

Jesus said "Come"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 May 2024

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Again, our worship now, we're singing, first of all, today in Psalm 100, in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 100, on page 362 of the Psalm books.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell. Come ye before him and rejoice.

We're singing to the tune, Old 100, that's on page 362, All People That On Earth Do Dwell. If you're able to stand, please stand. If not, don't worry about that. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

And the Lord with cheerful voice. Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell.

Come ye before him and rejoice.

[1 : 20] Oh, that the Lord is God in thee. With our glory, he dare not speak.

We are his hope, he doth us be. And for his sheep, he doth us take.

Oh, enter them his case with grace.

Have cross with joyous force unto you. Praise God and bless his name always.

For it is simply so to you. For by the Lord our God is good.

[2 : 48] His mercy is forever true. His truth at all times firmly stood.

And shall come to his treasure. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Now we're going to pray especially for the children and for the Sunday school just now. Let's join together in prayer. Almighty God, we thank you today that we can gather of all ages and all families to gather here with each other to worship the Lord.

And we thank you for these great words that you have given us to sing that we have finished singing in your presence when you call upon all people to praise and to magnify the Lord.

And we thank you for reminding us of your goodness. For we receive from your goodness each day we live those things which make our life so blessed.

[4 : 00] Bless the children we pray today as they come together in this way. We thank you for them. And we thank you for every family, for every child who belongs to this congregation. We pray for them today, Lord, as they learn more from your word.

And we pray that these words that you have given us in the Bible may be impressed upon their hearts. That they may grow up to value and treasure them and live by them. And we ask today that you bless those who teach them.

And we pray that you bless them too in their time of helping out with the Sunday school and Bible class. And we thank you for other offers of service that have come in the past few weeks to help with that work.

We pray, O Lord, that you would continue to bless us and our young people. Hear us now, we pray, and go before us into what remains of the service, pardoning our many sins and receiving us graciously for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Anybody know what these are? Maybe you can't see them from away in the back, but maybe near the front you can see them.

[5 : 04] Anybody know what they are? What are they? Party rings? They're party rings. Why have I got party rings today? I'm not going to eat them here in the pulpit.

I'd love to, but I'm not going to eat them. I'm using them today because they are actually Roscoe's favorite treat. Okay.

I haven't had a Roscoe story for a while, and probably this might be the last Roscoe story I'll have while I'm here as your minister. So this is Roscoe's favorite treat. He gets other treats as well, the ones that have meat flavor, pork flavor, bacon flavor, and he'll eat them.

But these are his favorite, and he'll go for these before he will go for the other ones that you can buy in the shops as well. These are really just, of course, biscuits.

But his favorite treat is party rings, and that really reminded me of how important it is to have Jesus as our favorite. Because we'll have many other people suggested to us as the most important people in our lives, and maybe even other people that we would follow instead of Jesus, and trust instead of Jesus.

[6 : 19] But just like Roscoe prefers the party rings to any other treat, so we have to believe and trust in Jesus as the best person there is.

He should be the favorite of each one of us here, whether we're young, middle-aged, or old. And he has to be number one.

He says in his word that we have to place him number one in our lives. There are so many people in our lives that are important, really important.

Our parents are important, our grandparents are important, people in the church are important. Maybe for some people even the ministers are important. But number one, Jesus.

Always Jesus. The second thing about party rings, I actually looked up just to see what they were made of. And when I Googled them, of course it came up on Google.

[7 : 22] Maybe I should just have looked at the packet, but I didn't. But I noticed there's so many ingredients that go into the party rings biscuits. There's, for example, flour, sugar, two types of oil, salt, bicarbonate of soda.

There are a few other things I didn't have enough room to list on my notes. But there's a lot of stuff goes into them. And there wasn't anything there that seemed to be bad for you, except perhaps too much sugar.

But these are the ingredients that go into each of these party rings. So each of these party rings has all of these ingredients in them. And again, that reminded me of something important, that there are so many things that go into our salvation that God has given us in Jesus.

For example, there's God's own love providing us with that salvation. That's gone into providing salvation from our sins for us.

There's also God's own power that changes our lives. There's God's forgiveness where he forgives our sins, and where he covers them so that we're no longer held as guilty in his presence.

[8 : 33] And there's other things from our side. In salvation, we use and exercise faith. God enables us to believe in him. We love the Lord.

