

# Learning to Trust Jesus

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let's turn together now to Matthew 14, and tonight we're looking at this incident recorded for us from verse 22 through to verse 26. Verse 33, in total, we're only going to look at part of it this evening. The incident of, as it's called there, Jesus walking on the water. But that really raises the question, as we're looking at this incident again in the life of Simon Peter, as we're following his life as recorded for us in the Gospels particularly, what is the main point to the incident? When you're studying your Bible, you always try and look for what you would regard as the main point of the passage you're dealing with. What is the main point in this passage?

Is it verse 25, for example, that remarkable reference to Jesus coming out to them at sea, walking on the sea? You might say that's a remarkable point. Of course it is. Is that the main point? Is that why the translation here has this heading, Jesus walks on the water? Is that why we so often think about that as being the main aspect of the passage? Well, it's not. Is it then Peter stepping out of the boat and walking on the water to come to Jesus? Is that the main point?

Is that really what the passage is getting at? Is that what it's leading to? Well, it's not that either. The main point of the passage is actually verse 33 and the confession that you find in verse 33.

Truly, you are the Son of God. The passage is not so much about Peter, though he features largely in it. It's about the Lord, of course, and who he is, and what his significance is here in the experience of the disciples and in the experience of Peter especially. And you need to come to the passage looking at these steps that lead to that conclusion, including the question that he put to them, as you have it in verse 31, where he put to Peter, rather, or you of little faith, why did you doubt? And it's through that question that leads directly onto the confession of 33 that you come to see how the passage is presenting us with Jesus and with his significance through all the detail that you find in that passage this evening.

So we're looking at this passage this evening and looking at it under the title of Learning to Trust in Jesus. We're following the experiences of Simon Peter as he came more and more to know the Lord and to know what it was to follow the Lord as a disciple.

[ 2 : 5 2 ] We find that here he's being taught what it is to trust in Jesus. And we're going to have to take that over two studies because there's just too much packed into it to try and squeeze it into one study. So we'll look tonight at the first point we're going to look at in the passage, which is the struggle of the disciples against the gale that was raging at this time.

The struggle against the gale, that takes us down to verse 27. I think, God willing, next week we'll look at the second part of the passage, which is more specifically to do with Peter looking at the sinking and saving of Peter.

And they're both the struggle against the gale and the sinking and the saving of Peter. They're both aspects of learning to trust in Jesus.

Again, the question, or you of little doubt, little faith, why did you doubt? One point just in passing before we come to look at the struggle against the gale in more detail, it's that you see here the remarkable emphasis on the power of Jesus, the person of Jesus, and the action of Jesus in the passage.

That reminds you of something that's consistently the case throughout the whole Bible. And it is this, that the great acts of God are directed towards the benefit of his people.

[ 4 : 2 4 ] Even of individuals such as Peter in this passage, the great acts of God, the great acts of God as demonstrated by Jesus having mastery over the creation, and showing that mastery over the creation, they are all directed, these great acts of God throughout the Scriptures, towards the benefit, the help, and even the particular needs of individuals like you and I.

That's a remarkable thing in itself, that the great acts of God throughout history are designed and purposed by him to impinge upon individual human beings in their need.

The struggle against the gale. Four points we're going to look at on that. First of all, that Jesus arranged this.

It's interesting, isn't it, as you come to how Jesus responded to the death of John the Baptist, as he heard about that. Then you have the incident of feeding the 5,000.

And then, in verse 22, immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side. Immediately, Jesus did this.

[ 5 : 43 ] The passage is really demonstrating for us and saying quite categorically, this is what Jesus actually arranged. This is Jesus himself who arranged this episode on the sea.

Everything that happens in these verses from verse 22 onwards, including what happened with the wind being against them, including what happened in Jesus' personal experience, it's all been arranged by Jesus.

He actually made them get into the boat. He constrained them to get into the boat. He knew what was ahead of them. He knew that he would demonstrate his own power for their benefit.

And so he actually ushers them in or constrains them. He made them, he compelled them to get into this boat. This wasn't something accidental. This wasn't something that happened that Jesus had to then catch up with.

This wasn't an event that he hadn't anticipated in order that he might then somehow bring his own power to bear upon it. This was something that he arranged.

[ 6 : 46 ] That's the Savior you need. That's the kind of Savior we need tonight. That's the kind of Savior that we worship, this Jesus. That's the kind of Savior your trust is in when you've come to trust and place yourself in his hands.

It's one who already has planned your life. It's one who has already all things in his own mind and purpose about you, so that whatever incidents take place in your life, they are not outside of the plan of Jesus for you.

