

Matthew 14:22-33 Jesus has just fed the five thousand.

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25 And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.' 28 Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' 29 He said, 'Come.' So, Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. 30 But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

### What are you looking at? Jesus or your circumstances

Point – Jesus knows what we need and when we need it. He is always there for us.

1. If we had read the whole chapter, we would have read how John had been beheaded and Jesus and his friends were needing time to grieve and be alone – however they were followed by the crowds.

Even as he and his friend are grieving, Jesus finds time to watch the crowds and then feed them. He shows amazing compassion

Afterwards he sends his disciples ahead of him – Was it because he knew they were mentally, physically and emotionally exhausted?

2. They're in a boat - then the storms come.
3. They will be used to storms but what this tells us today is that after sometimes the most mountain top experiences we can have with God we may face a storm.
4. However, Jesus goes to them and the next bit of the story is very intriguing.
5. They are terrified – now if I saw someone working on the water towards me, I would probably be terrified too, or I might be intrigued and be like Peter and want to try.

Jesus speaks to them - Do not be afraid-

the word fear is the word Phobos where we get our word phobia from and it is the type of fear that means overwhelm- where you may want to flee – rather than being a reprimand Jesus is comforting them and saying do not fear do not feel overwhelmed as I am here.

6. Those words seem to reassure Peter that not only would he not flee but he too would walk on water. Regardless of the storm and chaos around him

– as long as he's focused on Jesus, he's fine but then he takes his eyes off him and that's when he starts to sink.

7. This last few months without our normal support networks family – friends – church we may have felt that we were lost at sea too. We may have taken our eyes off God and looked at our circumstances. We may even still feel like we're drowning in a sea of despair. Can I reassure you that Jesus is still in the business of being a rescuer – he will never leave you and he will pull you up out of the miry pit.

Psalm 40:2

*He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*

8. **Today's very important point is this- keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and not your circumstances.** If you have taken your eyes off him then cry out to him to rescue you. Ask for prayer or reach out to one of the clergy but don't sink because you feel you can't do anything else.

2<sup>nd</sup> point

***Are you in a place of doubt?***

***, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'***

Jesus tells Peter what he's done – he's doubted Jesus can rescue him.

The words you of little faith are used 5 times. Each time it is Jesus reprimanding those who he is talking to for not hearing his voice.

Maybe in the storm and chaos Peter focused not on Jesus voice but on the chaos around him. Jesus is reminding him not to listen to the noise but listen instead to him.

We all doubt – we all have seasons in our life where believing in Jesus is really hard. Believing especially when the noise around us is loud and distracting can feel almost impossible. When we listen to the words of others rather than what God says about us can take us into some very dark places. Or when we listen to conflicting advice from the media and friends and family and end up in a state of confusion rather than using some of our common sense that God gives us. The gift of discernment is especially important to pray for in this season. A gift I often feel I need masses more of. Thank goodness I have plenty of people around me who have an abundance of this gift.

Going back to doubt

Curacy – almost lost my faith – I had to reach out to those who had been with me a long time. I had to take time out and seek God even though I wasn't even sure I really believed he wanted to help me or was there for me.

How can we help ourselves grow in faith rather than sink beneath the waves and storms of life?

Homegroup- we all agreed that meeting weekly and studying God word helped us. Knowing we could pick the phone up to one of us and not feel judged.

Who is your support network?

We would love as a parish to know we want to support you and we are working towards how we can do this in the best way. If you have any ideas, please do let me know.

Maybe you need to book onto a retreat – an online one – there's plenty around.

Maybe you need to ask someone to pray with you weekly or maybe joining the prayer meeting once a month and being with others as they pray will help build your faith.

**So, 1<sup>st</sup> point – Do not feel overwhelmed but recognises Jesus is with us - Look to Jesus not the storms.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> point If you are in a place of doubt ask God for help to grow your faith or reach out to someone and ask them to journey with you through the wilderness season you may find yourself in.**