



# ROOTS

## Home Worship

### 9<sup>th</sup> August 2020

#### Matthew 14:22-33. Peter Walks on Water

##### **Prayer**

As we approach you today, Lord,  
we probably feel pretty much like Peter –  
full of bravado to begin with,  
but then just not quite so certain of ourselves.  
We come to you, Jesus,  
trusting that even if we feel ourselves  
beginning to sink under the pressures that we face,  
we know you are still there holding us up.  
Please reassure us that you won't let go,  
no matter how we feel.  
Thank you, Lord. **Amen.**

##### **Bible Notes**

The quick dismissal of the disciples and then the crowd is probably because Jesus wanted to avoid being set at the head of a militia ready to march on Jerusalem. Instead he wanted to pray. Perhaps we should hear an echo of the temptation narrative: Jesus is seeking strength to stick to his guns in the face of the temptation to take a different route.

The twelve spend the whole night battling the elements out on the lake. As dawn breaks, they are confronted with the sight of Jesus striding out across the water. And they are terrified. But Jesus speaks comfort. Far from being a ghost, he says, 'It is I.'

This is a strong suggestion that there is something in Jesus' identity that is beyond human. God in the Old Testament spoke as the 'I am', so Jesus possibly does the same here. There is also a strong echo of the instances when God is pictured in the Old Testament as walking on or through the sea (Job 9.8; Psalm 77.19; Isaiah 43.16).

We are then treated to one of the great entertainments of the Synoptic Gospels: Peter inviting Jesus to tell him to get out of the boat, doing so and almost immediately sinking and crying out for rescue. Back in the boat, Jesus gently chides his lack of faith and the disciples worship him as 'Son of God'. Is there something beyond seeing Jesus as the king of Israel here?

Some have seen this story as a resurrection narrative that is out of place, perhaps one that exists in the same narrative world as that in John 21. There is little evidence for this, although Matthew would agree that the resurrected Jesus was the Jesus who lived with his disciples prior to the first Easter. Rather, this seems to be a story that is more centred on Peter and his faith than on Jesus and his identity. It is a story that encourages ordinary Jesus-followers as it confirms that 'the twelve', despite their proximity to Jesus for three years, still struggled with their faith. And perhaps Jesus (v.31) is not so much chiding Peter as recognising the frail material he has to work with. Here is someone who, along with the others, has seen Jesus conjure a meal for 5,000 out of a packed lunch and yet seems to find faith a struggle.

##### **Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

An exploration of Jesus' possible tone of voice may be helpful.

How does he say 'Come' in verse 29?

Is it an invitation or an order?

How does he say, 'Why did you doubt?'

Is it a rebuke, or does he take delight in the lesson he has taught?

There isn't just a single tone of voice in which God calls us.

### Questions for Reflection

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.*



- Does this image speak more of faith or doubt?
- What step/leap of faith have you taken recently?
- Are we too risk-averse in living the gospel?

### What are You Doing Here?

Make a postcard (you could use any unused postcards you have around, or simply fold a piece of paper to the right size). Imagine that you are Peter, and you have just experienced the events described in the Gospel reading. Write a postcard to someone about what has happened and what you think it could mean for you.

### Pray for Others

*Sections of this prayer could be said by different people. Adapt it to your local context.*

Lord God, we come before you to pray for all those people for whom taking risks is a way of life.

**Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.**

We pray for our emergency services – medics and paramedics, the police, the fire service – and all who daily face difficult situations as they seek to help to protect us and make our world a safer and more peaceful place.

**Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.**

We pray for people who work in troubled areas – the armed forces in war zones, those who, at risk to themselves, bring humanitarian aid into areas of natural disaster, and many more.

**Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.**

We pray for people who take risks in your name – those who take your word where it is most needed

– and for people who grapple with faith and doubt.

**Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.**

**Amen.**

### A Prayer to End

Peter only knew life as a fisherman.

But he got out of the boat and followed you, Lord.

Help us to hear your voice,

get out of our boats and follow you.

In the week ahead,

may the world and its problems decrease

as you increase in our lives.

Keep us focused on your way,

looking ahead and trusting you.

**Amen.**

### Live Your Faith

Take a risk this week. For example, you might say ‘Hello’ to someone you see regularly but have never spoken to; or make an apology that is overdue; or do something practical – that you would not normally do – to help someone struggling with the current pandemic restrictions.