds of people to be sitting with Jesus. It just doesn't get better. It was like a taste of heaven. Jesus was heaven come down to earth.

And this was them in heaven. How could you not want to follow him after listening to him for such a long time? But of course, the day was now getting on.

And they were beginning to get hungry. And there were 5,000 people. And there were no shops. And it was late. And if there had been shops, the shops would have shut. And they were in a desert place in any case.

[ 16 : 31 ] And what were they going to do? You know the story. I don't want to spend too much time on that story. You know, of course, of how the young boy had five loaves and two fish. And how he brought them to Jesus.

And how Jesus had thanked God for them. And he had blessed them. And then the distribution began. One by one, each disciple coming back to the Lord.

Receiving the loaves and the fishes as he multiplied them. And as the production went on and on and on. It must have taken hours.

And the disciples must have been absolutely exhausted by the end of it. But this was something really amazing, wasn't it? But I don't believe the disciples were complaining at all.

Because for them, like I say, it was God and his people. God amongst his people. Which, of course, was what the Old Testament was all about. It's what the Bible is all about in any case.

[ 17 : 34 ] But here's what I'm coming to. However pleasant it was for them to be there. It wasn't going to last. Because Jesus had a different experience for them.

And it wasn't going to be easy. See, that's the Christian life. There are peaks and there are troughs. They had been on the peak. And now they were about to descend into the trough.

Jesus made them get into the boat. That's what it says. He made his disciples get into the boat. And the word in the original language is like he forced them.

Like he hurried them into the boat. John tells us the reason why. Because they wanted to make him king. After seeing the kind of power that he had. Jesus could not allow them to continue to think that way.

So he hurried them into the boat. And there as they made their way from one side of the lake of Galilee to the other. The most enormous storm descended upon them. To the point where they were absolutely terrified.

[ 18 : 37 ] And probably wondering at the same time. Here the son of God around whom we stood and sat and listened all day. Whose teaching we could not get enough of.

Who fed us with the loaves and the fishes. And demonstrated who he was. He has now left us alone to die on the lake of Galilee.

How much sense can we make out of this? The darkness had fallen on them. The waves were coming into the boat. And they were in great danger. That's what it says.

They were terrified. They were terrified. What a contrast. To what they had just enjoyed.

Beside the lake of Galilee. With Jesus. And it was then. That they saw something.

[ 19 : 36 ] Wasn't very clear at first. They looked out over the lake. And there they saw. The silhouette of Jesus. The faint silhouette of Jesus. Coming towards them.

Walking on the water. It was a vision. That simply did not make sense. And what doesn't make sense to us. Frightens us. How much of our fear. Derives.

From situations that don't make sense to us. That we can't. Figure out what they are. And we feel that we're not in control. Of the situation. That's the way that the disciples felt.

That they weren't in control. Of what was happening. And who was this figure? They thought it was a ghost. Why? Because it's impossible. For anyone to walk on water. They didn't know who it was.

And I often use this.

When I'm speaking to someone. Who is. Struggling. With what to make. Of the Christian faith. Because.

[ 20 : 34 ] If. If. If you're in that position this evening. And you're trying to find God. You're reading the Bible. And to you.

The more you read of the Bible. It's a dark. And a mysterious. And an undefined. Book. And you just can't understand it.

That's the way that Jesus. Very often appears at first sight. And a. A dozen other voices. Come in at the same time. And they. Tell you to give up.

Not to read anymore. That's just all a load of rubbish anyway. Just go and find your happiness. Somewhere else. But don't you listen to those voices. Ask God.

To show himself to you. In the person. Of Jesus Christ. God in his own time. As you read. And as you listen. And as you speak about.

[ 21 : 31 ] Your own questions. As to what. Jesus did. In coming into the world. God will make himself clear.

I believe. By his own power. I really believe that. And it was at that moment. That moment of darkness. And fear.

That. Jesus spoke. And that was the transforming moment. That was the moment. When everything fell into place. And I believe that there is a moment.

In the life of a person. Who's seeking God. When things do fall into place. May not be now. God in his own time. God in his own time. Has that moment. When. When things.

When things become clear to us. And that was what. Happened on this. But look at what made it clear. It was the word of Jesus. The word is the all important.

[ 22 : 30 ] Paul says. Faith comes by hearing. It tells us that the gospel is. When we receive. God's word. You see. Normally.

We think of. Being right with God. As what we can do. To be right with God. That's not the way it is at all. Being right with God. As we hear.

God speaking to us. And faith is when we receive. God's word. And listen to what God. Is saying to us. Faith comes by hearing. And hearing.

Through the word. Of Jesus. Acts chapter 19. And verse 5. When they heard this. They were baptized. Acts chapter 18. And verse 8. Christmas.

The ruler of the synagogue. And many of the Corinthians. Hearing Paul. They believed. And they were baptized. Hearing. So I want to ask you tonight. To please keep coming to church. Please keep reading your Bible.

[ 23 : 25 ] And if you're confused. Don't throw the Bible away. Then come in your confusion. And keep coming. And ask God. That he will continue. To open up your heart. And to make his mind known to you.

To open your eyes. And your understanding. And I believe. That he will do that. Are you doing that this evening? It's too important. To put away. How can knowing God.

Not be important. How can it be a low. Low priority. Surely it's got to be. Your greatest priority. I hope it is. You carry on. Seek the Lord. While he may be found.

Call upon him. While he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way. That's what the Old Testament tells us. And tonight. The Lord is speaking to us. And inviting us.

To a greater. And a clearer. Knowledge of himself. Yet there was something else. There was one more thing. When Peter saw.

[ 24 : 24 ] And heard. That it was Jesus. Something was stirred within him. I'm not sure if I can understand. Fully what it was. There was a longing.