We have repentance, confession of sin. All the things really that make up a Christian life are part of what goes towards our enjoyment of the salvation that God has given.

So all of these ingredients that made up these party rings, each one of those party rings has all these ingredients. And everybody who comes to know the Lord as their Savior knows each of these things about God, having gone towards making salvation possible for them.

Now, you can see from these two, something else that makes them different. What is it? Something that makes them different. They've all got the same ingredients in them, same stuff that's gone into making them, but they don't look the same.

There's one thing especially that distinguishes them. What is it? Well, it's the colors. And one is white, one is yellow. There are also pink ones. Various colors in a packet of party rings.

[9 : 44] And that reminded me of something else that's important. We are all different in many ways. Even as children, we don't have the same likes. We don't have the same personalities.

We all behave differently. We all have different likes of food, for example. And we all have different preferences in life. But for Christians, although we're all different in many ways from our background, from what we prefer to have in our life, we are all the same in that we all trust in Jesus, that Jesus is the Savior of each one who comes to him and follows him.

So although we're all different today, I'm sure if I asked all the children here what their preferences were in life, they'd all come up with something different. But I hope they would all say, but we are all the same in this way, in this way, that we all want Jesus as our Savior, that we all need him and want to worship him as our Savior.

So, next time you have party rings, try and think of how the Roscoe's favorite, how Jesus should be our favorite, how though they have many, many ingredients in them, they all form the same.

Each and every biscuit is the same. And how although there's different colors and they're different in that way, they're actually the same. Each one of them is a party ring.

[11 : 14] Okay, so let's now say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. That's great. I could hear all the children saying the Lord's Prayer there, which is wonderful.

We're going to sing again. Psalm 62 this time on page 80. Page 80, Psalm 62, verses 5 to 10. Sorry, verses 5 to 12.

And the tune is Heron Gate. Find rest, my soul, in God alone. In him my hope is ever sure. My safety, fortress, sheltering rock.

[12 : 13] In him alone I am secure. Verses 5 to 12. To God's praise. verse 6 to 12.

I settle for thee, in Lord's Prayer. I am not alone, in name I hope is ever sure.

My safety fortress kept in all, in name alone I am secure.

My honor and salvation rest, on God my God and mighty Lord.

O people, trust in Him always, to Him alone, for our pure heart.

[13 : 39] The low or man is but alive, the high or man is but alive.

They did not bow and slide my side, they come to nothing but the sky.

Do not seek out their well and my poor, For triumphant, illoged gain, And even though your innocent peace, Set not your heart on what is vain.

Thy God has told in my hour, That you are strong and loving Lord, Each one according to his peace, Who will assure any reward.

One thing I am certainly going to miss, Is that stream of children coming through that door, Walking down here, on through to their classes.

[15 : 41] It is a wonderful, God-praising sight, isn't it? So let's read God's word. We are reading today from Matthew's Gospel, Matthew's Gospel and chapter 14.

We are beginning our reading at verse 13. We are picking up the reading here at a time when Jesus had heard about the way in which John the Baptist had been put to death.

So at verse 13 of Matthew 14, Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself.

But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, This is a desolate place, and the day is now over.

Send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves. But Jesus said, They need not go away. You give them something to eat. They said to him, We have only five loaves here and two fish.

[16 : 52] And he said, Bring them here to me. Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men besides women and children.

Immediately he 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. But 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.

[18 : 00] It is I. Do not be afraid. And Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. He 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 and beginning to sink. He cried out, Lord, save me. 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.

And may God bless that reading of his word to us. Let's again pray and call upon his name. Lord, our God, we thank you that your word brings to us so many accounts of your own power and presence with your people.

And we thank you that this is real to your people even today. And we bless you for the way that you showed yourself on that occasion to the disciples in a way that caused them to begin with to be afraid.

[19:11] And yet you came and pacified their minds by assuring that it was you yourself who had come to them. May we know that today, O Lord. May we know that you have come into this building and into our hearts.

May we know your assurance that you are the Lord who presides over all the events of life. And may we know that you are especially here to bless your word to us. Assure us, we pray, that our life is truly safe in your hands.

And help us to deliver ourselves by faith into your hands. We read there in your word, O Lord, how you took the loaves and the fish, after having blessed them, distributed them to your disciples.