There's something that he has already purposed. There are things which, in regard to all these events and the way they relate to each other, it's one who has charge of your life, complete control of your life, complete mastery over the details of your life, over the great events, over the tiny details.

Jesus made them get into the boat. Jesus has charge over the whole event. Let me just take you to Psalm 139.

If you turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 139, just to try and bulk out that point a wee bit from that Psalm. May I say, just in passing, it's one of the gratifying things, looking around this congregation that I see you with.

[ 8 : 09 ] Your Bibles open. From the time that the passage is given out, the Bibles are open. That's an indication that you're ready to give your mind to the teaching of the Word, that you're ready to actually take from the Word and follow in the Word what the preacher is trying to set out for you.

And that's itself a characteristic, surely, of a congregation like yourself that values the Word, that values following the teaching of the Word as it's brought to you.

So Psalm 139, verses 1 to 6. We're just very quickly summarizing it because you know it well, I'm sure, in any case. Psalm 139, verses 1 to 6.

They're about the Lord knowing all about David. The knowledge of the Lord as it sifts through even the very thoughts of his mind and the words that he's going to speak before he's spoken them.

And then you come to verses 7 to 12 where the emphasis changes to God being in every space, in every part of his own created universe.

[ 9 : 17 ] Where shall I go from your spirit? Where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you're there. If I make my bed in shoal or the grave, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning, dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, your hand shall lead me.

And all the way through there to the end of verse 12, there is no hiding place from God. Even the darkness is just like bright daylight to him. And then he comes in verses 13 to 15.

And you notice how he's really bringing things more closely into relevance to his own life as a person, as an individual. Verses 13 to 15, he speaks about, In other words, here is David saying, not only, Lord, do you know everything, and are you found everywhere in the universe, but in the process of my being created, my being formed in the womb, you were there.

You were in charge of that. You were the one who formed me. I am your creature. But he goes even further to say, In your book, there were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.

What is David saying there? He's saying, The days of my life, the course of my life, the whole history of my life, the whole span of my life.

[11:04] It's not an accidental arrangement day by day, that somehow or other I myself bring about, David is saying, In your book, these days were formed for me.

You're the one who arranged them. You're the one who planned it. It's your purpose that behind every single one of these days, and every single moment of these days, my whole life, he means, is actually formed by you, Lord.

And then he comes, really in many ways, to one of the wonderful climaxes of the psalm. How precious to me are your thoughts, O Lord.

How vast is the sum of them. The thoughts of God are really David's way of saying, Your mind, O Lord, your plan for me.

Everything that's inside, all of your thoughts, and your thoughtfulness of me, how precious that is to me. And that's the theology of Matthew chapter 14, as Jesus made the disciples get into the boat, and go before him to the other side.

[12:11] That's the teaching, really, theologically and spiritually, that you find, packed into that, what seems to us, first of all, to be just a reference to something ordinary.

And then you begin to look into it, and you find, actually, this is what it's saying. This is the theology of it, that God has planned every day and every detail of the life of his people.

the thoughts of this Jesus, as he makes the disciples get into the boat. It's God's plan, God's purpose, the things that he has in mind and his thoughts for all who come to follow him as disciples. Now, isn't that the Savior that you, indeed, need, that you worship, that you commend to others? Isn't that the Savior that fits with our needs as human beings?

You don't want a Savior that is able to deal with certain aspects of your life, but will actually fail when it comes to other parts of it. It doesn't matter whether you look at his person as the Son of God, whether you look at his being the God-man, where his humanity is joined to his deity.

[13:35] It doesn't matter whether you look to his knowledge as God. It doesn't matter whether you look to his experience as a human being, as that is bonded to, wonderfully to his God-ed.

This is the Savior that you and I need. And this is the Savior that God has provided for us.

And so, that question that comes up so often in our study of the Bible, that challenge that comes to me and to yourself tonight, who is in charge of your life?

Who are you willing to have charge of your life? Is your discipleship, as we're looking at Peter as a disciple, is your discipleship, is your Christianity, is my Christianity, the one that says, I am happy that Jesus is in charge of my life.

I'm happy that I've committed my life over to Jesus. I'm satisfied that this is the best possible thing for me, that I am ruled by the will of Christ, that my life is shaped and molded by his will, by his purpose, by his authority.

[14:51] Jesus arranged it. Secondly, Jesus saw their struggle. I'm going to ask you to turn over to Mark's gospel as well for a couple of references.

Mark chapter 6, where you have the same incident recorded for us there, but slightly different details, which is always interesting, as you bring the composite picture of these three gospels, and indeed John's gospel on this as well, as you bring that together.

