

Encouragement & Faith in a Storm

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Date: 20 April 2008

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[0:00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew chapter 14. I'm not going to read the verses again, but it's really that section from verse 22, where we find that Jesus made the disciples go into a boat and go before him to the other side.

He was intending to come later while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, we read in verse 23, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.

But if we follow it through, we find that the disciples are there in the boat, and it's getting very difficult because the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night, that's about between three and six in the morning, Jesus came to them walking on the sea, and so on.

And I want us just to think about that amazing incident in the life of Jesus. Now, one of the things that we all like to do, particularly after holidays, is to tell our friends what we've done, some of the fun places we've been, some of the exciting things that we may have seen.

We always like to tell people, I did this, I did that, I went here, I went there. And we like to hear it from others, some of the things that they did as well.

[1:27] But I'm sure that not just the young people here, but I am absolutely persuaded that even to the oldest person in here, that no one ever managed to do exactly what Peter did.

Can you imagine the story that Peter had to tell about the day when he walked on the water? It's quite extraordinary, because the one thing you and I know that we can't do, I'm sure we would, many times we would say, I would love to be able to walk on the water.

I'd love to be able to run out there and tap on a boat and say, hey, it's me. But you know you can't. Because the one thing we just cannot do, we cannot walk on the water.

But Peter did. And what a story he had to tell people. And of course, the way that Peter walked on the water was he walked by faith.

Now, faith, of course, is the most important thing for all of us to have. Faith in Jesus Christ. And that's what Peter had. Peter had faith in Jesus.

[2:37] And it was because of that faith in Jesus that he was able to walk on the water. To have faith means to trust.

To trust yourself. To trust your life. To trust your all to Jesus. And I hope that not just the young people here, but that everybody will do that with their life.

Because you've got to trust somebody. You're either trusting yourself, or you're trusting other people, or you're trusting something. But everybody, whether they know it or not, is putting their trust in something or somebody.

Well, many people just trust themselves. But your life, your all. For instance, supposing somehow you got stuck on one of these great sea cliffs that you find maybe over in Uig or in Ness.

Or if you're out at the far end of Carlyway between maybe Dalbeck and Dalmore or down in that direction there. These great sea cliffs. Supposing for some reason you decided to climb down and you got stuck.

[3 : 48] And somebody came with a rope to pull you up. You would want to know, wouldn't you, who was at the other end of the rope. If you knew that the person at the other end of the rope was somebody who didn't have very good concentration.

In other words, they're the kind of person who might pull for a wee bit and then if they saw something else they would let go of the rope and go away to look at something else. You would say to yourself, I don't want that kind of person at the end of the rope.

Or again, if it was somebody who was very weak. Might be somebody who was very nice but very weak. And for a wee while they're able to pull you but then their strength gives out.

But Peter knew as he walked to Jesus that Jesus was the wisest, most powerful, the most loving person in the whole universe.

And if you knew at the top of that rope when somebody was pulling you that their person up there was a person who loved you, who cared for you, who was as strong as an ox.

[4 : 59] You would say to yourself, well I feel fine about this. Even although you may be scared about where you are. You know that you are in the hands of somebody who loves you, cares for you and is all powerful.

And our Jesus is far more powerful than any person in this world. He is the almighty one.

He is the one who is all power. He is the one who is all wise. He is the one who is all loving. And that is why, when you think about it, we should all put our lives, put our everything into the hand of the Lord Jesus.

Now, on the night in question here, we have the disciples setting sail on their own to cross over to the other side. And Jesus, we read about that, had just fed the thousands with five loaves and two fish.

And he sent the disciples away in the boat. And then he dismissed the crowds. After he fed them, he didn't send them away until first of all he had fed them.

[6 : 07] And then he sent them on their way back home. While he himself went up into a mountain or onto a mountain to pray. Because Jesus needed time to be alone with his father.

Jesus had an incredibly busy lifestyle. There was always somebody wanting him. He was always doing something.

He was always here, always there. And people were always asking this and asking that and needing this and needing that. And Jesus needed time to be alone.

Alone with his father. Alone to pray. And you know, we need that time as well. Now, don't get me wrong. It's very important to make what we would call the little small prayers.

