

A little faith is more than enough faith.

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[0 : 00] Well, it's a privilege to be with you here today. I always take it as a real honour and a real responsibility to be able to share God's Word. And as I was praying about today, God led me to a passage, a well-known passage in Matthew chapter 14.

So if I have a Bible with you today, if you want to turn with me to Matthew chapter 14, it's a well-known passage. We're going to read from verse 22, when Peter walks on the water. But I think I would like you to try and read it today as if you've never read it before. To ask God, and as we look at it together, to ask God, what does he want to teach us from this passage today? So try as best as you can to read it. And as I'm sharing with you from it, just to ask God, just something new, something new.

For those of us who have been Christians for many years, we always sometimes have that sense, oh, we know it all, but actually we don't. We don't. We only know this much, and there's that much to know.

[1 : 03] And God still, even, there's a few people here today who are a little bit older than I am. There's still lots that we can learn. So let's read from Matthew chapter 14, starting at verse 22.

Immediately, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.

Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

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

Don't be afraid. Lord, if it's you, Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water. Come, he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came towards Jesus.

[2 : 06] But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, cried out, Lord, save me. Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. You of little faith, he said.

Why did you doubt? And when he climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, truly, you are the Son of God. I believe that God has, there's two different groups of people today that God really wants to speak to.

And for some people today, maybe God put something on your heart. God's asked you to do something. And at this moment in time, you're not sure if you should do it.

Something that's holding you back. And I believe that God today wants to say to you people, do it.

And the most important reason why you should do it is because God's with you when you do it.

And secondly, I believe that there's some people today here in a storm of some description. Like the disciples were in this boat. And I believe that the word that God has for you is, stand firm.

[3 : 18] Trust me. I'm there with you. Both those words have with it that Jesus or that God is with us. Every step of the way, wherever it is or whatever we're facing today.

To understand this passage is important, I think, to understand the context of where this sits. So just before this, we had quite an amazing, challenging few days for Jesus.

His cousin John the Baptist is killed. Then we have the amazing miracle of feeding not just the 5,000, because that doesn't include women and children.

There's estimates up to 20, 30,000 people were there that day. And then we come to this passage. And I'm going to be going through it almost verse by verse.

So if you have got your Bible, just keep looking at it as you go through it. Just drawing out different things I believe God wants to say to us. In verse 22, there's one word, one verb that I think is really

important.

[4 : 22] And it's an important word, I think, for us all to understand today. And that is immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat. He made them. Now, when you just take a step back, what does that actually mean?

What does that mean? If Jesus made them get into the boat, he knew what was coming. It was intended. He wanted them to get into the boat. And I think it's really important to understand that this was something that Jesus wanted to happen.

He wanted to test his disciples shortly before, a few chapters before, they had a similar incident being in a storm.

But there was one difference that time. Jesus was on the boat with them. He was asleep, though, at the time. And it feels like that event prepared them for what was coming this time.

And this is something which I find it's very easy to say and not so easy to live. That the things that we go through in life, there's a plan, there's a purpose of why we go through those things in life.

[5 : 35] Now, people have gone through really tough experiences. It's very hard sometimes to see that. And even experiences that, in my own life, my brother was killed in a motorcycle accident over 10 years ago.

How can I say to my parents, there's a plan in that? Last year, I had the amazing privilege of holding my sister's stillborn baby, 28 weeks.

How can I say, there's a plan in that? But that's what God says. That's what his word says. And I believe for those of us, or those of you who are in that storm today, that one of the things we're going to come on to is the storm.

The Bible, I think, is amazing how understated it is. We think about this storm and think about a bit of water here, a bit of wind, and a bit of whatever.

And actually, this is the Greek for this storm. It was torture. I happen to... I love the sea.

[6 : 48] I grew up by the sea. And every time, any chance I get to go to the sea, I just love it. I don't like the sea when it's really rough, though. And I happen to Google, when was the sea really rough and whippy?

And stormed Dara a little while ago. I saw some videos of Whitby, of that storm. And that looked pretty wild. And maybe for some of you who were trying to walk and get about your normal business in those days of the really bad storm, it was hard work.

And that's where I believe for some people today, God wants to say to you, I am with you, wherever you are, whatever storm you're facing in life today, in the same way for the disciples.

For them, they were in the middle of this sea. It tells us in the passage, just before dawn, Jesus came to them.

