

Do not be afraid

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Preacher: Rev Alan Montgomery

[0 : 00] The reading this morning is from Matthew chapter 14 verses 22 to 36. That's Matthew chapter 14 verses 22 to 36.

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

And when evening came, he was there alone. But the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

And 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.

[1 : 25] 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 they 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.

And when they had crossed over, they landed at Jezeret. And when the men of that place recognised Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country.

People brought all their sick to him, and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak. And all who touched him were healed. And may the Lord add a blessing to the hearing and the reading of his word.

A leading church work leader said this, I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty, because it has been out in the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.

[2 : 56] The Lord Jesus Christ came into a world which had become disorientated, disillusioned, a world which had taken its eyes off the Creator and fixed their eyes on other kinds of deity.

A world which took its eyes off the Son of God because here was someone who himself said, foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay its head.

And that Son of Man asked a question of each individual and those who are here this morning.

Who do you say I am? Now he didn't ask people what they felt or what they thought.

He made the question very personal. Who do you say I am? Now, you've been faced with many personal questions in your life.

[4 : 32] Maybe you're still to be faced with those questions. For example, will you marry me?

Now, I remember when I worked with the homeless in Edinburgh, there was one guy who came to our centre. He came out of the army.

All he had was an army pension and he wouldn't use that to buy accommodation. He would rather sleep on the street.

And when he came to our drop-in centre in Bread Street, he took a leading role and he would often welcome people into the centre, more especially the older ladies who came to volunteer and then he got this courage within him and he would say to them, good morning or good afternoon.

Would you like to marry me? It's my day off. A bit of a joke, says Arthur. But the question Jesus asks us is not a joke.

[5 : 57] Who do you say I am? And when he asks that question of us and when we respond positively, he then says to us, come and follow me.

Come and follow me when you're lonely, when you're hurting, when you're misunderstood, when you yourself are disorientated, when you're afraid and when fear knocks at your door in whatever form, God asks us to respond to that knock as he wants to restore us, renew us and remake us.

Amen. John Oortberg had a book entitled If You Want to Walk in Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat.

Now think for a minute about your tomorrow. I want you to imagine for a few minutes that your environment will have changed completely.

You'll become dirty and smelly. You'll be unshaven and unkempt. Ladies, you'll no longer have makeup.

[7 : 38] Food will be scarce. Warmth will be minimum. a bed will be non-existent. Your comfort zone will no longer be comfortable.

You'll no longer be able to take things for granted. You'll be disorientated. need. How would you feel?

And how would those people have felt over the last months in London or Manchester or Greenfield Towers when the unexpected suddenly came upon them and they were left with no family, with no home, left destitute.

In a sense, they would have a sense of fear. fear. But if you've never experienced those things, you won't know what fear is.

But God comes to us in our turmoil, in our situations of fear, and he says to us, be not afraid, it is I.

[9 : 08] I am here with you in those situations, in those unrestful moments, in those times of anxiety and loneliness, in those times when you're disorientated, when you don't know what's happening, I am there.

And in Matthew chapter 14, there are three incidents in the life of Jesus and his disciples, which creates for the disciples their own sense of fear.

in verse 5 of chapter 14, there's a beheading of John the Baptist, and he said he would have killed John, but was afraid of a riot, for all the people believed John was a prophet.

Verse 15, the king of the 5,000, there's nothing to eat in the desert, said Jesus, send the crowds away so they can get to the villages and buy some food.

Jesus said to them, that's not needed, you feed them.

[10 : 23] Can you feel a sense of fear in those disciples' lives when Jesus said to them, you go and you feed them. Or verse 27, Jesus immediately spoke to them, reassuring them, don't be afraid.

When Peter took that step from the boat towards Jesus and took his eyes off Jesus, began to sink.

Jesus said, don't be afraid, it is I. only in that last incident does the real sense of fear come to disciples.

And as you come to the conclusion of the church's ministry, this session, and look towards the new session starting up soon, after a break, you need to ask yourself, what does God have in plan for this church?

What does God want to do with this fellowship? How does God want to use me in a ministry? ministry? And maybe over these past weeks or months or even years, you've gone through difficult times, or you're constantly going through difficult times, or you will do.

[12 : 21] But whatever it is God asks you to do, he reassures you with the present, with the answer, I am with you. Do not be afraid.

I'm always interested in the passage of Scripture in John chapter 17, where Jesus is praying for the world, for the disciples, and for Christians following.

following. And that to me says that Jesus in that moment of prayer, the great intercessor, was praying for you before you were even born.

He was praying for you, and he knew what would happen to you, how your life would turn out. and as he prayed for you, I believe he prayed that his father would sustain you through all you had to face.

Because Jesus lives to intercede. now, in Matthew chapter 14, the disciples found themselves in a difficult situation.

[13 : 55] The boat was buffeted by the waves, and as far as they could see, they were facing danger, and facing danger, they were scared.

have you ever been in a rowing boat, rowing away, and the winds came up, and you kept going round, and round, and round, no matter how hard you rowed?

Obviously not, but I have. It was scary. They were facing danger, and they were scared.

And it may very well be that today, some people are feeling something similar, your rowing boat, whatever it may be, as you face the future, the unknown.