Where maybe when you're going to school or you've reached school or you've got something to do and you're needing help. You're worried about something or about somebody. And lots of times in life, we speak to the Lord just in a very quick way.

[7 : 17] We're asking the Lord to help us. We're asking the Lord to forgive us. We're asking the Lord to teach us. We're asking the Lord to make us strong. In lots of different situations.

Just like these wee prayers. That's so important. But we also need time to draw aside. And spend time with the Lord. Just so that there's just the two of us in prayer.

The Lord and ourselves. Here we are. It's one to one. Nobody else around. That is so important. And here is Jesus Christ.

The son of God. And if Jesus needed this time to be alone with his father. He's teaching us the importance that we also need time to be alone with the father.

Because Jesus never did anything in this world without asking his father first. He was doing everything. Everything he did.

[8 : 14] He did according to his father's will. And so that is really what Jesus is teaching us. The importance of depending upon our father in heaven.

Upon looking to him. So that he will teach us. He will shine his light upon us. And show us the way to go. Now far too often.

We think. That we are in control of our lives. And that we can sort things out ourselves. That we are the ones who kind of.

That we call the shots in life. But that's not true. And very often what we find ourselves. That it's when troubles come. When difficulties come. That we go back to the Lord.

And the Lord is showing us. No. You're not in control. But you see. One of the problems that all of us have in here. Within our heart. Within our mind.

[9 : 11] Within what we are. Is that we're sinners. Now that's a word maybe that some people don't like. But it's a word the Bible tells us. This is what we are. We're sinners. And one of the things that sin does.

Sin wants us to keep. Wants to keep us away. From God. And what God has given to us. Like church. Like his word.

The Bible. Like prayer. These things. These are the things God has given us. So that we may come to know him more and more. But sin.

It wants to keep us away from these things. Because. Within each one of us. Whether we realize it or not. We are drawn to sin.

Because we're sinners. We've described it. Maybe if I remember. Possibly. As. Probably as good a description of it. It is. We have.

[10 : 10] In our own house. An incredible amount of different types of. Sports balls. We have a bin. An old. Not one of the wheelie bins. But a round bin. Full of footballs.

There's a rugby ball. There are several tennis balls. There's a couple of squash balls. There's about 40 golf balls. There's basketballs. There's basketballs. There's.

Even an American football. There's a shiny ball. You name it. All different kinds. And all these balls are different in different ways. Some are very bouncy.

Like basketballs. Some of the balls that you. That you have. They're a different shape. A funny kind of shape. Like a rugby ball. But there's one ball.

And I don't know if you can call it a ball. That we don't have. And that is a bowling ball. Or what we would term. If you're going for a game of bowls. Some of you. I don't know if any of you have ever tried bowls.

[11 : 06] But down by the pavilion there. Down at Bayhead. You will often see people. Mainly in an evening. Playing bowls. Now. Bowls is quite an interesting game.

And a different game. Because it's a. And I don't know if you call the actual bowl. A ball. Or what it's termed. But in this.

It's a heavy ball. We'll call it a ball. The bowl. It's heavy. Not all to get. It's nearly round. But it's roundish. But the funny thing about it.

You play it by. Rolling it along the ground. Now you may say to yourself. Well. If I'm going to roll this. And the purpose of the game is. That there's a wee white ball.

Called a jack. Jack. And you put that white ball. Away down at the end of the green. And the idea is. To get your bowls. As close. To this wee white jack.

[12:04] As possible. Now you may say to yourself. Supposing you've never played bowls. Before you get the ball. And you say. I must roll this. As straight as possible. In order. To hit this wee white ball.

Well. If you did that. You would miss. By miles. Because if you try to put it straight. It would go way over there. And you would say to yourself. What on earth has happened there? And you would try it again.

And it would go away over there. Or it might go over there. The reason is. That the bowl. I don't know how they work it. But it has what is called. A bias.

It is weighted in a particular way. So that the only way you can do it. Is by curving it. And those who are good at bowls. Are able to curve it. In a way.

So that it comes back in. And it will reach. That wee white ball. That's what we are like. Towards sin.

[13:00] There's a bias in us. That is bringing us. All the time. We cannot go by ourselves. We can't go through life straight. We might want to.

But we can't. Because there's a bias. That is taking us all the time. In this direction. Towards sin. Because we're sinners. That's the way we're going.

