

Trumpington 9 August 2020

Matthew 14:22-33

Romans 10: 5-15

If I had been preaching this morning in The Leys School Chapel, as I did regularly some years ago, the school would have collectively sighed when we had a Bible reading which had anything to do with boats or the sea. For some reason, they always listened out for any mention of sailing – and hopefully, other messages I wished to impart might also have been heard.

Today's readings are, of course, from the lectionary (which guides us Sunday by Sunday) so a gift for a keen sailor to reflect upon. The accounts of Jesus walking on the water are so well known, but we have listened to Matthew's gospel, and it is Matthew who specifically mentions Peter's role in the event. So it is Peter on whom we are to reflect for these few minutes.

Peter – that wonderful example to all Christian disciples: impetuous, keen to say the right thing, the rock on which God's church was to be founded, but also **rocky** in his behaviour, to acknowledge that oft used play on words; he even denied knowing Jesus when the going got really tough.

Three points, (of course!)

1st: The disciples were doing what was not at all unusual for them – travelling by boat across the lake. And not unusually for the Sea of Galilee a storm arose – it was a challenging time, it appears. And not exactly reassuring for them to see an apparition approaching them. A bit of dramatic irony here: we know it was Jesus, but apparently they didn't, understandably I suppose. Peter does seem to have got it though, and he calls out: **Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.** Our knowledge of Peter's track record might suggest he would bottle out at this point. I wonder if he did waver; certainly there's the "if it is you...". Slight doubt, a bit of uncertainty?

I mentioned Peter's example to all followers of Jesus, and here he is, responding to what he has seen, and wanting to check it out; wanting to hear Jesus calling to him; wanting, even, to be called to do something ultimately risky.

A bit about risk then; well, as with so many areas of life, when I am sail training we constantly assess the risk of what we are undertaking. We might avoid an action if it is just patently too risky, but, on the whole, we are doing something which inherently carries risk. A bit like crossing the road, or going out with or

without a face covering, or trying to follow Jesus in this complex and perplexing world we inhabit.

2nd: Whether it was the answer Peter wanted, or not, he actually got out of the boat, and headed towards Jesus. What on earth(!) is going on. I suppose he'd be thought of as daft... In spite of the stormy conditions it is always better to stay in the boat unless there is no alternative (e.g. only ever step **up** into a life raft from your boat; much safer to stay with the yacht unless absolutely necessary to abandon ship).

Rarely will we be challenged by such a situation, but for us in our everyday discipleship? Probably more often than we think. It's about taking a step of faith – in response to what we discern as Jesus' call. For some it might even be to step out of normal church life and live out a calling elsewhere. For us all it will be to be prepared to take those risks – individually or together as God's church. Just how are we called to respond to Jesus' call in this parish. Can we dare to step out the boat?

3rd: But of course, it wasn't all plain sailing for Peter (Sorry about that metaphor). He wavered, and even then he experienced Jesus' presence – for real. Jesus says **Why did you doubt?** Perhaps it's obvious – actually it's a Matthew sort of word (*distaso – to doubt or hesitate*)– only used by him in the gospels, and probably means being of two minds, wondering which way to go. That's natural, let's not beat ourselves up if we sometimes feel the same.

And the story then goes on, but enough for now.

A story of sensing Jesus' presence; hearing his call and responding; being prepared to take Godly risk (let's call it stepping out of the boat) and trusting in a God, who through Jesus Christ, not only calls, but accompanies, and reassures, and saves us.

Can we trust and respond – as individuals and as God's church?

Amen

Lord you have come to the seashore

[Pescador de Hombres \(Lord, You Have Come\)- Cesareo Gabarain- Lyrics](#)