But you have to remember this, that one of the commonest commands in scripture is fear not. Isaiah says, fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name.

[15 : 22] And Jesus knew their fear. Take courage, it's I, don't be afraid. Now that's sometimes here said and done.

but when Jesus speaks to us, we have to believe that the creator of the world has got the authority to do things, something about it.

It's reported over 90% of what we worry about never happens. that means that our negative worries have less than a 10% chance of being correct.

and if you face fear straight on, it will turn away, it will turn tail and slink away.

Fear is a dark room where Satan develops negatives. Ortberg said this, that fear is created more in practicing heretics than bad theology ever has.

[16 : 45] For it makes us live as though we serve a limited, finite, partially present, self-component God.

But a God who could create all this thing, all this world, these planets, this universe, is someone who has to be acknowledged as having all authority and he has got authority over our fear, whatever it may be.

Don't be afraid. Peter took a step of faith. He wanted to walk. He wanted to go to Jesus.

It was his desire. The big flamboyant fisherman had no reserve at that time. let me come to you. Okay, come on, said Jesus.

And he took a step out of the boat and walked. And then something happened.

[17 : 52] He began to sink. He took his eyes of Jesus. He forgot who he was going towards.

And sometimes we can forget who we're working for. Not a church, but the author and finisher of our faith.

there's a hymn that some people sing. Fear thou not, for I'll be with you.

I will still thy pilot be, never mind the tossing billows. Take my hand and trust in me.

And sometimes there are people who often criticize Peter's lack of faith. But remember this.

[18 : 58] The others in the boat were even afraid to move. They were captivated by fear. At least, Peter took a step of faith, even though his fear diminished at one point.

And when we think of church growth, church growth always involves risk. And risk always involves fear.

It takes only one to move. to face a challenge and you can either sink or swim.

We can have great plans, but sometimes we are paralyzed by fear, not wanting to go forward with those plans, just in case.

We're waiting for that one person to move. If we don't see any moving, we won't go. But Jesus moves, and he moves individuals, and he wants to move you, and he wants to move me.

[20 : 28] Jesus came that day, and the disciples were in the boat, and he called them.

And often Jesus calls men and women in church situations, out of their comfort zone, because we would rather be comfortable than challenged.

Is that right? Well, I can't do any harm if I'm just nice and comfortable. But if I move forward and don't know what the future holds, then I'm afraid.

There's a sense of fear there. And that is why when we talk about vision, we have to be sure and certain that the vision we're thinking about is God's vision and not my vision, because he knows everything.

He's conquered fear. He's conquered sin, death, and the grave. he's sent the devil packing, and he wants to send him packing from your life, because he wants your life to be full with his love and with his presence.

[22 : 10] disciples. And those disciples, so we read, in their own way, thanked and worshipped him.

And we worship God, we worship Jesus, we worship this morning, not because his ego needs it, but because he deserves it.

for without worship, our experience and joy of God are not complete. And they gave him, those disciples gave him the place of authority.

He already had it, of course, the place of authority. authority. And let me just say, very briefly, what Jesus did for those disciples that day, is an indication of where God wants you to be as you continue to let fear go, and let God be.

Because if you keep on doing what you've always done, you'll keep on getting what you've always got.

[23 : 42] But first, you've got to get out of the boat. Whatever that boat is, whatever you're surrounded by, whatever you're comfortable in, you need to get out of that situation and that boat and let Jesus be the driver.

Whenever humans begin, our beings get out of the boat, they're never quite the same.

our environment changes, our perspective changes, but God doesn't change. He brings us into a new environment, a new perspective.

He gives a new focus, a new desire, a new longing to be where he is. And our world is never the same.

because our world is a new focus with Christ's eyes. Our worship takes on a new dimension as we come together.

[25 : 05] We realize we're worshiping the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and we are excited. excited. And our relationship with Jesus is never the same because he never stands still.

He's always on the move. But do you want to move with him? Or do you want to stay in your boat, whatever that boat is?

If that's the case, then your faith is challenged. And your faith does not remain the same.

It's equipped to do more and greater things. And he says to you, and he says to me, it is I, be not afraid.

Many of those people over the last few months would have been afraid, undoubtedly. But how many of them would have had that same faith in Christ that you have this morning.

[26 : 22] And it just brings before us in a sense the urgency of evangelism, the urgency to let people know about God's love and his care.

Jesus Christ died and rose again and promises to return. And if you want to see God, God's purpose for this church, for your life, you must move from fear to trust and get out of your boat, whatever it is that's keeping you from seeing and hold it on to Christ.

A previous colleague of mine in the Salvation Army, just a few years ago, developed a brain tumor and he eventually passed away.

And before he passed away, he wrote this, don't tell God how big the storm is.

Tell the storm how big your God is. Okay? Don't tell God how big the storm is.

[28 : 03] He knows that. But tell the storm how big your God is. Jesus Christ has paid the price and it was written and read.

And I showed this short DVD clip a few months ago, maybe a bit longer. And I want you to look at it again, just to refresh your memory of what God has done for you.

Think of the fear that was in Jesus' eyes. Yes? As he went to the cross but think of the love that was on the cross written in red.

Thank you, Chris. Thank you, Chris.