There's the straight line. There's the route to heaven. And where are we going? We're going this way. Because of sin. And we can't.

Deal with it ourselves. If we could. There was no reason for Jesus. To come into this world. That's why Jesus came. Jesus came to break that bias. He came to deliver us from that bias.

Towards sin. And to help us. To go on this right route. To go on this straight road. In order that we may follow him. So that he will.

[13:57] Eventually take us. To be. In heaven with himself. So that is why. The Lord Jesus Christ. Came into this world. So we need his help.

We need his strength. We need his strength. And that is why you and I need to be. Like Jesus was doing there. Teaching us the importance of prayer. We have to depend upon Jesus.

And trust in Jesus. And rest in Jesus. Every single day. Anyway. As Jesus was praying up the mountain. The disciples are making their way.

Across the water. And it's a wild night. There's a real gale blowing. And they're struggling. And they've got to remember. That some of them were experienced seamen.

Some of them were fishermen. But they were really struggling. But whatever difficulties they had. And it was taking them a long time. Because here they are. Somewhere between three o'clock in the morning.

[14:56] And six o'clock in the morning. That's the fourth watch of the night. Sometime around then. In the darkness. And there's the wind. Is whistling. And roaring.

And the waves are crashing. And thundering against the boat. And it's up and down. And up and down. And then they peer out into the darkness. And they see something.

That their eyes just do not believe. They're seeing this shadowy form. Walking on the water to them. And it's a passion.

Well. As we said earlier. Nobody can walk on the water. And so they cry out. Here are these men. Grown men. And they start screaming.

Like youngsters. Screaming. But with fright and terror. And they're shouting. It's a ghost. When you were wee. And I'm sure.

[15:58] If you were ever in places. Where there are no street lights. It's different. Like here in town. Where there are street lights. In the dark. But you know. When you sometimes. Will go to parts.

Supposing you go around. The castle grounds. Supposing you went. You were at the. The far side of the castle grounds. In the winter time. And it got dark. Before you could get back. And it's a windy night.

There's no lights. And you see all the branches. Of the trees there. And they're creaking. And they're groaning. And your mind. Begins to play games.

And you begin to see monsters. And dragons. And ghosts. And all these things. And I'm telling you that. Because I used to see these things. When I was wee. Because that's the way it is.

That's the way. Our mind works. And for a moment. Probably the disciples thought. Our minds are playing tricks on us. And then they realized.

[16:55] No. There is actually somebody coming. And so that's why they. They cry out in terror. And as they peered into the darkness. Here is this somebody.

Coming ever closer to them. As we said. They scream. Out in fright. But out of the darkness. A voice comes. And this is the voice of Jesus.

There couldn't have been. A more beautiful. Wonderful voice. That they could have ever hoped. To have heard. Than the voice of Jesus. And Jesus is saying to them. Don't be afraid. It is I.

These wonderful words. Take heart. It is I. Be not afraid. And see these words of Jesus. They are amongst the most comforting words.

That any person could hear. And you know. I would like young people. And I hope you do. And I know you do. You learn little bits of the Bible. This is a verse I would love you to learn.

[17:58] Where Jesus is saying. Take heart. It is I. Be not afraid. These are some of the most personally comforting words.

In the whole Bible. And there is many a time. When people have been. In darkness. Not just the darkness. Of the night. But darkness.

In their mind. Or darkness. In their soul. And these words. Have come. The words of Jesus. It is I. Be not afraid.

Be of good cheer. It is I. Take heart. I would love you to learn these words. And take them. To your heart. And Peter. Of course. Being Peter. When he heard.

The voice. And he heard the words of Jesus. Peter. Of course. His love for Jesus. Was such. That he didn't want to wait. For Jesus. To come to the boat. He wanted to go straight over the side.

[18:56] And to meet Jesus. And it is here we see Peter's great faith. Because Peter was a fisherman. Peter spent his life at sea. And if there was any person who knew you couldn't walk on the water.

It was Peter. But his love for Jesus. His desire. To get to Jesus. Was so great. He says. Jesus. If this is you. Command me. To come.

Over the side. And come to the water. To walk on the water. To meet you. Lord. If it is you. Command me. To come. To you. On the water. And you see.

