

Dear Friends,

Matthew 14: 30-33

Peter has been walking on water towards Jesus. All went well until he was distracted by the threatening winds. He became frightened and started to sink. He cried out to Jesus saying "Lord save me!"

As soon as Peter calls for help Jesus is there. He immediately reaches out his hand, catches him, and holds him safely and securely. He will not let Peter fall. He will not let him perish.

This moment of crying out to God and of God coming to help is like many in the Psalms. Here are some examples:

"Stretch out your hand from on high: set me free and rescue me from the hand of mighty waters."

"Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the floods sweep over me."

"He reached down from on high, he took me; he drew me out of mighty waters."

Jesus holds Peter. They are on the sea. The wind and waves are all around them and Jesus has something to say. He holds up a mirror to show Peter what he is like. He does not hold back. He says, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

We are not always very good at receiving hard messages. It's a pity. I know people who receive feedback which is almost completely appreciative. Some of the comments let them know that they are awesome. But somewhere, tucked away in all the positives is the smallest suggestion that maybe they should give a little attention to something or other. They instantly forget all the things that are valued and fixate on the quibble. They can't sleep for thinking about it and finally reach the conclusion that they are the worst human being who has ever walked the planet. And so, people become sensitive about giving honest opinions and we all suffer. If only we could receive the insights others have to share, they would give us a chance to grow, improve and be better. It would be an opportunity for grace.

Peter needs to know that his doubting is holding him back. What does it mean to doubt? There are some who would urge us not to ask questions. They would rather we accept something without thinking about it. If we want to put our minds to it and explore it, they accuse us of doubting. We know however, that God has given us minds and wants us to ask questions. We have confidence that God's truth can stand interrogation and that when we grapple with it, we are led deeper into it.

That is not what doubt is here. The word translated "doubt", suggests someone who is uncertain about which way to take. They waver between one way and

another. They are in two minds. In life it is right to take a realistic view of the wind and the waves, but not to allow them to distract you from Jesus. This is what God asks for, not great spiritual achievements, but that you whole heartedly without wavering give your attention fully to Jesus.

Jesus and Peter get into the boat and the winds cease. The word "cease" means "to cease through being spent with toil". It is as though the winds have been in a struggle with Jesus, but they are no match for him. They are weary, worn out and exhausted. And so, they give up. After all this turmoil and buffeting, at last there is calm and tranquillity.

And the friends of Jesus worship. There is no more of Peter's "If it is you", there is certainly none of the tempter's "If you are the Son of God". They no longer doubt. They are fully faced in one direction, towards Jesus. They say "Truly you are the Son of God".

God bless you,

Tony