So they had been rowing all night against the wind. They were exhausted. They were feared for their lives. And obviously, some of the disciples, as you know, were fishermen.

[7 : 52] So they knew what it was like to be in a rough sea. This was something pretty awful for them. Jesus, from my understanding of Scripture, my life experience, there's two main reasons why we go through things in life.

One is for Jesus, for God to teach us something. And the second is to help other people who've gone through that similar experience. For those of you who have been through a really tough experience, a really traumatic experience, lots of people don't get it, don't understand what it's like. But when you meet somebody who's been through that, there's a connection there. So for my parents to meet other parents who've lost a child, I've watched it happen when they met friends who they hadn't seen for years, who had lost a child as well.

And just the embrace between them was something so powerful. And that, I think, is the beauty of us as a church. And that each of us today have had experiences we've all gone through.

And we know what it feels like to be in different situations. So that when somebody is going through a really tough time, I know how you feel. And often, I think, even in churches, we say, I know how it feels to be going through a certain experience.

[9 : 15] But do you really know how it feels? And that was one of the things my parents said to me. That was one of the things that after my brother died, they got so many people to say, I know how you feel. And my parents were like, Do you?

Do you really know what it feels like to lose a child? Or to use, my son was 37 when he died. What it feels like to lose a child. But yet, if we've been through that experience, we know.

We know. One of the things that happened with the disciples, and this is, again, another point I think God wants us to focus on, is the disciples spent every day with Jesus at this stage in the story, in Scripture.

And as he was walking across the water, they didn't recognize him. Why didn't they recognize him? They were with him every day. Now, there might have been a lot of waves and wind and spray and all sorts going on, which made it quite tricky.

But I believe something God wants us to focus on today is, I'm in the storm with you. I'm there with you. Look for me in the storm.

[10:23] Oftentimes, when things are going wrong, when we're in the middle of a challenging time, the last place we look is God. We look to other people to help. We look to the Internet for a different illness or what could these symptoms be.

Our first focus should be on God. Now, when you've gone through, I was just thinking of another experience that I went through, which was when we were in Mexico, Gemma had an ectopic pregnancy and we had to rush her to hospital.

And she was taken off to have surgery. And I was put into a room to wait for her. And the first time in my married life, I had to, in my mind, create a strip of what do I say?

At that time, we just had Matthew and Susie. What do I say to them if their mom doesn't come back? If somebody said to me at that point, I'll just focus on Jesus, I probably would have given me a good slap.

And sometimes, when we're in the middle of the storm, we don't see things clearly. But I think it goes back to those tests, like, for example, the disciples went through that previous test of being on the storm.

[11:40] They knew what it was like to be on the storm. They knew that Jesus came through for them that time. The second time, did they know that Jesus would come through for them? Probably in the back of their minds they did, but they saw what was around them and thought, oh no, we're going to die here.

And I think that those tests and trials that we go through in life are there to help us, are preparing us for what's coming.

We talk about storms in life, that we're in the middle of the storm, we're coming out of a storm, or we're just about to go into another storm. Sorry to be a bit negative about life, but that's how life works.

And we've all got the scars, or the t-shirts, depending on which way you look at it. The Christian life, unfortunately, people try and sell it to other people as, oh, like, come to faith, you'll not have any problems.

That's not what the Bible says. That's not the Bible that we say. However, and this is something which I learnt, is what defines, what makes being a Christian different when it comes to the storms.

[12:59] And there's one word, that's hope. Hope.

Something which I can't really explain, but when my brother grew up going to church and then spent most of his life not interested in that thing with God, and he, I remember my parents telling me, literally, he was living in Australia at the time when he passed away, and they had just been to see him about a month before he passed away.

And my dad said he had a conversation with my brother about God. My brother's response was, well, if I needed to know anything, I'll just Google it. That was my brother's response. But yet, in my hope, in those last seconds, I have this hope that what he learnt as a boy came back to him.

And unfortunately, that somewhat separates me from my parents at the moment, because they don't have that hope. They don't live in that hope. And I know I didn't lose my child. They lost their child.

But that's what, in these situations, when we're facing these tough times, and especially when it's people outside of the church are going through a really tough time.

[14:21] How did you get through that? How did you get through it? That's a testimony that we can share. I had hope. God gave me hope. God gave me hope.

So, this passage, the thing that people focus on is Peter, and the fact that Jesus calls, says, little faith, about Peter. But in that boat, there were other people too.

