

Come and Don't Be Afraid

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 January 2025

Preacher: John Lowrie

[0 : 0 0] situation, but the Lord comes to them, and I want us to look at that in the moments that remain. So, Matthew 14, all these passages we have looked at regarding the invitations of Jesus when he says, come, are found in Matthew's gospel. So, we're going to read from verse 22 through to the end of the chapter. John the Baptist's context has just been beheaded, and Jesus feeds the 5,000, and then you have this account. 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 the 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, walked on the water, and came towards Jesus. 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. We'll end the reading.

At the end of verse 33, you might want to look at this as we look at this together in the moments that remain to us. But let's come before God and ask for his help to understand his word.

Our loving Heavenly Father, we've been reminded, Lord, by Kimmy, that we do not live and minister in a vacuum, but there are so many things impinge upon us, things that encourage us and things that make us weary. And Lord, wherever we are in our walk with you, though we gather as a congregation this evening, we gather as individuals as well. Lord, and it's for sure that you not only see every aspect of our life, that you're involved. You follow us. You lead us and guide us. You take an active interest in us.

Indeed, Lord, you're active in each one of our lives. Lord, you lead and guide and provide for us. And Father, we thank you for this. We pray, Lord, now as we come to study your word together, we pray that there might be something in this passage that would just challenge us or maybe even encourage us this evening. So, Father, just bless us, we pray. Teach us, we ask in Jesus' name.

[3 : 0 0] Amen. I think in a sermon a while ago, I showed you these images. Here is the first image. And do you remember that I showed you this image and the one that will come after it to remind you that this is what the Christian life is not like? It is not like that. When we are saved, the Christian life is a life that's lived by faith. We usually forget this. We know we're saved and we're going to heaven.

We're saved by faith. But we also walk. We have to walk by faith. And the very implications of that means that we have to trust when things are dark and things are difficult. But it's sad to say, many of us, we prefer that, don't we? We like a merry-go-round. We're coming round. We don't mind occasionally. We bob up and down. But it's fairly safe. It's fairly sedate. And round it goes. We know where we're going. We've been there before. Everything's okay. When, in fact, the Christian life is like the second image, it's that is the Christian life. That is what it's meant to be like. It's scary.

It's not easy. And as we seek to live the Christian life, there are many times when we say, Lord, what's happening? What's happening to me? What's happening to my church? Where are we going?

And we have to look to the Lord afresh and to trust in Him. And that's what we're looking at tonight in this passage. Here is an invitation to walk with Jesus through the difficult times in life, but also to perhaps take a step of faith with Him. It might be that you're not in a storm, that your life is not too bad. During those times, often the Lord asks us to take a big step of faith. It might be in ministry. It might be as a church. It might be as an individual to step outside the boat, as we will look at in a minute, to go onto the roller coaster and come off the carousel. And often the Lord does that for us. And that's what we're looking at tonight, an invitation to walk with Jesus when it's not easy, when it's quite difficult. And that's what we'll look at in a moment. But we'll end this wee series that I started on the invitations of Jesus. First of all, come to the wedding banquet.

The Lord tells us about this parable, wedding banquet for His Son. Everything's been prepared. Come. An invitation of the gospel. And then a couple of weeks ago, come and follow me, Jesus says.

[5 : 24] The implications of that. He is worthy to follow. He is Lord. His teaching is desirable. We read His word like a daily blog. We buy into what He's all about. And therefore, we follow Him. We are following Him in this life. We follow Him to glory. He has many followers today. And then last week, you remember, we looked at, come and get some rest, you who are weary and burdened. And I will give you rest. Rest for your soul. Spiritual rest. End your search for God. Your search for God ends when you discover who Jesus is. But also physical rest. Come to a solitary place. Recharge. And we looked at that.

So here, now, I want to look at this one. This invitation to walk with Jesus when things aren't easy. I've called this heading, Afraid. That's what Jesus says here. He comes to the disciples and says, take courage, afraid. Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you in the water. And Jesus says, one word, come, Peter. Storm. And Peter does this. And he came towards Jesus. There's so many, as we finish this wee series, a comfort and a challenge. Now, what can we learn here?

