

I hope when you read a passage of scripture, you don't just read it as if it's a fairytale. When I read scripture I sometimes try to put myself literally in the scene, as though I was there myself. With today's passage that really doesn't fill me with good thoughts. If you know me well, you will know that I don't particularly like boats. So when verse 24 says that the boat is "buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it", I begin to reach for the sick bag.

Now things have got much better with me. Alison often recalls the early days of our relationship where if I had to get onto a boat I would walk away from her and find some open air part of the boat where I could sit alone in misery. And here's how far it's now come. Last year I took Alison on a cruise to the Norwegian Fjords. And

only last week, we took a boat to the Aran Islands and then had a rather rocky boat tour of the cliffs of Moher.

So I get how the disciples in today's reading are feeling. It's interesting how at the beginning of our Gospel reading it says that Jesus **made** the disciples get in to the boat. They had no desire to go out on a rough sea that night – I more than any am with them. But Jesus made them. If they were anything like me they'd be asking a lot of questions – how far are we across, is it calming down, and most importantly 'Where's Jesus when we are in trouble?'

And this has got me thinking about life. We get in the boat. We start rowing. We have a destination in mind. Yet the wind constantly beats against us. The waves of life wear us out. We set our minds on

success - but the waves of life slow us down to a crawl. We get exhausted as we try to get to our destination. We end up in the middle of a lake feeling helpless at times. We don't always get through life maybe the way we wanted to . But neither is life an accident. Just as Jesus shoved the disciples into the middle of the lake, Proverbs 16:9 says, "The human heart plans its course, but the LORD determines the steps."

We know in the end that God is in control, and God has determined a path for you – the question I suppose is whether we have sailed the path that God has desired for us, and whether we have involved God through our course in life? Are we willing to trust him even it means we will be in deep water, feeling very much on our own? So, thinking about this passage this

morning, how do we get through the storms and get to the other side?

Well firstly, we should never give up. We've got to keep on plugging away. Even though it was the morning and the disciples were exhausted, they didn't give up. But they were running out of steam doing what Jesus told them to do. As husbands, wives, parents, employed, or retired, God calls on all of us to "do everything for the glory of God." Our mission in life is not to focus on ourselves – if we do then our ultimate destiny will be without God – but with God as our focus he walks with us through life.

So what do we do when we are exhausted? Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still, and know that I am God". As the disciples were stuck, Jesus decided to come down

from the mountain and go to them. In a powerful display of might, Jesus calmly walked on water. It says the boat was a considerable distance out so we can assume we are talking miles rather than metres. In the midst of their struggling and going nowhere, Jesus was easily able to overcome nature and reach these exhausted men.

Instead of being overjoyed at the sight of their Lord, when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. You see they had put Jesus in a box. They didn't understand that he was a God who could control nature. And for us we take pride in the way we think we are in control. It makes us feel as if we have got everything sorted. But we have to realise that God works outside the boundaries of

nature, and therefore nothing is impossible to him. Do we have faith to rely on God when things are tough and exhausting? Throughout our journey in life, God requires us to love and trust him even when we don't quite understand how it's all going to work out.

And that's why as Jesus approached them in the boat he said : "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." In the midst of this terrible storm - Jesus was assuring them of his everlasting presence. If the disciples were wondering if they were sunk since Jesus wasn't physically there, Jesus was saying to them, "nothing can separate me from you."

When a child is growing up he needs that assurance through his parents and usually through a toy or blanket. That's what

Jesus was assuring the disciples and us of. "I am here." And so no matter where you are - you may not have planned on being here, but Jesus comes with reassurance that he isn't leaving us. Jesus is the LORD. He is in control of all of creation. Since He can walk on water, that tells me that HE is still in charge of everything. He has not abandoned me - and shoved me out to sea just to drown! What is it that you are going through at the moment? Are you worried about something? Are you concerned for someone you love? Be assured that Jesus is LORD. He is in control. He has not abandoned you.

And so in the midst of all of this is Peter. Peter wasn't satisfied with sitting back. He wanted a piece of the action. "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." And Peter just doesn't jump in. He's

waiting for an instruction. I often hear about people just jumping into situations because we think God will support our actions, but we haven't actually heard from God. And then we wonder why things don't work out. We need to slow down at times, and instead of panicking when the waves seem to be threatening us, instead wait on God for his direction. Remember the words of Isaiah 40:31 "that they who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength." For Peter his faith rested on the Word of Jesus. He sought the Word and promise of Jesus so that he could experience this miracle and come closer to Christ even more so. And so as we journey through life, it is important that we take those moments just to wait on his Word and his promise, so that we can experience more of him.

With the Word and command of Christ, Peter stepped out of the boat - and he walked on water! Wow! Amazing faith! Peter achieved the impossible. Imagine what else could be done with such a faith! Jesus said that we could move mountains with faith as small as a mustard seed!

So is Peter a great example of faith? It says '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?"' Why did Jesus say Peter had little faith? Because Peter SAW the wind and feared. Remember that Faith is being sure of what you DON'T see. Peter's eyes saw the wind and the waves. He didn't remain focused on Jesus - and His Word and command. And so he fell - only seconds

after having the promise and command of Jesus. The First Commandment states to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind.” If only Peter would have had a strong faith - he would have trusted that he could walk all the way to Jesus with no problem at all. But He didn’t trust Jesus’ words. His faith was only little. Sometimes in life we find ourselves in deep water. Maybe you are so feeling that this morning. We often end up sinking in doubt and despair - losing sight of our Lord - because we just can’t keep our focus entirely on God’s commands to trust him fully. With health, financial or marital issues on the horizon, we finally realize that we aren’t so great. All we can say like Peter is, “Lord, save me.” That’s when it hits us. The strength of our faith is not in whether we can walk on water - whether we have “successful” marriages or

businesses. The strength of our faith is in the object of our faith - and that's Jesus who will never let us drown. Immediately Jesus reached out his hand to Peter and caught him. . . . And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Even though Peter's faith was "little" in actions - he still ended up saved. When we look to Jesus - he won't let us drown. He sees our doubt, he sees our weaknesses, but he doesn't ever walk away. Whether you're walking on water or sitting in the boat - the main point is that you're listening to the Word of Jesus and finding comfort in knowing he is there for you.

There is no safer place we can be than in the loving care of our Lord. When all was said and done, the disciples and Jesus ended up at their destination. The point isn't, "how do I walk on water," but

actually “how do I get across the lake?”
And Jesus brought them across the lake.

When you find yourself scared to death at nature’s roar, sinking in front of the waves, look to Christ. If He could get all the disciples across the sea safely, He can take care of you as well.

Finally, I am so glad that we belong to a very loving church family with a prayer ministry team that provides support and the reassurance of God’s healing presence to many people. It may feel at times that like Peter you are standing on your own in the rough seas with no one to help, and all you can feel is the winds battling against you. But that is not the case. As well as your focus on Jesus, take heart in people around you that will walk with you through the storms. Never try to do this

on your own, and never allow yourself to think that your worries and challenges are nothing in comparison to anyone else. Jesus knew the concerns of five thousand hungry people as he left the side of that hill to look after 12 men. And therefore know that in the midst of all the people in the world, he loves you and wants you to believe that. And he wants to surround you with people who will journey with you. So pick up the phone any time to me, never think I am too busy to take a call, and let me support you alongside the prayer ministry team with whatever help you need. Jesus said these words to Peter and he says them to you this morning, "Take courage. It's me. Don't be afraid".