And none of them got out of the boat. None of them said to Jesus, ask me to come. And I think, if you were looking for a title of this message, is, little faith, is more than enough faith.

And for each of us today, that faith journey that we're on, some of us may be at the very start of that journey, some of us quite a long way down that journey.

But it's a journey I don't believe ever ends until we see Jesus. We're still on that journey. For me, when I think about faith, I think about helping my children to learn how to swim, and how they would be at the side, in the water, and then they would launch themselves towards me.

[15:40] And the thing that they did was they always kept their eyes on me. So as they kept their eyes on me, they would jump towards me. And obviously then I would take a step further back. And each time they would jump, I would still catch them.

How that worked was, they had complete faith that I would catch them. Whatever happened. That thankfully, it wasn't like the story of the water horse cam was in the swimming pool, but they'd launch themselves and I would catch them.

And when we think about faith, what does faith really mean? Is that hope in things that we can't see? That's trust in God, that if things go wrong, which they often do, God will be there for me. For Peter, he got out of the boat. And this is something which I believe this message for some people today is, one commentator talks about it as Peter saw the opportunity to be with Jesus and he went for it.

And I believe that sometimes our faith is limited by what we think God can do, what God is able to do. And there's a book that I read years ago called Pray Big.

[16:59] And I want to encourage us today to dream big. What's God asking you to do? God asks, what is a step of faith for you might be to talk to your next door neighbor who hasn't spoken to you for 20 years because you fell out over the bins.

For somebody else, it might mean a career change. I was teaching primary school teaching for, I came back from Mexico I was teaching and I was so unwell with it.

I was broken and I came out of teaching. And that was a really tough decision for us as a family because it meant that I had a very secure job, secure salary and things have changed for us.

But that needed to happen for the sake of my family and for my own sake. That might be what it is, what God's asking you to do to make that change. It might be a relationship that you have with someone and God's saying to you, do you know what?

That needs to change. John Ortberg uses, his book is called, if you want to walk on water you need to get out of the boat. And I think of that scene, I can't remember which Indiana Jones film it is, where he, this chasm of death and he, the stepping stones.

[18:17] But to get across, to see the stepping stones, he needs to put his foot onto the stone. You can actually see it only, you only see it when he puts his foot out there. If you're waiting for it to appear, it doesn't appear.

He has to have that faith that it's there. And some people talk about Peter failing in this story. But I believe that God's teaching us that Peter didn't fail.

This was a lesson for Peter. And if you think about later on, and one of the beauties about Peter is, he's like every one of us, he made some big mistakes in his life, but he did some amazing things with God as well.

And I believe that for each of us today, don't be afraid of getting it wrong. If God's asked you to do something, he will make a way.

I've heard it, one of the quotes that I quite like is, if faith fails, grace prevails. So, Peter walking across the water, he had his eyes on Jesus, everything was fine.

[19:20] Oh, that wind's a bit strong, that wave's a bit big. He takes his eyes to Jesus. Jesus reaches out, takes his hand. I don't know about you, but I'd rather live life where I've tried, had a go, and God's caught me rather than sitting in my boat nice and comfortably.

And I believe that that is a big risk that we have, Christianity in this country. It can be so comfortable. But I don't believe that God, what God wants for any of us.

And as I say, that risk, each of us have, what that risk is, can be something different. Was Peter afraid? Yeah.

What other times in his life, was Peter afraid? Most certainly. And this is some of the things, one of the things that John Ortberg says in his book is, fear never leaves us. And that God, it's almost that sense of, for God to ask us the question, do you trust me?

Do you trust me? So that those fears that we have, God might use those fears to say, I will help you. But you've still got that fear to overcome whatever it is, to go through a tough experience.

[20 : 39] When I was, you saw on the screen about preaching in Spanish, it was something that I did several times. And the first few times I preached, I read from a script like this. And then I thought to myself, I don't like it when a preacher reads from a script.

It's a bit boring when I read from a script. I want it to be different than that. I believe God said to me, trust me. So that, the next time I preached, I had my notes, but I didn't read from it.

And I tell you, it was the Holy Spirit. It wasn't me that let me get through that whole sermon because I didn't, I said to God, God, I trust you that you will give me the words. And in my head, it still, there was a thought in English translated to Spanish and yeah, language didn't come easily.

for me, for that one. God has got plans for each of us. Plans to prosper us, to give us a hope, to give us a future.