But you initially said to them, bring them here to me. We give thanks that all that we place in your hands is in your blessing. And that it comes to be laid upon yourself so that you carry your people and their burdens with them.

And you are able, O Lord, even to make what we regard as small and insignificant. Even if we should say this of ourselves, you are able to multiply this and prove your blessing through us.

[20:26] Bless us then, we pray here today. Bless each of us individually and bless us collectively as a congregation. Remember us, Lord, in all the ways in which we seek to serve you throughout each week and the different activities that we find, both for our children and young people and for adults alike.

We pray your blessing to be upon each gathering, Lord willing, this week. And we ask, Lord, as we prepare for another communion time, when we will remember the Lord's death in the Lord's Supper.

Lord, we pray for your blessing in advance of this. We pray that you would encourage us and bring us together in the power of your Holy Spirit and your truth. And make this communion to us, Lord, a time of rich experience.

Help us to be confirmed in our faith. Help us, Lord, to know that as you direct your people through life, so you will continue to direct them on into eternity itself.

And that not even death itself can separate them from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, O Lord. Encourage any especially, O Lord, who may feel weak at this time in their own spiritual life, who may have struggles for different reasons, and who may have issues affecting their exercise of faith and of love.

[21:46] Lord, be pleased, we pray, to draw near to them. We pray that you bless any who have thoughts of coming to take communion for the first time. We thank you that there are some in our midst who undoubtedly have this in their mind.

We pray that you would encourage them. We pray that you would grant them, Lord, to look to yourself and to reach out by faith and know that as they are held by you, so they are held in every eventuality and every circumstance, so that they are safe with you.

And so we pray that your blessing will be with us during this week and during these activities and these services. Bless us, we pray, in all the other aspects of our life, in our homes, our families, in our places of work.

We pray that you'd continue to bless us there. We ask your blessing, Lord, to be with the congregation as a vacancy is on the horizon. We ask that you would continue, Lord, to bless your word here.

And we pray that you'd bless all who come faithfully week by week to gather here as those who worship you in your holy name. O Lord, continue, we pray, to let your favour rest upon us and grant that we may know that you are our God and that you take us as your people.

[23:01] Bless the world in which we live, our own locality, all those who have different responsibilities there. Bless us in our own nation, we pray, as we look towards another election.

Bless, we pray, those who are standing for election. We ask that you would help us as a people to choose wisely and enable us, O Lord, to benefit as a people from the choices we make.

Help us especially to be true to the principles of your word as we do so. And enable us to accept whatever the outcome may be. For we know that it is by you that kings rule and princes decree justice.

And that as you tell us in your word that the powers that be are ordained of God. You preside over all things. You are the sovereign master of the universe.

And help us, Lord, to exercise that faith and trust that would accept whatever the eventualities of this election will be. Grant, we pray, your blessing to us now.

[23:59] Hear us in our prayer and cleanse us from all our sin. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Before we turn to God's word, we'll sing once again. And we'll sing this time in Psalm 146 to the tune Stuttgart.

That's on page 191, beginning at verse 5 to the end of the psalm. Blessed is the one who truly looks for help to Jacob's God. Blessed is the one who places all his hope upon the Lord.

He who made the earth and heaven and the seas with all their store. He who keeps his every promise. Who is faithful evermore. Verses 5 to 10 of Psalm 146.

Blessed is the one who truly looks for help to Jacob's God.

Blessed is the one who truly looks for help to Jacob's God. Blessed is the one who truly looks for help to Jacob's God. Blessed is the one who places all his hope upon the Lord.

[25:09] Blessed is the one who closes all his hope upon the Lord. He who made the earth and heaven and the seas with all their store.

He who keeps his every promise, lives with forevermore.

He delivers from oppression and relieves the heart of his mind.

He releases those in prison to the blind the Lord gives sight.

Those who harm the down he races, God delights in righteousness.

[26:19] He protects and cares for strangers, widows and the fathers.

He puts face the wicked purpose, so the Lord through endless days.

Rings to every generation, praise your God, O Zion, praise.

Amen. Well, let's turn together to the passage we read in Matthew chapter 14. Matthew chapter 14.

And looking especially at verses 28 to 33. Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you command me to come to you on the water, he said, come.

[27:23] 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. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me.

