



10th Sunday of Pentecost

9th August 2020

Taking a step of faith during stormy weather

Genesis 37:1-4,12-28 | Psalm 105:1-6,16-22 | Romans 10:4-15 | Matthew 14:22-36

**“Then Peter got down out of the boat,
walked on the water and came toward Jesus.”**

Matthew 14:22-36

Slide 1 is the Message Title

Have you ever heard the expression ‘a leap of faith’ or ‘a step of faith’? it is a well-known expression!

Slide 2 | A step of faith ...

The phrase reminds me of a famous scene in *Indiana Jones’ and The Last Crusade* in which Indiana’s father, named Henry, is dying. His only hope for life is Indiana’s success in reaching the cave in which the chalice Jesus supposedly used at The Last Supper was stored. However, to get to the holy grail, Indiana had to follow the instructions written in his father’s journal. After successfully navigating various traps, Indiana comes to a bottomless pit. His eyes tell him there is no way to cross. However, he reads in his father’s journal, that he must take a step of faith.

... a step onto nothing ... a step into an empty space which has no means to support him.

Slide 3 | Stepping back into turbulent stormy weather ...

As you know two weeks ago I kind of made you feel seasick as we braved the stormy seas of uncertainty. Well, it seems pretty obvious that the Lord has more lessons for us about how we are to survive the stormy weather we are currently enduring.

In fact, we read that after feeding the multitude, Jesus **“insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake ...”** (v22) So, if we agree that Jesus knew what was about to unfold, it seems pretty likely that Jesus is sending us back into the stormy weather.

Rather than retell the story, I thought we would watch it from The Bible Miniseries.

Slide 4 | [VIDEO] | The disciples obey Jesus instructions, yet their obedience sends them into stormy weather

I like this version because it shows what the stormy weather would probably have been like – in Mark’s version we read that Jesus saw that the disciples were “in serious trouble.” (Mark 6:48)

As they’re struggling, some begin to make out a vision of a person, walking in the distance.

The others draw their attention to the unlikely image, and the only explanation they can muster is it must be a ghost.

But the mysterious image calls out, “Take courage. It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

We must not let our English translations miss the significance of Jesus’ words.

Jesus is not just saying, "Don't worry. It's me. I'm not a ghost."

When he said, "**It is I.**" he used an expression the disciples would immediately understand. "It is I" is the Greek version of what God said in Exodus 3:14 when he told Moses his name is "I AM." So, Jesus is declaring himself with the God of the Old Testament who miraculously delivered his people again and again. It's his way of saying, "I am the Lord God of the universe. I created the wind and the waves and I control this storm."

But in Peter's incredulous way, he needs more assurance.

Slide 5 | [VIDEO] | Point 1 | Peter was willing to risk the impossible, taking a step onto that which could not support him.

I stopped the video at this point on purpose.

Too often, we read through the story so quickly, we forget how amazing Peter's response to Jesus invitation actually is.

Peter was prepared to go against everything he knew in the natural – to step out of the safety of the boat, into turbulent water, which he knew could not support him.

Peter, and only Peter, was prepared to take an enormous risk – what has become known as the ultimate step of faith.

There is another reason why I paused the video at this point.

We must never let our quick reading of this passage allow us to forget that Peter did, indeed, walk on water.

With his eyes fixed on Jesus, he walked towards Jesus, on the water.

At this point, I'd like to ask you a question ... it is a strange kind of question – but it is a question that is designed to take the passage out of Bible into our lives.

The question is: 'upon what did Peter actually walk?'

I hope you don't say 'on the water' – because you and I know both know the water didn't suddenly change when Peter stepped onto it.

So, I ask again – upon what did Peter walk?

[congregational responses invited]

I would like to offer the suggestion that Peter walked on the same thing that you and I are invited to walk on when the Lord asks us to take a step of faith.

The Lord never asks us to take a 'blind' leap of faith ... he never asks us to step onto nothing.

Look at verse 29, Peter walked on Jesus' word – the word "Come."

Just one word from Jesus had sufficient power to permit Peter to do the impossible.

The word of the Lord Jesus always has sufficient power to sustain and support us to do the impossible.

This incident in the middle of the stormy lake provides a powerful image of what the walk of faith is really like.

When we take a step of faith, placing our trust in God's word alone – it is like we are stepping onto a substance of which no-one, but us, can see or perceive is there.

We read in Hebrews, "**faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**" (Hebrews 11:1)

Peter was able to walk on the word of God as long as his eyes were fixed on Jesus.

But unfortunately, Peter's brain caught up with his faith.

Let's watch what happened next,

Slide 6 | [VIDEO] | Point 2 | Peter sank into the waves, when he took his eyes off his Saviour

What caused Peter to sink into the waves?

The video clearly showed what Matthew recorded, "when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Are we not all susceptible to do the same?

Peter looked away from Jesus and his word, and looked at the wind and the waves.

When his eyes moved to look at the stormy weather, which beat against his cheeks, his brain caught up and shouted at him,

"What on earth do you think you're doing? You're in the middle of the lake, and there is a storm raging all around you."