But that plan is reliant on us, taking that step. And for each of us today, I just want us to think about our own faith, think about the own journey that we're on.

[21 : 51] we live a life of regrets over things that have happened in the past. But we live a life of lessons that we've learned. And I believe that God's saying to each one of us today, yes, learn from what's happened before, but let go of those times where things went wrong, where it seemed like you failed.

what I was teaching you in those times. A bit like helping a child to learn how to ride a bike, which is even more scary than helping them to swim.

Because when you see them go off in the distance, and that's when you realise you forgot to teach them how to use the brakes. You've got them balanced on the bike, they know how to balance on the bike, and they're upright on the bike, but they don't know how to use a brake.

And they said, just fall off. Just fall off. When Moses was asked to go to speak to Pharaoh, he said, I can't do it.

I haven't got the words. How can I speak to Pharaoh? God's response was, I will be with you. And that's something which I've had all sorts of experiences where that tangible sense of God's presence I felt in some really challenging times.

[23 : 08] When we were in Costa Rica, one of their friends from language school had a bad accident and was in intensive care. And I went to see him. I hate hospitals with a real passion.

Unfortunately, I had an uncle that passed away and my last memory of him is seeing him in his hospital bed, so that was something I've never really liked going to hospital. And I felt like God said to me, for him, do this.

Not for you, for him, do this. And I overcame my fear to sit on the bedside. And that man who's from the US, he messaged me and he says, I never forget that time you were like an angel coming to me on my bedside.

If God says, go, he will go with us. But I also believe a bit like those people in the storm, one of the things that the word that God said or that Jesus said that Peter was come.

And I believe that maybe for some people today, that's what Jesus and God is asking you, come back to me. Come to me. If we're laden down with worries, with things that are going on in our lives, we're not able to go.

[24 : 21] To be able to go, we need to come first, if that makes sense. We need to come to Jesus for him to fill us up, restore us, then we can go. I was reading in John Ortberg's book and one of the examples he gave about trying was a guy called Jonas Salk.

I've never heard of this guy before who developed a vaccine for polio and he had 200 attempts at creating this vaccine and none of them worked. And somebody asked him, what's it like to fail at creating the vaccine?

And his response was, I now know 200 ways for the vaccine not to work rather than fail. And that's something that I believe, going back to where I started, those two different people today, groups of people, is God asking you to do, take that leap of faith, that step of faith?

Is God asking you to stand firm? One of my favourite songs that goes from the 90s, Sometimes He Calms the Storm.

I'm just going to read that to you just to finish off with. So this is the chorus. Sometimes He calms the storm with a whisper of peace be still. He can settle any sea but it doesn't mean He will.

[25 : 54] Sometimes He holds us close and lets the wind and waves go wild. Sometimes He calms the storm and other times He calms His child.

If you notice, the storm wasn't calmed before Peter walked in the water. Peter walked in the water when there was a storm still brewing. So I encourage each of us today, ask God the question, am I doing what you want me to do?

And of that question, if God says to you, I want you to do this, have faith that whatever God asks you to do, He will help you. As you saw, our journey took us over 10 years to get to Mexico. Part of that was our own doubt, our own fears. And we have people alongside us to support us and I encourage that. That's the beauty of a church. church is if you believe God's asked you to do something like we did when we felt God asked us, we had people like Annie and Fiona and others around us, we asked them to pray.

Is this what God's asking us to do? That's the beauty of church. Use people around you to support you, to encourage you. Use those experiences in life that God gives us to be your testimony and work with your family on the street, wherever you are.

[27 : 19] That's, we talk about, people say about, I don't know how to share my faith. Share your story. How you got to where you are today. Those times that you struggled and got through it.

Let me pray for us. Father, we thank you for this amazing passage where we're taught what faith really is.

But we're also taught about you and that you're with us. And I believe, Father, for each of us today, I just ask that we will know in an even more tangible way today that you are with us here at this moment.

Father, for those of us you're asking to take that leap of faith, Father, give us that courage, that boldness to say yes to you, to go where you want us to go, to do what you want us to do.

And Father, I pray for this church, Father, that you will help it to be a church where people are cared for. People can help each other go through similar experiences.

[28 : 30] People can pray for each other who believe God's asking them to do something. That you will just strengthen this church and help it to be such a light, such a beacon in this community. And Father, we thank you for who you are and for the plans you have for each one of us.

Amen.