And immediately Jesus 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. Well, as you read here from verse 22 especially, and indeed the same is true before that as well, but especially from verse 22, you find how obviously Jesus is in total charge of these events.

It is Jesus who sent them away to the other side in the boat. It is Jesus who saw them as they were struggling against the wind and against the tide. It is Jesus who saw and came to them walking on the water, as we'll see.

And it is Jesus who reassured them. It's all about Jesus and his control and his ordering of these events. And we'll see how important that is in the passage as we look at it.

[28 : 36] His eye and his concern is for them. And it's important that his eye is on them all. They're all together in that boat anyway. But he is concerned for all of them together as they occupy that little boat among the waves.

As you come there to verse 27, you'll find that that really remains the basis of what assures and reassures God's people right through to this day.

What is it in verse 27? He said, immediately he spoke to them saying, take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid.

Thousands, millions of Christians throughout history have been thankful to God for the way that they have experienced the truth of these words. In the middle of some crisis or other, or during some crisis, whatever it is they've been going through that causes alarm and concern and despondency or whatever.

How wonderful it is and how powerful it is that you hear the voice of Jesus coming through the scriptures. That you know the presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit saying, don't be afraid.

[29 : 47] Take heart. It is I. I am in charge here. I have ordered this. I am going to deal with it. Take heart.

Don't be afraid. It is I. The circumstances of our life are no barrier whatsoever to Jesus coming to make himself present with us.

And the miracle that is recorded here for us is a miracle that tells us that the Lord is present with his people as the Lord of creation and of salvation and of circumstance.

He's showing by the miracle the control that he has even over the elements of the sea. He created them after all. And when they come to be threatening towards his disciples, he comes into the situation and shows himself as the Lord, the creator, the master, the controller of that situation.

And isn't that something for which we're thankful here today, that whatever takes place in our situation together or individually, we can say that Christ is in charge.

[31 : 04] Nothing has slipped out of his control. He is there to see us safely through. And so the attention then turns to Peter.

The focus moves to Peter. And that again is an important point. Yes, he cared for all of them. He was concerned for all of them so as to come to them on the waves.

But the attention in the passage turns to Peter individually. And for all that Jesus is concerned about, all of his people, all of the time, none of them is lost as individuals in that crowd.

He is as much committed to your individual life as a Christian as he is to the whole body of his people. And that too is a precious truth for us today.

We matter to Jesus personally, individually, just as much as we matter to him as a congregation or as part of his whole church.

[32 : 07] So what are we looking at in this passage? First of all, we're going to look at Peter's request and the way that Jesus replied. Peter's request and the way that Jesus replied.

And then we're going to look secondly at Peter's sinking and the way that Jesus responded. Peter's sinking and the way that Jesus responded.

Here's Peter's request, first of all, and Christ's reply. Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. You might say, that's a bit strange.

Perhaps even it's a bit foolish. In other words, if there, if it is you, it's probably better translated as since rather than you.

It follows on immediately from what we've seen in verse 27. Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid. And then if you translated, since it is you, Lord, command me to come to you.

[33 : 08] And even then you might think this is a rather strange request, rather strange thing to ask for. After all, Jesus is at a distance. He's on the top of the waves. He's walked on the top of the waves towards them.

And here is Peter saying, why is he saying, Lord, since it is you, saying you assure me it's yourself. Command me to come to you. Well, for one thing, this man, Peter, loves to be with the Lord.

He loves to be in his presence. If you go to John chapter 21 and verse 7, the Lord is standing on the shore. This, of course, is after the Lord's resurrection.

Peter, again, is in the boat with some others. And the Lord is at a distance on the shore. And when Peter realizes that it is, in fact, the Lord, what does he do? He throws himself overboard.

He girds himself with his outer garment, throws himself overboard to go to Jesus. For this man, being with Jesus is so important. Yes, we can criticize so much.

[34 : 11] The Bible itself doesn't hide from us the fault even of people like Christians, like Peter and apostles and others in the Old Testament as well, David and so on. It doesn't hide the faults of these men from us and these women from us.

And that's important. This is not a biography written by some individual without any input from God. It gives us things as they are.

It tells us about people as they are. And here is this man, Peter. So often we might say he's at fault, and indeed he was. So impetuous.

So prone to acting really before thinking things through. And then sometimes regretting what he said or what he did. But the one thing you can never say about him is that he doesn't love the Lord and doesn't love to be with him.