Rocket signs, five C's, five letters beginning with C. First of all, here, we see change. After Jesus feeds the 5,000, he now sends the disciples away. And there's a sudden change in the disciples' situation. They've just been with Jesus. They've seen the feeding of the 5,000. But Jesus changes their situation. Three times in this passage, you will see the word immediately. It's a favorite word of Mark. Mark mentions this a lot, straightway, if you're using the authorized version, or immediately.

Jesus is an action man for Mark. But Matthew mentions the same thing. And then here he says, in verse 22, the first words we read was the word immediately. Right after this, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat. It wasn't something they chose. Jesus says, get into the boat. He does this quickly. And that's what's happening here. The situation changes. We don't know why. He's not with them in the boat. He makes them get in the boat, and he sends them off. And Jesus dismisses the crowd. And then he perhaps does what he wanted to do before the feeding of the 5,000. Remember, before he saw them, he said to the disciples, come, let's get to a solitary place. We looked at this last time, didn't it? Get some rest. You need to recharge. But he sends them off. And perhaps that he's now going back to plan A, and it's to get some rest. Verse 23, after he dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. That's quite powerful, isn't it? If he prayed, we need to pray.

Later that night, he was there alone. It's almost like a whole night's prayer on the mountaintop. And then it's in this situation. Before he's praying, he sends the disciples off. And he places them in this situation. But while Jesus is praying on the mountaintop, all is not well with the disciples. Their situation has changed. Look at verse 24. Jesus is on the mountaintop, praying. But the boat was already a considerable distance from the land, buffeted by the winds, the waves, because the wind was against it. Normally, the disciples would have, when you look at the numbers here, it's talking about the fourth watch and so forth. And they would have probably been at the other side. But because of the sudden storm, which is not unusual, this could often happen.

[9 : 25] They are buffeted. The translation of the word buffeted is tormented. This thing was really against them. They couldn't make much progress. Things aren't good. They'd seen this before in Matthew 8, earlier on in Matthew's gospel. They'd been there before, remember, a storm. The difference was Jesus was in the boat that time. And so they knew the presence of Jesus, the felt presence of Jesus.

And though they were anxious, don't you care that we're drowning? And Jesus wakes up and he rebukes the waves. But Jesus isn't with them this time. The disciples are a considerable distance.

It's, the mentions here about many stadia away, that doesn't mean anything. I always find it frustrating when, I watched a program the other day, and they, when they measure distance by football pitches. What is the point of that? Instead of saying it was 20 mile, it was for 4,000 football pitches. I mean, who talks like that? If it's 50 miles, that's Glasgow to Edinburgh. Or 25 is Glasgow to Livingston or whatever. I can't get my head around 4,000 football pitches. So stadia, what does that mean? Basically, they've traveled about three or four miles, and they've probably got another mile or two to go. We don't know what route they've taken, so it's hard to say. But they've still got a good bit to go. They're in the middle of this situation. It's a very scary situation. And they're weary.

Remember, Jesus has said to them before, you're weary. Have a rest. So it's weary. It's at nighttime. There's a storm, and they think there's a ghost in their midst. There's nothing going for them on this journey. And then the Lord suddenly comes into their situation. And yet the Lord does this, sometimes you're minding your own business. You're in control. But then a change comes.

How do we cope with change? I never liked the status quo. I must confess I have a reputation for being that type. John doesn't like the status quo. But I don't like change either. It's a weird situation. I get easily bored. But then you think, well, okay, change, woof, scary as well. But we're wired like that. Change can unsettle us, especially if that change is unpleasant. Especially if that change brings us to an end of our resources. We cannot cope with this. And often the Lord places us in those situations. His job is to grow us, to mature us, to make us like Jesus. The only way to do that, the only way to do that is to increase our faith, to increase our walk. And the only way to do that is to place us in difficult situations. It's on the treadmill we get fitter. It's on the treadmill of life that we learn things. And here the disciples were going to learn something about themselves and something about Jesus as well. The Lord, can I just say, the Lord knows what boat you're in.

[12 : 26] Often he has placed you in a boat. The church is in a boat just now, a particular situation. You look for a pastor. I'm in a particular boat. I'm wondering what the Lord will do with Lucille and I going forward. That is the boat. I don't know what your boat journey is like just now. You could say to me, I'm in a boat. Been in it for ages. It's a nightmare. Or you could, your boat might be an ocean liner.