As soon as he turned his face away from Jesus, he sank deep into the waters.

My challenge to you today, is: on what is your gaze focused?

Are you focussed on the stormy weather? Are the winds of unpredictability causing you to take your eyes of God's word?

Are you looking at all the changes taking place in our world, and saying to yourself, 'it is impossible for God to do anything right now,' or 'nothing can happen as long as the storm is raging all around us. We should just wait it out.'

If your brain is saying that, why not look back at the Bible and tell your heart to hear Jesus' voice calling 'Come.'

'Come out into the storm – walk towards me. As you walk on my word, and the surety of my promises, together we can do the impossible.'

Slide 7 | Application | Are you prepared to step out of the boat, trusting in God's Word alone?

Before, I close, I'd like us to remember one other important lesson from this passage.

Yes, Peter took his eyes off Jesus and sank into the waves.

Thank goodness Jesus was there to rescue him.

But, can't we all empathise with Peter's mistake?

I actually think that Peter is really inspiring. Why?

Because Peter, and only Peter, was willing to get out of the boat.

This is not the story of Bartholomew walking on the stormy seas ... because Bartholomew stayed in the safety of the boat.

This is not the story of Matthew walking on the stormy seas ... because Matthew stayed in the safety of the boat.

This is not the story of James walking on the stormy seas ... because James stayed in the safety of the boat.

Only Peter was willing to take the risk, step out of his comfort zone - step out of everything that represented safety and security to him - to take a step into the unknown toward his Saviour.

We too are in a place where God is asking us to step out of our comfort zone into a new place.

We are all vividly aware our world is becoming a very different new place. Already wherever we go there are new signs, new green spots, and new masked faces confront us – it feels very much like stormy weather.

Jesus is calling us – his church – a community of priests who have experienced the good news of Jesus Christ in our lives – to step into the choppy waters of this new turbulent world.

Are you willing to step out of the boat?

Where will we be when we step out of our safe boat?

What will we walk on when we step out of our comfort zone?

We step onto the rock of God's word. Knowing His sure foundation will certainly support us. Even though no one else can see what the heck we are trusting in – We know.

And when we reach the other side, our community will be remarking amongst themselves, 'who are these people who travelled through such dangerous waters?'

And we will tell them, 'have we got a story to tell you:'

'our Saviour told us to cross the turbulent waters, and although it was bumpy and frightening at times, he brought us safely to the other side.'

*Our Lord and Saviour, thank you for Peter's willingness to step out of the boat. Thank you for Matthew and Mark's faithfulness to record the story so we may learn and be challenged. Lord, give us the courage to step out of the boat, out of our comfort zone, and take a step of faith towards you. Help us to trust in the unseen word of God, so with you we may do the impossible. Guide us during this turbulent season of change and teach us to keep our eyes fixed on you. **Amen.***

Reflection Questions:

The Word of God provides many images and metaphors which can be applied to many different situations. It is the work of the Spirit to make these images come alive in our specific situation. The following questions are designed to highlight some of the challenges that were presented in today's message.

As you listened (or read) today's message, what aspect of the message challenged you?

In what areas are you hesitant to step out of your comfort zone into the stormy weather?

What represents a 'step of faith' for you at the moment?

Did a specific 'step of faith' come to mind?

As a church community we are needing to adapt our worship to this new world that is emerging – and it is like trying to build a house in a storm. Yet, Jesus calls us to take a step out of what is familiar and secure, into the turbulent waters.

How does this message apply in your life?

DAY 6	Praise God for His Handiwork	15th August
<i>O LORD my God, how great are you! You are robed with honour and majesty. You are dressed in a robe of light!</i> <i>Psalm 104:1-2</i>		Further study: Psalm 95
“ <i>I will sing to the Lord as long as I live. I will praise my God to my last breath! May all my thoughts be pleasing to him.</i> ”	Psalm 104 is like a symphony to God’s handiwork in creation. In fact, if it is fine and sunny outside, why not take your Bible and read Psalm 104 outside. This psalm tells us that God is intimately involved in every aspect of sustaining our amazing world – from rain, to animals, to sea creatures. God sustains it all.	
	Questions: Do you praise God when you’re surrounded by nature? When was the last time you sat in God’s presence outside, perhaps by the water? Allow the stillness of his presence overflow in your heart.	
<i>Heavenly Father, we live in a world of wonder and delight – and the beauty of creation is a masterpiece I get to enjoy daily. Help me to appreciate your gift of creation. Amen.</i>	Application: So often we don’t take the time to enjoy nature. Next time you go for a walk, praise the Lord for his handiwork, even in the simplest of objects.	



This is a devotional resource created for Southlakes Anglican Church community.

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Week 3: I’m scared – the turbulent weather is frightening!

DAY 1	There is still some fruit in me!	10th August
<i>Even in old age the godly will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green. Psalm 92:14</i>		Further study: Genesis 18:10-14

“
Is anything too hard for the Lord? The Lord said in response to Sarah’s laugh of disbelief”
Genesis 18:10-14

Too often when we reach the latter years of our life, we begin to feel that we are no longer useful. But, here the psalms celebrates that even in the third age, the godly still remain fruitful. In fact, the psalm describes the elderly godly person “vital and green”. Surely, they will radiate, joy, confidence and security! Why? Look at verses 1-5 and you’ll have your answer.