So it's Mark chapter 6, and you look at verse 48, and verse 48 there says, when evening came, verse 47, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land, and he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.

He saw that they were making headway very painfully. In other words, they were not making much headway at all. It's interesting, too, that Jesus was actually praying at this time.

He was there alone. They had departed. They had gone out to sea. They were quite far out to sea by this stage, but what was he doing? He was praying. And we're not told specifically, but we assume, and we have good warrant in Scripture to assume, that he was remembering them in that prayer as much as anything else.

[16:14] He was praying, obviously, in response to the death of John the Baptist. He was praying in regard to his own ministry, but he would also be including, surely, these disciples out at sea.

And that, too, is a point in passing that's very important for us. We're dealing with it in passing, not because it's not important, or unimportant, or of little importance. It has huge importance.

Because while we're toiling through some of the issues of life, as disciples of Jesus, they may be toiling and struggling through many things in their experience in this life.

What is Jesus doing? Is he mindful of them? Is he seeing them? Yes. What else is he doing? He's praying for them. He's interceding for them.

All the time, this is going on in heaven for God's people, whatever their circumstances are. In their times of comfort, so that they'll hold their comfort without being untrue to God.

[17:17] In their times of crisis, so they'll draw their strength from Jesus. He is interceding for them. Never forget, in all your difficulties, in all your trials, whenever the wind is contrary against you, in the experiences of this life, you have one who's constantly remembering you.

As you're following him, as your trust is in him, he is praying as they are struggling against the wind. But they are toiling, and they're toiling against the wind.

It doesn't seem that it was really a storm as such. We're not told that it was a storm as we are on other occasions, but there was certainly a raging gale. You might say, well, there's a raging gale, there's a storm, but there was certainly a very strong wind coming across the waves and whipping up the waves.

And as they were rowing to the other side, they were having to row against that wind. And as they were trying to make progress against the wind, they were really, really toiling and struggling, as you can imagine, and weren't really making much progress at all.

And he saw them there. His eye was upon them. He saw them in that very situation.

[18:33] He knew exactly what they were going through. And that's how it is, friends, with our life's struggles as well. There's nobody here tonight that doesn't have some struggle or other.

You may have a struggle with yourself. And I may have a struggle myself tonight with my own sin, with my own tendency.

We have struggles against certain habits that we have in our individual case. Maybe different one from the other, but we all have certain habits and propensities like that in our life that we struggle against, especially when we know if they are habits that God is not pleased with.

We have struggles in terms of relationships, our homes, our places of work. We have struggles with addictions.

Some people struggle daily against addictions of different kinds. all kinds of struggles, even here in our own human experience.

[19:44] I was speaking to someone recently who has a problem of that kind. And as he was speaking to me, one of the things he said was somebody had said to him some days before that, only you can beat this.

And he said, well, I believe that, he said. And he wanted some confirmation, I think, that this was really true, that he alone could beat this, only he could beat this.

I said to him, no, you can't. That's quite wrong. You'll never beat this on your own. You will never beat this. You can only do it in the strength of Jesus.

You can only do it by the power, the energy that comes from Jesus into your life. That doesn't mean you may not have struggles even after you've come to know Jesus. These are disciples.

These are disciples that Jesus is teaching. And Jesus uses the struggles in the life of his disciples to teach them further what it is to trust in Jesus. And through the struggles that we have, we have to recognize this great fact that Christ is never neglectful of his people.

[21:03] Christ never forgets them. Christ never turns his back on them. Christ never gives them the kind of attention that is only just partial or unsuited to their needs at any specific time.

It's not the kind of savior he is. he saw their struggle and he sees your struggles and he sees my struggles. And whatever that struggle is tonight, be persuaded of this, that as you trust in Christ, you're in the best place.

You have the best master. You have the best control of your life when your life is handed over to him. And you'll find that despite the struggles, he'll never be untrue to himself.

And he'll never leave you to be tempted above what you are able in his strength to meet. So he arranged it. He saw their struggle.

And then thirdly, he went out to them. And that's where you see Jesus, the creator. Remember again in Psalm 147, at the beginning of Psalm 147, we have, among many of the other Psalms that

are similar to this, we have, praise the Lord, it is good to sing praises to our God, he builds up Jerusalem, he heals the brokenhearted, and then you come to, he determines the number of the stars, he gives to all of them their name, great is our Lord, and abundant in power.

[ 22 : 41 ] And on each side of that, you have these references to God gathering together the outcasts of Israel, healing the brokenhearted, binding up their wounds, he lifts up the humble in verse 6, casts the wicked to the ground.