You're sitting with the deck chairs out. You're sunning yourself and you're having a drink. Only you know what the boat is. But sometimes the Lord will place you in a boat, which is scary. It's a scary situation. And that's what happens here. The disciples are in this situation because of Jesus.

Jesus placed them there. And often that's what happens. The Lord either is proactive in this or he allows us for things to happen. You're not, God's never asleep whenever you're going about your life. And it's good to reaffirm that. Whatever you're going to face on Monday, the Lord knows about this.

And he's allowed this to happen or you will be there. So he is in control. Secondly, comfort. In our darkest moments, Jesus often comes to us. In this, in my Bible, it might say the fourth watch shortly before dawn. It can say, you know, that the wee saying, it's always darkest just before dawn.

It's a well-known wee phrase. And the fourth watch here would basically mean between three o'clock and six o'clock. I've got a habit of waking up every day, every night at quarter to three for some reason. I keep thinking there's an alarm hidden somewhere. I don't know why I wake up at quarter to three. This morning it was ten past four. I had a long lie. It felt great. And it's quite difficult to get back to sleep. I find that. I can sleep in a washing line when I go to bed, no problem. But if I wake up, I might as well get up and cut the grass. I just struggle to get back over to sleep again.

[14 : 24] When you wake up and, I don't know about you, but do you ever wake up and your mind races with you in the morning? You never solve a problem lying in your bed. Everything's bigger lying in your bed.

You're worried about the tires in your car. Every wee thing becomes a monster when you lie in your bed. But when you get up and the sun's coming in, you begin to see things normally. But we are told when Jesus chose to come at their darkest moment, just before dawn or in the fourth watch.

Jesus, there's the second, immediately. He comes as the situation changed immediately, so the comfort came immediately as well. Jesus immediately said to them, take courage. It's like, don't be afraid. And that is so special, isn't it? That often when we think we can't hold on, life is difficult, the Lord will come to us at that time, in our darkest moment, when we think all cause is lost. A time for change, a different change this time. A change for their good comfort coming to them very quickly. And it's often during the very, just when we begin to lose hope, and that's what happened here. Jesus came, and we notice his presence. How did he comfort them?

By his very physical presence. It is I. Don't be afraid. He wanted to reassure them that he not only knows their situation. He's placed them there. But he's in their situation. He's with them in the midst of the storm. He's not absent with them. He's, this is, this is a different development from the last time.

He was with them in the storm before, but this time he's on the storm. He's walking on the storm. That's quite something, to be in a boat and think, well, Jesus is here, it's okay. Jesus is sovereign over the storms of our life. He's not only with us in the storm, he walks on the storm. He can trample all over whatever thing is causing you grief. It's no problem for him. So we see the presence and the power of the Lord. We also see his prayer, because we're meant to see the connection in this, that while they're having a hard time, where is Jesus? On the mountain praying. We're supposed to see the connection here, that while they're rowing and things are hard for him, what is Jesus doing?

[16 : 58] He's praying. He is a night of prayer. And in other words, the fear was unfounded. Quite often during the time I've been here, we've often said, we thank you, Father, for Jesus, whoever lives to make intercession for us. When you pray tomorrow in your own devotions, there is somebody bigger than you praying for you as well. He always lives to make intercession for you. What that psalm, Psalm 46, God is a refuge and strength and ever-present help in time of trouble. And Jesus, no doubt, would have been thinking, we're not told what Jesus prayed, but no doubt Jesus would have been praying for them, thinking of them. And he comes to them in the fourth watch, which meant he must have spent a long time in prayer that night for them, and probably for other matters. But his timing is perfect here as well.

He comes immediately. He knows when enough is enough. John, the disciples are going to need my presence. Courage, it is I. Do not be afraid. So he comes to them to comfort them. So thirdly, come. Peter, make sure that's not the end of the drama. Knowing Peter, he decides, oh, really exciting.