And there's a point there for ourselves today. Is that how we are? Is that a feature of your life and my life today? That the one thing above all, the company, above all company, that you actually want to experience and to go on to experience is the company of Jesus himself.

[35 : 20] Do you love to be in the presence of Jesus? Do you love to be alone with Jesus? Do you love to speak with Jesus? Do you love to pray to him? Do you love to find him in his word? And even you could say, do I and do you make times of crisis?

Times of challenge? Do we make these tests means by which we get to reach Jesus? Do we reach out from them and say, Lord, since it is you, help me to come to you.

Command me to come beside you. Come into this with me. Let me unburden myself to you. Here's this man. And this is what he's like.

Lord, since it is you, command me to come to you. And the reply is instant because Jesus gives him what is effectively a command. That's what Peter had asked for.

Command me to come to you. He said, come. Come. It would have been different, perhaps, if it wasn't a command. If he hadn't actually come to know that Jesus was actually commanding or instructing him to come, you might conclude that Peter would have been acting on his own initiative as at other times.

[36 : 32] But no, he said, command me to come. And when the command comes as it came, this is what the command said. Come then. Come as you desire. Come to me.

And Christ's call or command like that always requires us to face some test or other in order to comply with it.

Doesn't it? Very seldom do you find the command of Christ for you and I do do something without there being some sort of challenge as you see it in the way of doing it.

And sometimes that may prove enough to just put you off from doing what you know God and Christ is requiring and commanding you to do. Christ's command always requires some testing element or some testing step on our part.

A step of obedience at a time of testing in order to actually comply with his command. Maybe you're here today and you're thinking of the Lord's Supper next Lord's Day.

[37 : 40] You've not been to the Lord's Supper before. It's in your heart to do this. But as you're thinking about it and as you look around you as it were, there may be some things that you find so challenging, so many fears.

Things that you're afraid of. A challenge is there. You need to take that step as Peter here took the step in compliance with the Lord's word come. He needed then to step out of the boat.

Maybe you're here today and there are some fears in your heart of it. Whether it's going to the Lord's table or something else you know the Lord is calling you to do. Well, listen to what he's saying.

It is I. Do not be afraid. Whatever waves are surrounding you today in the providence of God. Whatever difficulties, challenges you're facing.

If your trust is in Christ, if your hand is in his, if you know him as your Savior today, even if you've never professed that publicly before, be assured of this.

[38 : 48] You need not be afraid. You need not be afraid to take that step. Because he assures you, don't be afraid, it is I. Take encouragement from that.

And so the response of Jesus, the response of Jesus is come. But then the response of Peter is, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.

Now, we believe in miracles. We believe that the miracles of Jesus were, in fact, real miracles. The miracles that God performed through history. We don't come to this passage and say this is just symbolic.

This is just something that never actually happened, but it sounds great and there's a real story in it. When you make it into a symbol, then you can apply that in your life. This is no mere symbol.

This is actually an event that took place. And if you believe in God, you believe in the miraculous. If you believe in Jesus, you believe in the supernatural. If you believe in Christ, this is who you're dealing with.

[39 : 53] Not some ordinary mortal. Not somebody who couldn't walk on the waves that he in the beginning created anyway. The one who can create the waves is perfectly capable of standing over them and walking on them.

So, he said to Peter, come. And Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. If it's Christ that's commanding us to do something, it will never be wrong for us to do it.

However much we might fear stepping out of that boat. If he has said, you come. If this is your desire, you come. I'm commanding you to come. Then we come to him.

And we come to him confident that if it's his command we're complying with, he's going to give us the ability, the grace, the wherewithal to do it. There are times in life when we need to step out.

We need to step out of situations that make us feel secure. That remaining within, from our own perspective, from our own point of view, might feel more secure to just stay where we are.

[41:08] There's less risk. There's less likelihood that we would let him down, we would fail. But if Jesus is saying, come, then we have to step out of the boat like Peter did.

Step out of our comfort zone. However much we describe it, different ways of describing it. But stepping out of what makes us feel secure.

You know, it's very difficult really for us as human beings. Especially as sinful human beings. It's very difficult to hand over control of your life to someone else. To hand over control of your life to somebody else.