What is that saying to us? The same as you find in Jesus coming across the sea to these disciples, that, yes, he is the transcendent God who presides over the powers of the creation, whose creation this is under his mastery, of course, he can come walking on the sea.

You don't find surprise, surely, in reading that about Jesus. He created in the beginning, he set its bounds, why should it be a surprise that the creator of the sea can walk on it?

and he walks across the sea to these people. So the point is, yes, he's the transcendent savior. He is the creator who has that power and mastery as creator over the creation, but what's he doing? He's walking out to them. He's using his power and authority as creator. The transcendent God, remember, is also your friend.

[ 24 : 00 ] And that transcendence and glory and splendor and greatness of Jesus as God never let it interfere with the fact that he is a friend of sinners, that he uses his power and his glory and his authority to go out to them, to go out to these struggling disciples.

He went out to them in the fourth watch of the night. This is about something like four in the morning or five in the morning. And he goes out specifically towards them.

And that's the Lord again that you need. Yes, the Lord who you know is God, who you worship as God, whose greatness exceeds our capacity to begin to even understand the fringes of that greatness.

And yet, who comes across the waters and providence, whatever they are in your case tonight, and comes right out to you, and comes alongside you, and comes into your circumstances, and understands them.

and wants you to know that he understands them, and take comfort from the fact. Not only that, but in Mark again, we read something else that's quite remarkable.

[ 25 : 38 ] He made as if he would go past them. If you read again in chapter 6 of Mark, the same passage, when he went out to them walking on the sea, he made to go past them.

He meant to pass by them is the way it's translated there in verse 48 of Mark, Mark passage. But it's best to think something translated that he made as if he would go beyond them or would go past them.

And you find a similar thing in Luke chapter 24 and verse 28, when he came to these two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and when they came to the place where they were going to be for the night, he made as if he would go further.

But they constrained him and said, abide with us, remain with us tonight for the day is far spent.

And so he went in and he stayed with them that night and obviously divulged to them so much then that they benefited from.

What is this saying to us? What is the theology in that for us tonight? Well, it's this something like this, that God, here is Jesus, coming across the sea, to the disciples, using his great power and authority to go right out to them in their need, in their struggles.

[ 26 : 55 ] And he made as if he would go past them so that they would be taught that trusting in Jesus means that you need to actually let him know and confess that you need him.

You actually put, if you like, a halt to what you think he's going to do, what he is saying that he himself intends to do, if you like, to bypass you or to go past you or to leave you where you are, you say, no, Lord, please stay with me.

Doesn't it put a shudder through you tonight that tonight may be the last time that Jesus draws near to you in the gospel?

And if you feel in your heart tonight that the last thing you'd want is for Jesus to go past you, for the Lord to make his way beyond you and leave you where you are, well, he's saying, the reason I'm making you feel like this is so that you can cry out after me and appeal to me, Lord, please don't leave me where I am.

Take me with you or come in with me because I need you and I need you as much as ever. He went out towards them, he went to where they were and as he went out there he meant to go past

them just to stir them to the possibility that he might be passing by them altogether.

[ 28 : 41 ] There they are still with the gale against them and the last thing they want is for Jesus to go beyond them and to go out of sight. And that's the last thing you want, isn't it, in your life?

You don't want the Lord to go past you. So you cry out to him and say, Lord, I need you.

I need you with me. I need you in the boat with me. When I'm struggling with the issues that I have in my life, stay beside me.

Give me your strength. And they were terrified because they thought initially that this was a ghost. You can just imagine what this would be like. An entirely new situation for them to face at four o'clock in the morning and they're struggling against the wind and not making much progress and they see this figure coming across the sea, something they've never seen before, and no wonder they ask or think to themselves, this must be a ghost because human beings don't actually walk on water.

They were terrified. That's what it says. They were terrified, greatly afraid. And that's how it is, isn't it, for if it's not terrified, certainly there's a sense of fear for ourselves over something new, something new beginning in our lives, something we're asked to do, something that's different to the normal.

[ 30 : 18 ] We feel comfortable with what we're familiar with, but sometimes the Lord will take us into unfamiliar territory, not just as individuals, but perhaps sometimes for a congregation as well, as we need to follow the Lord and follow his guidance and follow his spirit.

We feel afraid as we try and step out in faith. It doesn't mean just because you're placing your trust in Jesus that you won't have a sense of fear, a sense of lacking security, and the sense of security you had is maybe something that you're afraid of losing if you step out and become more public, for example, in following Jesus.