He wants a piece of the action. And he is so excited, he wants to launch out the boat. I don't think it would have been boring with Peter. When the rest of us are weighing it up, well, I don't know if that can be done, Peter would be, let's do it. Let's get it sorted. He has a can-do mentality. He's the first to volunteer for anything. But he wants to get out of the boat, into the storm with Jesus. Now, we don't know why he chose to do this. We're not told. It might have been, that's a great trick, Jesus. I want to participate in this miracle. I'd love to do that. Wow, walking in water. Give me a wee shot at that. It may have been just a purely sensual thing. He just wants to do this. He's excited by this. It may have just been his impulsiveness. It's the type of thing. Sometimes we can mistake our temperaments for faith, when really we can just be a loose cannon and say, I think we should do this. And we're going, well, that's just you. You can step out the boat, but I'm not stepping out the boat with you. And sometimes it can masquerade as faith when it's not. Perhaps it could just be to get closer to Jesus. He loved the Lord. And it might be, if that's you, let me come to you. I don't care about the water. I just want to come to you. I want to be with you. You are all I need at that particular time. Lord, if it's you, he says. If it's not you, I'm not interested in coming.

But if it's you, tell me to come to you. And Jesus tells him to come. It's very commendable to Peter, and the Lord encourages him in this. He doesn't say, well, wait a minute, I can walk in water.

Father, you can't. I'm the son of God. You can't do this. It's very, very commendable. And with one word, we are told he's to come, and we are told he starts to come. He gets out of the boat. He gets down out of the boat, walking in the water, and comes towards Jesus. The Lord wants us to do mighty exploits. This is such a challenging passage, this, isn't it? To walk by faith. Now, it might not be as bold as that. Sometimes you meet Christians who say, I believe I'm going to pick up this snake and pop it in my mouth, and hopefully everything will be okay. Well, that's okay for you. I'm not doing that. Masquerading as faith, and all it is is testing God. Peter did it because he was told to come.

[20 : 41] There's a difference. When you know the known will of God, it's disobedience not to do it. So, you sometimes meet Christians that says, I believe God can do this. That doesn't mean God will do it, because God can do it. Jesus walked in water. It doesn't mean that he could walk in water.

But when Jesus says to him, come, he can walk in water, because Jesus has told him. And there comes times in our life when the Lord wants us to step out, and we often pray, Lord, show me your will.

Lord, show me that even the difficult thing. Lord, this is scary. It's very scary. As I said, I've been associated with big churches and small churches. Big churches don't often move by faith.

They weigh it all up. The slide rules out. The pie charts are there. If A plus B equals C, they'll do it. And there's no great step of faith there. But small churches, A plus B, we don't know. We really don't know. We hardly have any resources. And it's often to small churches, the Lord says, take this step of faith. And it's an exciting thing. Lord, if it's you, if we just say to the Lord, Lord, if it's you, tell me what to do next. Even if it's scary, come, go, stop, do this, don't do that. It's a great prayer to pray as Peter prayed here to Jesus, spoke to Jesus. If it's you, cause me to come. And Peter does this. He walks on the water. He walks on the storm. And it's quite something. It's very special. And he discovers it works. It starts off really well. I remember the first time I heard this. It was a written sermon I read by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. I've never heard this before. I was just blown away by this. And as a young Christian, I could associate with it. You start off well in the Christian life. You're full of the joys. Watch me, Lord. I'm the next David

Livingston. I'm going to do great things for you. And you realize when the weather changes direction, suddenly your faith crumbles. And you realize you don't have much. You start to look at the waves.

[22 : 47] His problem was he took his eyes off Jesus. And he started to look at the waves. And suddenly it realizes, wait a minute, I shouldn't be here. He had a thinking disorder in that sense. I remember as a youngster, my dad took us along with his mates. My dad and his mates were, I don't have much memory, but they were only the sharpest knives in the drawer. Anyway, we all went to largs on this rowing boat. I'd never been in a rowing boat. I was only seven at the time. And all I could remember, the only boats I was in was these, no, the pedaly things come in number 24, your time is up.

Suddenly there was the sea and there was this boat. You know the boat with the wood is like that. It kind of overlaps and down it goes. One of those kind of boats. It may have had an engine. I can't remember. But I remember just pushing out with this thing and this thing bobbing up and down.

No, I thought, these folk don't have a clue. All it was saving us was about wood, that thick, all the way around. All I could see was that saving us from the sharks or whatever happened to be lurking around largs. And I just lost it completely. I was hysterical. We're drowning. We're going to die.