Because it feels more secure if you retain some measure of control yourself. I don't mean by that, that when you come to the Lord and give your life to the Lord, that he takes out of your hand all responsibility for making decisions and all of that.

That remains with us, of course. But it's difficult to begin with just to accept the fact that our whole life needs to be handed over to Jesus. But that's what Peter is doing effectively here.

[42:17] Bid me to come to you, Lord. Command me to come. And Jesus said, come. So he stepped out of the boat and came to Jesus. It says that very deliberately. He actually came to Jesus.

He didn't step out of the boat and walked a couple of paces without coming to Jesus. He actually reached Jesus. That itself makes a point. He actually achieved what he had set out to do by the power of Christ given to him.

You know, sometimes when you hear about lifeguards, some people hear maybe lifeguards, I don't know. But lifeguards that you find on the beach, for example, where there's many people coming to swim in the water.

If somebody gets in trouble, especially if they're a good distance offshore and the lifeguard goes swimming out to them or however makes his way out to them, one of the first things the lifeguard will try to do is to stop that person struggling.

Because that person struggling to actually stay alive and not drown, the struggling is actually making things worse for them. It's making it more likely that they will in fact drown if they just keep struggling as they are.

[43:31] And as the lifeguard takes hold of them, you'll still find them trying to struggle. And the lifeguard will actually do everything possible to say, look, stop struggling. Just hang on to me. Just let me take control.

And then they're led, usually safely, to shore. Sometimes we struggle on ourselves, don't we? We just try to cope with life and cope with the things that come our way as challenges.

We hear the voice of the Lord saying, come. And we step out of the boat. But then we start struggling. As Peter did, then he started sinking. So today, if you haven't yet come to give your life over to Jesus, to place your whole life in the hand of Christ, if you're still keeping back something from him that he requires you to give to him, in controlling your life, your struggles are not going to be saving struggles for yourself.

If your struggles are only going to make things worse, friend, give it to him. Let him take the weight. Let him take control.

Because he's best suited to do that for you. Here's his request. Here's Jesus' reply.

[44:56] Here's Peter's response. Peter's request and Christ's reply. Well, there's how we find there so much for ourselves, spiritually and morally as well, that are so important for us in life.

Secondly, Peter's sinking and Christ's response. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. When it says that he saw the wind, that's just a way of saying when he became aware of the wind.

It's quite a stormy time, it looks like. As you read the earlier part of the passage, the ship was beaten by the waves and was a long way from the land. So it was a crisis moment.

It was a difficult moment. And a dangerous moment. And when Peter actually realized, hey, I'm actually on top of the waves here.

I'm standing here. I'm on top of the sea. And he realized the wind around him was stronger than himself. He realized outwardly what that meant. So what happened?

[46:00] He began to sink. You see, there's a change of focus. The focus that Peter had to begin with there was, Lord, since it is you, command me to come to you.

And Jesus said, come. And so Peter came. And as long as his focus was on this Jesus and on the ability of this Jesus, on the power of this Jesus, on the control of this Jesus, he was fine.

He was safe. But as soon as his eye went to something else, he began to sink. He took his eye off the Jesus who controlled the whole situation.

And as soon as he did that, he got into difficulties. He began to sink. And that's how life is, friends, isn't it? We live amongst so many distractions, so many things that are liable to take your eye off what's important, to take your eye off Jesus, to actually lose your focus in looking to him and how he is as the master of life, the master of the situation, the Lord of creation, the Lord of salvation, the Lord of your life.

And when you do that, and you see your difficulties then, having taken your eye off Jesus, the difficulties then are magnified. Sometimes they'll appear huge compared to what they are when your eye is on Christ.

[47:28] The moment you take your eyes away from Jesus, from his ability, from his control of your life, the moment you look around to the difficulties, to the weakness that you find in yourself, whatever it is you look to instead of him, the challenge then becomes so enormous, you begin to sink.

You begin to really lose where you're at. And fear then sets in. He was afraid, you see, and he began to sink.

When he saw the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried out. Why did he begin to sink? Because he was afraid. Why was he afraid? Because he looked and saw the conditions around him.

Why did he see the conditions around him? Because he took his eye off the Lord. And when he did so, he began to sink, became afraid. Now, I'm going to just refer to an incident in the Old Testament, which I think fits in well with this.