You're quite comfortable as you are. You feel secure just as you are. You feel secure that you're with the Lord's people, that you privately trust in him, and yet you know in your heart of hearts that he wants more of you.

And so you have that fear of the unfamiliar. But don't let that stop you. Don't let that put you off.

We'll come to more of that, God willing, next time.

As Peter stepped out of the boat. Well, what could be more unfamiliar to Peter than stepping out onto the sea? But he did it. He did it on the basis of Christ's word, come.

[ 31 : 41 ] And when it's Christ's word that draws you or gives you the encouragement, it makes all the difference, doesn't it? And so he's saying here, they're saying, it's a ghost.

ghost, but immediately Jesus says, take heart, be encouraged. It is I, do not be afraid.

A couple of thoughts in relation to that before we finish. Take heart, it is I. And these words, it is I, are really the basis of the other words, take heart.

Why are they to be encouraged? What is it that gives them not to be afraid anymore? What is it that gives them the sense of being able to put their fear aside?

Well, it's this, it is I. And it reminds you of the great words that God gave to Moses when Moses asked, if I go back to the people of Israel, they ask, what is your name?

[ 32 : 42 ] What shall I tell them? Tell them that I am has sent you. I am that I am. The great, one of the great names that God has given to himself.

And it's here built into the very words of Jesus, don't be afraid, it is I. It's myself.

You're not mistaken, it's myself, it is I. They're learning to trust in him and learning to trust in him, they're learning more about his person and his character and his power and who he is.

And the more you learn about who he is, that's why the theology of the Bible is so important, the more you learn about who he is, the more you place your confidence and trust in him and you put your life in his hands.

Now remember, the wind is still howling, it's still blowing a gale as you read about this. They're saying it's a ghost, they're still struggling against the wind and the wind hasn't gone down.

[ 33 : 54 ] And as Jesus has come across that sea whipped up by the wind and made his way without difficulty against the gale towards the disciples and faces them having said it's a ghost and looking at their terror, he says, take heart, it is I, don't be afraid and the wind is still howling.

Doesn't that say something to you as well? Sometimes Jesus will not take away the gales in life immediately.

The wind is still howling but there's a difference. He is now there himself and that's what encourages the disciples. The wind may howl but with Jesus there the situation has changed. He's there, it is I. Whatever it is tonight that you're struggling with, whatever wind you're trying to make progress against in your life, whatever you're up against in terms of progressing your life as a disciple, if Jesus is there, in a sense it doesn't matter.

When he's there, everything is well with our souls. I need thy presence every passing hour.

[ 35 : 30 ] What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power? Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be through cloud and sunshine?

Lord, abide with me. Let's pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks for your commitment to your people in all our circumstances.

We thank you for the privilege of following you as disciples. We pray that tonight any who may not yet be followers of you as disciples will come to put their trust in you on the basis of what your word assures us of in regard to yourself.

Lord, help us, we pray, to put our life into your hands, to be secure in the person of Jesus himself.

We pray your blessing, Lord, for each of us as we once again come to learn from your word aspects of your own greatness.

We pray that this may constrain us to be at peace with your will and to be persuaded that what you have in your plan for us is devised in your wisdom.

[ 36 : 52 ] Be with us, we pray, in this week ahead, and in all of these things we ask for your guidance and presence with us, and all for your glory's sake we pray. Amen. Let's conclude our worship this evening singing in Psalm 93, the whole of Psalm 93, and that's on page 123, singing to the tune Bethesda, Psalm 93, on page 123, these five verses in conclusion, the Lord is king, his throne endures majestic in its height, the Lord is robed in majesty, and armed with strength and might.

And the Psalm, of course, includes these words, the seas, O Lord, have lifted up, they lifted up their voice, the seas have lifted up their waves, and made a mighty noise, the Lord enthroned on high, is strong, more powerful is he, than thunder of the ocean's waves, or breakers of the sea.

Let's sing the whole Psalm in conclusion to the tune Bethesda. Amen. The Lord is king, his throne and judge, majestic in his height, the Lord is rocked in majesty, and armed with strength and might. the world is pounded, firm and shore, removed it cannot be, your God is strong, and you are God, of all eternity.

The seas, O Lord, have lifted up, they lifted up their voice, the seas, have lifted up their waves, and made a mighty noise, the Lord enthroned on highest strong, more power is he, than banner of the ocean's waves, are papers of the sea, sea.

[ 40 : 25 ] Your royal statutes, Lord, stand firm, unchanging is your word, and holiness adores your house for endless days, O Lord.

I'll go to this side door this evening just now. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you.