And then my dad, you just sit down, sit down. We're fine. There's more chocolate. You'll be fine. You'll be fine. And I thought, they don't get it. I get it. I've thought about this. We shouldn't be here. This is a boat. It's that thick. Forget it. I'm back on board. I want back on land. And that's what Peter does. He just, yeah, Jesus, yeah, if it's you, let me come to you. And then he goes, whoa, I shouldn't be here. This is scary. I've weighed it all up. This is not good. I've got a pair of Nike trainers on. It's not meant for walking in water. If I had a paddle board, maybe, yeah, I'd feel comfortable. This doesn't work. This does not work. This is not natural. And that's when your faith fails. That's the whole point of faith. It's unnatural. It's supernatural.

It doesn't make sense to somebody else, but to you it makes perfect sense. This is the route that God has planned for you. You know it. He's made it clear. There's divine coincidences. It's true to God's word. Other folk advise you as well. The church meeting, we go. That's what we should do.

[25 : 08] Scary. It's a big thing. And we need to try and take that step of faith. So he begins well, and he becomes overwhelmed. He cries out to the Lord. One minute, Lord, if it's you, cause me to come to you. And then he says, Lord, save me. So fourthly, caught. He is caught. This is the last immediately. Immediately they're sent. Immediately they're comforted. Peter steps out the boat, and he has to be rescued. Immediately, Jesus reaches out to sand. Now, we don't know how far he got. It doesn't say he got 50 yards. I'd love to know how far he got. I get an impression it was like two steps.

Yes. But whatever it was, he comes toward Jesus. Enough for Jesus just to reach out his hand and say, I've got you. I've got you. And that's a great thought, just to think of that. Even when you take these step of faiths, the Lord doesn't abandon us. Well, you stepped out the boat. I never told you to.

Sometimes, yeah, there are consequences. But the Lord is never far from us. He can't reach out and catch us. He doesn't abandon us. Even sometimes when we're foolish, and maybe it wasn't foolish for Peter to step out the boat, the Lord wouldn't have told him to. It was foolish for him to think wrongly of the Lord and think wrongly of his situation. The Lord will often catch you. And maybe you need caught. Maybe you feel you're sinking, you're drowning, whatever that is.

How does the Lord catch us? He will catch us often in a quiet time. You just think, situation's too big. I'm really enjoying reading. I enjoyed reading Genesis, but I'm in Galatians just now, those of you who are following the five-day reading plan, and some of the Psalms. You always read a Psalm now and again, an appropriate Psalm. But I'm enjoying Galatians as well. And it's amazing how the Lord just gives you a verse at the right time. And sometimes it can be every week, every day, sorry. And that's you just being caught. That's you just being held up by the Lord, that you're not sinking. And the Lord does this. He does it in the readings. He does it through prayer. You pray, you find your confidence, your faith growing. He sometimes does it through others. The Lord just says, send somebody at the right time just to keep you afloat, just to keep you going. The Lord knows how to catch us. And lastly, fifthly, changed. But by this, they were changed. That is the whole point of this. Two things have the Lord working in their life. They learn something about their self. What did they learn about their self? Their faith was weak. He says this to, why did you doubt? It's a kind of mild rebuke, isn't it? Why did you? You could have stood. You could have walked in the water, the same as me. Every trial we go through, it's to, not only to twithers, and we should never despise that time and say, Lord, forgive me. I doubted. And the Lord would say to us, why did you doubt? Oh, you of little faith. But they also learned something about Jesus. Verse 32, the wind died down. And it ends with these words, then those who were in the boat worshipped him. Truly, your desire is always to show us something about ourself and something about his self. So I don't know, I don't know, even know what might happen to you this week. Kimmy was telling us her week, Monday, Tuesday, is this. Something could happen in a way. Your situation's changed. But the Lord is always with you. He knows how to comfort you and how to strengthen you. Sometimes he says to us, come to me. This is a difficult thing I'm asking you to do, but walk in faith. Keep your eyes when faith fails.

He can catch us. But as a result of this, we are changed. Oh, you worship him. And we acknowledge that he is the Son of God once again. May the Lord comfort us. 25. Let's close by singing a closing song.

[29 : 01] This is a song.