It's an incident in Numbers, chapter 14. And you remember the incident, I'm sure, very well, where Moses had sent spies in to spy out the land to see what it was like and bring back a report to the people as they were traveling on towards the land of Canaan.

[48:45] And when Moses actually sent, in Numbers 14, these people, the spies, into the land, they came back with a certain report.

And the report was that the land actually was a good land, but as they came back and brought that report, the report really focused mainly upon the giants that were in that land.

Yes, they said, the land is a very good land. The land has certainly got all the things that we were promised according to the way that it's spoken of a land that flows with milk and honey.

But they're saying, there are some giants there. There are some big people there. Caleb, he tried to still their hearts and to gather their minds together to say, no, let's go up.

We can do it. We're sufficient to do it. The Lord is with us. But they said, no, we can't. The sons of Anak are there. And we appeared like grasshoppers beside them. They're gigantic.

[49 : 52] They're formidable. We just can't do it. They took their eye off the Lord. They took their eye off the promise of God. They took their eye off the ability of God to keep them and to give them the victory.

And what happened? They just didn't go through with it. They became afraid. And so it is for Peter. As he began to sink, he did it because he took his eye off Jesus and became afraid.

Don't take your eye off the Lord today. Whatever it is you're facing in life, you're not going to manage it on your own. You're not going to manage it even with the support of other people, even other Christians, other experienced Christians, if that is all we have.

Keep your focus on Christ. Don't take your eye off him and off his mastery of your life. Because then you find Peter crying out.

He began to sink. He cried out, Lord, save me. And of course, that's the first step in anyone's recovery, isn't it? To cry out to the Lord out of a realization that you're sinking or that you're lost and you cry out, Lord, help me, save me.

[51 : 09] That's the first step in his recovery. He realized he was sinking, realized he needed help. And that's how it is for ourselves as well. You know, backsliding, as we call it usually for a Christian who slides back into almost, could be even, worldliness, slides back from faithfulness to the Lord, slides back from church attendance, from Bible reading, from prayer to God.

We call that backsliding. And it's a terrible thing because if it goes on for a certain time, you can reach the conclusion that you were never converted at all.

What is the way to deal with it? Well, the way to deal with it is like this. Lord, help me.

You realize you're on the way of sliding back. Do you realize things are not what they used to be between yourself and the Lord? Do you realize your heart has become cold or colder to the gospel?

Do you realize that your heart isn't desirable? of fellowship with Christ or with His people as it used to be? What do you do about it? Well, don't try and cope with it on your own.

[52 : 26] The thing to do about it is go to the Lord with it. Say to the Lord, Lord, I realize. I realize something's happened in my life. I don't know exactly how it's come about, but I realize where I am things are not as they should be.

Help me. Save me. Take me out of this situation. And immediately, you see, the Lord reached out His hand and took hold of Him, saying, O you of little faith.

He reached out. You see, there's the Lord. Immediately He reached out. He didn't leave it for a second longer than it should be. It was immediate. Soon as Peter cried out, the Lord reached out His hand, took hold of Him.

I'm sure Peter spent the rest of his life thankful to the Lord for that grasp of the Lord's hand on the sea at that time. And that He looked back reflectively on that moment many, many times and said, If the Lord had not taken hold of my life in response to my cry, I would have drowned.

I would have perished. That would have been it. And it's that power that saves us from our sins.

[53 : 39] It's that power that keeps us in our life of obedience to God. It's that power that rescues us when we go astray. It's not your own ability.

It's not the minister. It's not your elders. It's not the congregation. Precious though these might be and important in their own right as they are, what saves us is the Lord and His power, His grasp of our life and His hold of us.

And then it comes a searching question. O you of little faith, why did you doubt? You see, you put that as well beside verse 27, in the light of verse 27 there, Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid.

And here is Peter now afraid. Afraid because he's looked away from this Jesus. Because he looked into himself. He looked at what was around him.

And Jesus saying, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? Why did you doubt? When I assured you that this was none other but myself, than myself. When I assured you, it is I, be not afraid.

[54 : 51] Why did you doubt? Why did you doubt? We mustn't ever treat our doubts as if they're good. Doubts are always a sign of failure to some extent on our part.

We all have doubts, I'm sure, from time to time, most of us. I've seldom come across anyone. In fact, I can only think of one person ever as a Christian that would always say to you, if you asked him, have you any doubt about it?