The great faith of Peter here. Peter knew. That the power. Of Jesus. Was such. That if Jesus. Commanded it. Peter.

Would be able to walk on the water. That was great faith. And just as Jesus. Spoke. A personal word of comfort. To the disciples.

[19 : 51] Saying it is I. So Jesus. Here is speaking. A personal. Word of command. To Peter. Come. My dear friends.

Jesus. Speaks these. Personal. Words. To us. There were other people. In the boat. But it was only Peter. Who got that personal word.

Come. And the Lord. Is speaking. A personal. Word. To you. Today. Long ago.

I shouldn't say long ago. It still happens. People get loads of letters. But we don't get nearly so many letters now. With the days of messaging. And emails. And texting. And all that. But.

It used to be. Very. Common. To get letters. Because as I say. These things have. Often. Replaced letters. Now. I remember. When I was younger. I always used to like.

[20 : 49] When somebody. Would write me. A letter. But the letter. Or even a postcard. Was always personal. It was. For you. Now.

I didn't grow up. Here. I used to come here. Always on my holidays. And to Carl. But I grew up. In another island. And we had a postie. There. Who was different.

To any other postie. I know loads of posties. But this postie. Was different. Because he was. And it wasn't because he was a postie. It's just. The way he was.

He was the nosiest. Passion. I think I have ever met. We used to call him. 20 questions. Because whenever. He met you. He would ask you. And it was.

It was the same. With everybody. He would ask you. What you had for breakfast. What you were going to do. After school. What. Who your favorite teacher was. Why. All the rest. Always asking.

[21 : 42] And when he delivered. The letters. He always. He didn't just put them through. He always wanted to speak to people. He must have taken ages. Doing the rounds. But he would ring the bell. And hand you the letters. But you know what. And I.

This is what I could never forget. He would hand you the letter. Or letters. And. I remember this happening one time. When. I was still quite young.

And you know how you get a. A postmark. Where. Wherever it comes from. They. They put a stamp on it. So that you can see the date. And see where it's come from. And. He handed it. And he said.

There's a letter from you here. And I can see it. It's from London. I wonder who's writing to you from London. Do you recognize. A handwriting. And I remember another time.

Him handing over a postcard. And he told me who the postcard was from. And what they were saying on it. I've never forgotten that. And I remember even though I was young.

[22 : 36] I was a bit annoyed. Because I said. Well. This is for me. If I want to tell you what's on it. That's all right. But this is for me. Well. You know. This is what the Lord is doing.

He is giving to us. A personal message. Now the beauty of it is. We can take that message. And share it with other people. But today. Even although.

There's loads of people here. The Lord is speaking directly to you. It's as if there is nobody else here. But you. You and the Lord.

And just as the Lord spoke to Peter. And he said to Peter. Come. He gave Peter the ability to come. There was power in that word.

Saying come. And that's what I want you. Not just the young people here. But all people. Is to say to the Lord. Lord. I today am seeing this word.

[23 : 38] And hearing this word. Saying come. Please. Give me the faith. Just like Peter had that faith. To come to Jesus. And to believe in Jesus.

And to trust in Jesus. Help me. In my soul. To hear personally. The word. Of Jesus Christ. Because if we hear that word.

Personally. In our heart. Our soul. Will. Live. Will you today. Ask Jesus.

To be your savior. Do you know. Though Peter had a wonderful story to tell. If Jesus became your Lord and savior today. You would even have a greater story to tell.

Wouldn't it be wonderful. If you were able to say to people. You know. I heard Jesus today. Speaking to me. In his word.

[24 : 37] His word. Spoke into my heart. And I have come to believe in him. And to trust him. As my Lord. And. My savior. Let us pray.

Oh Lord. Our God. We. We pray thy blessing on us. And ask to. Help us to believe in Jesus. With all our heart. We pray that we might hear this personal word.

Coming into our own soul. We pray that we may hear the word of Jesus. Commanding. And we pray that we might believe in Jesus.

And trust in Jesus. And follow him. With all our heart. Bless us all here together. And do us good. And bless our time together. And as we go to the hall.

Lord. We ask that thy blessing may be upon us there. And we ask that thou will part us. With thy blessing. And uphold us. And keep us. And take us all to our homes. Eventually safely.

[25 : 36] In Jesus name we ask all. Amen.