Deep within his heart. To take another step. And so he said. When he saw it was Jesus. He said. Lord. If it is you. Command me. To come to you.

On the water. It was like as if. He's not content. To be in the boat. He has to be. Exactly where Jesus is. And there was something. That was. Compelling Peter.

To take a step. Of faith. In which. He depended. Completely. And entirely. And entirely. Upon Jesus. But in order to do that.

He has to get out. Of his boat. Now that's what the step of faith is. That's what it means to.

[ 25 : 24 ] After you've heard Jesus. When you're convinced. That Jesus is the way. And the truth. And the life. That he was sent by God. To die for our sins.

To take that step. That depends entirely. Upon God's power. But it means leaving.  
The security. Of what we're used to. And what we're accustomed to. Means leaving the old life  
behind. Have you taken that step of faith.  
In which you lay hold upon Jesus. And say. Even if you say. Lord. I believe. Help. My unbelief.  
Because whatever there's true faith.  
There's always a measure. Of unbelief. Don't wait until your faith is perfect. It will never be. It's not  
perfect faith. That God is looking for. It is faith that rests.  
[ 26 : 32 ] In Jesus Christ. As God's son. His death on the cross. And I wonder. If I'm speaking to  
anyone tonight.

And you can relate. Exactly to what I'm saying. You've heard God's voice. You've recognized  
Jesus. In the storm. You know you need to take.  
That one step. I was going to say. That one last step. It's not a last step at all. It's only the  
beginning. Because faith. Is not just taking one step. With Jesus. It's beginning.  
To take steps. Because every step. You take. As a Christian. Is a further step. Of faith. In which  
you're following. Jesus. Not knowing. What he has in store.  
For you. That's the way it was. With the disciples. Who knows. What they were going to meet with.  
In an hour's time. Who knows. What we're going to meet with. In an hour's time. The life of faith.  
[ 27 : 29 ] Is a life. Of trust. And dependence. Upon God. Alone. In which you're saying. Yes Lord. I  
want you. I want the new life.

That you can give me. I need your mercy. I know I don't deserve it. I know that I only deserve. Your  
punishment. Forever. Because of my life.  
And my sin. And I need you. In my heart. That's what the step is. But by so doing. You're turning  
your back. That's what God.  
Asks you to do tonight. To turn your back. On a sinful life. On the old life. The Bible talks about. The  
Christian life. As being. The new life. The new birth. And the new birth.  
Happens as we listen to God. And as we respond. To him. I wonder if you're thinking tonight. I can't  
take that step. Because.  
[ 28 : 26 ] I don't have enough. Faith. Faith. Neither did Peter. I wonder if you're saying tonight.

My faith. It's just so shaky. It seems to be strong one day. And weak the next. Same with Peter.  
If you're saying. I am so aware. Of the faults. In my life. Well. Peter had plenty of faults. So do the  
rest of the disciples.  
I heard a man at the assembly today. A very experienced Christian. And he's about to plant. A  
church. In Govan. Govan. Because Govan.  
Is the place where he was brought up. And he was speaking at the assembly. He was very moving.  
He was talking about. How he really believed. That this was the mind of God.  
[ 29 : 24 ] God was drawing him. Into planting a church in Govan. And he says. You must think.  
That I have very strong faith. He says. I wake up early every morning.

And I'm afraid. Sometimes. My faith. Is strong. And sometimes. I'm afraid.  
That's the way it is. In the Christian life. You might look at other Christians. And you think. Oh.  
That's what a Christian is. And I have to wait until I. I'm like that person.  
Before I can possibly take a step. Of faith. You let them be what they are. You don't know. What's  
going on in their heart.  
But Jesus talks about faith. Like a grain of mustard seed. He talks about the tininess. Of faith.  
Because what he's looking for. Is where your faith is placed.  
[ 30 : 23 ] That's what's important. And Peter blew it. Having taken that step of faith. And everything.

Having looked so promising. Him having walked straight. Step by step. To Jesus. What next  
happened. He saw the wind.  
And the waves. And he went straight. Under the water. He blew it. Whatever confidence he had. At  
the beginning. Was lost. Whatever focus he had.  
At the beginning. Was gone. Everything. Everything. Was gone. But here's what happened. And  
here's what happened.  
Happens when our trust in Jesus fails. As it will do. Mine has. On many occasions. He cried out to  
the Lord.  
[ 31 : 19 ] And Jesus stretched out his hand. And pulled him back up to the surface. Once again.  
That's what the Christian life is. It's not a life of perfect strength.

Of continuous. Unblemished strength. It's a life. Of continuous. Events.  
In which the Lord leads us. Day by day. Sometimes we're on the crest of the wave. And other times  
we're down in the depths. Wondering why the Lord has allowed us to sink.  
Into this place. And yet the one thing is for sure. God has promised never to leave us. And never to  
forsake us. And it was when. The disciples.  
Were in such danger. And such darkness. That the Lord came to them. Nothing stopped it. Even.  
The water itself. Was never going to be a barrier. And it's the same today.  
[ 32 : 24 ] The love that Jesus has for his people. Is a love that will not let them go. A love that we  
can depend on. And rely on. And from which nothing.  
Can separate us. Let's pray. Father in heaven. We pray that. You will bless your word to us.  
Once again. We thank you for it. We want to surrender ourselves to it. We want to know you. We  
want to. We want to be led by you. And we pray that. If there's anybody here tonight.  
Who. Who doesn't yet know you. That even. As we've read your word. And spoken about it. That  
your spirit will take them. And press home. The Lord Jesus to them.  
In such a way that they will. Be compelled to trust in him. For we ask in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
[ 33 : 33 ] Amen. Amen. Fuck. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.