

Sunday 9th August 2020

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together to worship God, who comes to us when we least expect it, who calls us out of the safety of our ordered lives and invites us to join Him in the adventure of faith. **LET'S WORSHIP GOD TOGETHER!**

HYMN

Be Thou My Vision

[\(Video\)](#)

READING

Matthew 14: 22-33 (NIV)

Jesus Walks on the Water

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. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

29 "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

SONG

Still

[\(Video\)](#)

HYMN

Jesus Calls Us O'er The Tumult

[\(Video\)](#)

SERMON: When Jesus Comes

Imagine the scene--a story we are told in three of the gospels: Matthew, Mark, and John. The disciples had just been through an emotional roller coaster. Mark's gospel tells us they had recently returned from a mission adventure where they had gone out in pairs to preach, heal, and cast out demons. We also know that they and Jesus had just been told about the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod. Emotional highs and lows! Then on top of that all they had helped Jesus feed a crowd of many more than 5000 with a little boys lunch. Five small loaves and two little fish--a few sardine sandwiches!

So I can understand why they were emotionally exhausted.

And they are also physically exhausted. They had been rowing across the lake against a strong wind with big waves, and they had been doing it for hours! Mark's gospel says they were "straining at the oars. " He uses a Greek word that is elsewhere translated "tormented." I would put it in Kiwi English, they were "totally stuffed!"

And it is into this scene that Jesus comes. Their initial reaction is terror as they think he is a ghost. Peter's reaction--recorded only in Matthew--is one of enterprise. But when he gets out of the boat and looks at the weather and away from Jesus he starts to sink. Jesus rescues him.

And the summary of Matthew's account is this: Then the disciples in the boat worshiped Jesus. "Truly you are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

For me this passage in Matthew has two lessons to teach us. The first is theological and the second is practical.

The theological one is that this story provides compelling evidence for Jesus' identity. He is divine. He is the creator God who can perform miracles. Both the feeding of the multitude and his walking on water provide evidence of this.

Some people--such as scholars in the Jesus Seminar--reject miracles. They suggest Jesus walking on the water didn't really happen, or provide a natural explanation for it. Such as the story that follows:

Three religious leaders, a Jewish Rabbi, a Catholic Priest, and a Presbyterian minister, went fishing together in a small boat. The Rabbi, suddenly remembering he had left his fishing pole at the cabin, stepped out of the boat and walked on the water to the shore. Just then, the Priest remarked that he had left his lure behind, and he too, stepped over the side of the boat, and followed in the same direction as the Rabbi. When they both returned

to the boat, the Presbyterian minister who had watched this remarkable demonstration, reasoned, "Now, my faith must be as strong as theirs." Determinedly he stepped out into the water-and immediately sank to the bottom. His two companions dragged him out, but once again he made a determined effort of faith, and again sank into the water. "My faith must be as strong as yours; why can't I walk on the water like you?" he asked his rescuers. The Rabbi turned to the Priest and said, "We'd better tell him where those rocks are before he drowns himself."

It is interesting that the Old Testament has a reference to God who walks on the water: *He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted. (Job 9:8-10, NIV)*

LXX: *"Who alone has stretched out the heavens, and walks on the sea as on firm ground?"*

The theological lesson is that Jesus is indeed God.

The practical one can be two-fold.

The one that would impact us more when we were younger is all about risk, About being willing to metaphorically "get out of the boat" and walk to Jesus.

There were two key times in my earlier life when I experienced this in a significant manner:

The first time was in the late 1970s when my first wife and I got involved with the ministry of YFC and then felt strongly we should leave the Brethren fellowship we had been in all our lives and look for another church fellowship. In a way, because the Assembly was such a sheltered environment, this was very much a "get out of the boat and walk on water" experience. We prayed about it a lot, and trusted God to lead us to a suitable place. After an initial visit to Knox Presbyterian in Lower Hutt he guided us to Avalon Baptist. That 'clicked.' The pastor who had been there only a few months was Rev Kevin Ward who has just retired from a teaching position after many years at Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership. God works in mysterious ways.

The second time was in 1980 when I felt God strongly calling me to apply for a position as Assistant Pastor at Avalon Baptist. At the time, I was possibly one of the highest paid government scientists of my age in the country and our family finances were looking good. My wife and I looked closely at all the factors, and decided we could manage financially on a much lower income provided I used my government superannuation to pay off some of our mortgage. But again, it was a bit of a "get out of the boat" moment.

Perhaps as we get older challenge such as "get out of the boat" moments become less frequent, although I imagine that some of you have experienced them and may still do so. Be assured, when they do happen, Jesus will not let us sink! He is there for us just as he was for Peter!

But the other practical lesson is for us all, whatever our age and whatever our stage in our journey with Jesus.

We all encounter times when we are emotionally and physically exhausted.
We all have times when we are at the end of our tether.
We all have times when we feel the night and our time of torment will never end.

That is when Jesus comes. And he says to us, as he said to them, the words

"Courage!" he said. "It is I. Don't be afraid!"

There are just five words in the Greek language. "Courage" / "I am" / "Fear not".

The first word is a Greek word that is used twice before in this gospel:

The paralysed man brought by his friends:

Some people brought to him a paralyzed man on a mat. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Be encouraged, my child! Your sins are forgiven." (Mat 9:2 NLT)

And the woman with the bleeding condition who touched the hem of Jesus' cloak:

Jesus turned around, and when he saw her he said, "Daughter, be encouraged! Your faith has made you well." And the woman was healed at that moment. (Mat 9:22 NLT)

Jesus says to you, and me, and to us all, "be encouraged."

Why? The second two words tell us why. He says, "I am."

The words "I am" connect to the Exodus experience of Moses with God. Exodus 3.14-15

Moses replied, "When I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors sent me to you,' they will ask me, 'What is his name?' So what can I tell them?" God said, "I am who I am. You must tell them: 'The one who is called I AM has sent me to you.' Tell the Israelites that I, the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, have sent you to them. This is my name forever; this is what all future generations are to call me.

But these two words also connect to the account in John's gospel when they come to seize Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and when he says those same words, "I am," they fall over backwards. Of course John uses the same words to preface the great "I am" sayings of Jesus. "I am the bread of life, and so on.

Finally the words “fear not” make a wonderful bible search exercise as we see time and again God reassuring people and us that we do not need to fear because HE is in control of all our lives.

We need to experience time and time again what happens when Jesus comes. We get exhausted on the journey of life; we feel afraid; we seem to be in the dark.

Jesus comes to us and says: "courage" / "I am" / "fear not"

I enjoy the way that Patrick of Ireland expresses his need of Christ's company in part of what is called "The Breastplate of Patrick." I invite you to say this with me:

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me;
Christ to comfort and restore me;
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

SONG *In Christ Alone* [\(Video\)](#)

SONG *What A Friend We Have In Jesus* [\(Video\)](#)

LORD’S PRAYER

HYMN *I Am Trusting Thee Lord Jesus* [\(Video\)](#)

BENEDICTION *May The Lord (Edelweiss)* [\(Video\)](#)