I've never doubted in my life, this person would say. Never doubted anything about Jesus. Never doubted about my salvation. That's a very rare person. Because very often, you and I have doubts of some kind.

What we must never do is make our doubts something commendable in the presence of God. As if doubt was actually a very good thing. What we must do is put our doubts aside and look to him and rest upon his word.

Because if he says something to us, such as he said to the disciples here, it is I, do not be afraid. Whatever comes to you from the word of God, God that assures you and reassures you, build your life around that, build your life on that.

[56 : 09] Because it's the truth. And the devil will come to you and your own heart will come to you sometimes by saying, hmm, not so sure. Not really sure about that.

That's how the first sin began. When the serpent in the Garden of Eden, who was effectively Satan, said to the woman, has God really said?

And from that moment onwards, we have been assaulted. We have been assaulted by the same dark force. When it comes to the word of God, there's always this dark power, this dark influence that comes from time to time and say, has God indeed said, can you trust the word of God?

Yes, you can. Yes, you must. Otherwise, you're left with your own thoughts, your own word, your own mind, your own ability. Never doubt him.

Never doubt his word. Never debate as to whether this Bible is the truth or not. It is. It will remain so. It will never be anything else.

[57 : 22] Take Christ at his word today. Whatever it is he commands you to do and requires you to do, step out and do it.

Difficult though it may be, challenging though it may be, seeing it as him, don't be afraid. You see, they all then got, it's interesting and important that when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

You see, that's important. When they got into the boat, who's they? It is Jesus and Peter. Jesus didn't say, now I've saved you, I'll take you back to the boat, I'll even give you a hand up into the boat and then I'll disappear.

They got into the boat. Jesus and Peter, together. Bound to each other spiritually. They got into the boat.

And when you do that, with Jesus, when you're with Jesus, that's how it is. He doesn't leave you. Whatever the situation is, he will always see you through.

[58 : 31] And then he will gather, he will stay with you for the rest of your life. And verse 32, the wind ceased. There it is, another miracle that it is, it's really just reminding us, who is our Redeemer?

Who is our Savior? It's not just one who says, I am the Savior of sinners. He demonstrates that. How does he demonstrate that? How did he demonstrate it here?

He demonstrated it here by actually stilling the storm, the wind has ceased. By demonstrating his might over creation, he's assuring them, Peter under rest, that this is our Redeemer.

Who is our Redeemer today? Who is our Savior? What's he like? It's this Jesus. This Lord. This Master.

This Master. And he has the ability at all times to see us through whatever crisis we're facing, whatever challenges we have today.

[59 : 45] And they worshipped him. Those in the boat worshipped him, saying, truly, you are the Son of God. What a wonderful conclusion to this event.

Here is Peter and Jesus. They've now gone into the boat with the rest. And what do the rest do? They worship him. And they worship him and make their confession. Truly, you are the Son of God.

And if you're saying that today about Jesus in your heart of hearts, in all honesty, then you're a Christian. It's a mark of you being saved. Because you cannot say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit.

You cannot say that you're willing to have him Lord of your life but by the Holy Spirit. Today he's saying to you, where are you in relation to me as Lord?

If you've taken me as Lord of your life, let me control your life. Give it entirely to me.

[60 : 57] And whatever things arise in providence, it is I. Don't be afraid. May he bless these words to us. We're going to conclude now our service today singing from Psalm 146, sorry, from Psalm 37.

Psalm 37 on page 252. Tune this time is St. Andrew. We're singing from verse 3, verses 3 to 7 of Psalm 37.

Set thou thy trust upon the Lord and be thou doing good and so thou in the land shalt dwell and verily have food. Delight thyself in God.

He'll give thine heart's desire to thee. Thy way to God commit. Him trust it bring to pass shall he. Verses 3 to 7 to his praise.

Let thou thy trust upon the Lord and be thou doing good and so thou in the land shall dwell and verily have good.

[62 : 30] Till thine thyself in gold will bear thy heart's desire to thee.

thy way to God on heaven's path and bring to us shall be.

And like unto the light shall thy righteousness shall bring forth thy good time on the day.

And thee thy judgment shall bring forth thy good time on the day.

shall seeachel for Him pay For him who was in him in his way, success in sin again.

[64:17] I'll go to the main door today after the benediction. 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.

Amen.