Questions: Are you feeling old, tired and rundown? If so, follow the instructions in Psalm 92, verses 1-5. Praising God with our mouths and hearts is like taking a multi-vitamin or an energy drink – try it today!

Heavenly Father, thank you that I can still produce fruit even in my latter years. Thank you that I’m never too old to be useful in your kingdom. Reassure me of my usefulness. Amen.

Application: In your prayer journal, write down what “thrills your heart with all God has done for you.” Then, think of someone who you may like to share one of those stories.

DAY 2	I sit in the hands of my Maker	11th August
<i>Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is our God. Psalm 95:6-7</i>		Further study: Psalm 139
“ <i>He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains.</i> ”	The rest of this verse reads “We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care.” It can feel, at the moment, as though the world is swirling out of control. But, we read that God is watching the world, and especially his people. In fact, God is not watching from a distance, he sent his Spirit into the world, to be IN the world with us. As we read Psalm 139 we are reassured that God’s presence is with us wherever we go.	
Psalm 95:4	Questions: Mediate on the concept of God being our Maker. You may like to read Psalm 139, a famous psalm about God’s intimate knowledge of us. Which verse from 139 stands out?	
<i>Heavenly Father, may I never cease from seeing your handiwork all around me as I look at nature and your creation. Amen.</i>	Application: Psalm 96 says “sing to the Lord a new song”. A new song is one that hasn’t been written by anyone before – what would be the words of your new song?	

DAY 4	God is with me in the ups & downs	13th August
<i>I will be careful to live a blameless life – when will you come to help me? I will lead a life of integrity in my own home. Psalm 101</i>		Further study: Psalm 102
“ <i>Lord hear my prayer! Don’t turn away from me in my time of distress.</i> ”	In psalm 101 the psalmist makes a commitment to live a holy life – one guided by integrity, justice and wise choices. But in the next psalm, we see a broken person pouring their heart out to God. The psalms are known as the Prayer Book of the godly – and prayer is with us in our ups and downs, when we make huge commitments, only to fail. Prayer is the consistency through life’s entire journey.	
Psalm 102:1-2	Questions: Is your prayer life consistent in the ups and the downs? Or, do you only pray when things are going wrong?	
<i>Heavenly Father, thank you for the book of Psalms that provides prayers for the high moments and the low. Even when I fail, reassure me of your unbounding love. Amen.</i>	Application: In your prayer journal what kind of commitment can you make to the Lord about your prayer life? Yes, you may fail. But thank God we have a forgiving Father.	

DAY 3	Does your closet need airing?	12th August
<i>For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever and his faithfulness continues to each generation. Psalm 100:5</i>		Further study: Psalm 99
“ <i>Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with singing.</i> ”	The Lord is good! Do you really believe that? Many people secretly doubt that the Lord is good. People often harbour doubts that God might want them to do what they desperately don’t want to do – and so they hide from God their hurts and mistakes of the past. But, here we read that God is faithful. Are there mistakes that you are holding on to (perhaps hidden in the closet of your mind)? Perhaps it is time to open up these hurts to God – allow the fresh breeze of his Spirit to blow in. God’s unfailing love is able to heal any wound of the past.	
	Questions: In verse 1 we are asked to “worship the Lord with gladness.” Is there anything that is preventing you from worshipping the Lord with gladness? What is it?	
<i>Heavenly Father, although we are going through times in which we feel the waters are raging – help us to recognise that your love is unfailing and your faithfulness unceasing – like a lighthouse in a storm. Amen.</i>	Application: It can be hard to find joy while the swirling waters are raging – but, the Psalm advises us to “acknowledge that the Lord is God”. How does acknowledging God’s sovereignty help you to find joy in uncertain times?	

DAY 5	What are dawn’s first words?	14th August
<i>My heart is confident in you O God; no wonder I can sing your praises with all my heart. Psalm 108:1</i>		Further study: Psalm 109:20-30
“ <i>I will thank the Lord among all the people. I will sing your praises among the nations.</i> ”	Would you describe your heart as a ‘confident heart’? Remember, this is not a heart that is confident in itself – its own strength and resilience. No, this is talking about a heart that is confident in God – confident in God’s faithfulness and promise to answer his prayer. The psalmist is so confident in God that he desires there to be constant praise to God being offered in the morning!	
Psalm 108:3	What is the first thing that you do when you wake up? Coffee, Toast, Tea ... why not sing a song in the shower?	
	Questions: What are the first words that you offer in the morning? Why not make a commitment to make your first words in the morning, words of praise to God. I’m sure your spouse will be grateful for the smile that accompanies your praise.	
<i>Heavenly Father, thank you for delighting in my praise of you. Give me a grateful heart that is filled with words which honour you. Amen.</i>	Application: Sing a song of praise in the shower – yes, no one will complain – and you’re allowed to sing as heartily as you like.	