





Lord, still thy mercy lasts. Do not thine own hands works forsake. These verses are Psalm 138, 5 to the end. Yea, in the righteous ways of God.

[ 18 : 45 ] With gladness they shall sing. Yea, in the righteous ways of God, with gladness they shall sing.

For grace and glory of the Lord, through love forever reign.

Lord God be high, yet hear his praise, all those that lowly be, whereas the proud and lofty ones afar off knoweth thee.

Though I in midst of trouble walk, I life from thee shall have.

Hence my foe's wrath thou stretch thy hand, thy right hand shall me save.

[ 20 : 15 ] Surely that which concerneth me, the Lord will perfect me.

Lord, still thy mercy, I do not thine own and work forsake.

Amen. Let's turn back for a little to the chapter we read in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew chapter 14.

And if we could look from verse 22. Matthew 14, verse 22. Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side while he dismissed the crowds.

And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. But the boat by this time was a long way from the land beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them.

[ 21 : 26 ] And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and said, it is a ghost. And they cried out in fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid. I think this story, this account that we have of Jesus walking on the water and Peter, in fact, going to meet him is one of those that has always captured people's imagination.

Because it's the one thing you and I know we can't do unless we walk on frozen water and ice, that's the only time that we are able to walk on water. The normal course of life, it's impossible for us to do that.

And so, this episode here, it's amazing how many biblical sort of sayings and episodes and things find their way into normal day life.

and there is often the expression used of people, do you think that they can walk on water? There's lots of things like even the writing on the wall, we find biblical expressions so often make their way into everyday conversation.

[ 22 : 47 ] And sometimes, I'm sure, people use it and have no idea that actually it has come from the Bible. But this episode here is one that really grips our imagination.

and I'm sure we've often tried to imagine what it was like for the disciples because there we are in the dark, it's a bad night, a storm has blown up and they're really, really struggling.

And as we remember, there are seas, some of them are seasoned fishermen, but it was a difficult crossing. And then there is this apparition, as it were, appearing before them, walking towards them on the water.

Now I know that very often children, when they're young, can be, many aren't, but some can be afraid of the dark. Not so much dark like where there's lots of streetlights around, but in absolute where it's really dark, simply because we can't see.

And every sound is amplified and what we are able to see, the shapes we see take on, I remember as a wee boy, I would see shapes of sometimes trees and they turned into monsters and also your mind would begin to run into all kinds of directions when we think of and see these things.

[ 24 : 08 ] And the dark is such that sometimes we find things a wee bit distorted. Well I can't even begin to imagine the terror that took hold of the disciples when they were aware that this, as it were, apparition that was walking towards them or was appearing to walk to them actually was somebody walking to them on the water.

But we find here before this particular incident takes place that there were huge crowds that they were following Jesus. And we find one of the lovely verses, and we find it so often, when he went ashore he saw a great crowd and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

And it's one of the expressions and one of the characteristics that is so common about Jesus that he had compassion.

We find it over and over again. He was moved with compassion. Someone described compassion as your pain in my heart.

And that's a lovely description. but we find that Jesus was so touched by all that was going on and he could see the impact and the effects of sin.

[ 25 : 24 ] It's outworking in so much in the way of disease and hurt and pains. And so, he was moved with compassion. And let us remember that this Jesus who is in glory, the exalted saviour, is the same Jesus as we have here.

His compassions don't change. And he is still moved with compassion. It is still part of who Jesus is. And that's one of the wonderful things of why he asks us always to come to him.

With all our sorrows, with all our hurts, with all our pains, because his ear is always open. You know that there's nothing more difficult than if you're struggling with something, if you're down and you feel that nobody is listening.

They might listen, but you're saying to yourself, they're not really listening. And that can be difficult. Well, here's an ear that's always open. And Jesus is able to help us in a way that nobody else can. And so, it's important that we bring all our worries, concerns, and cares to him, because he's somebody who has moved with compassion to us. And particularly to those who are marginalized and displaced, and those who are the victims of oppression and all these things.

[ 26 : 45 ] It's actually very interesting when you go to the Old Testament, and you find, when you go through the prophecies, and you'll find that the prophecies, by and large, of judgment, where number one was against spiritual adultery or idolatry, or where people were forsaking God.

But following on very closely from that, you'll find God's judgments against oppression, against briberies, against treating the vulnerable in a bad way.

You'll find it over, you go through Isaiah and Jeremiah and or Micah and all the prophets, and you'll find that God hates when he sees people treating people badly.

And so, it's something, it's, and again, even when we look out in our own societies, we've always got to remember that where we see injustices, where we see what's not right, we've always got to remember that God is taking note of these things.

These things are a great offense in his sight. Well, Jesus was somebody who cared deeply for people. And we find that this compassion that he showed was not always found in the disciples.

[ 28 : 04 ] Because the disciples say when Jesus is saying, it's getting, the day is getting late and so on, and the disciples say, look, it's getting late, send them away.

Now, the people are away in an isolated place, and they'll be hungry, they haven't eaten all day. Send them into the villages to buy something for themselves. And we've got to remember these disciples were often quite hard-hearted.

Do you remember the time when the mothers came with the infants to Jesus to bless? What do the disciples do? They try to block it. And they told them to go away, to leave Jesus alone.

And Jesus' response is interesting. When he says suffer little children, he's actually angry with the disciples because of what they're trying to do.

Because Jesus has this heart, this compassion towards people. And so, these disciples had a lot of lessons to learn.

[ 29 : 05 ] Because they said when they were seeing the people, the day was gone, was hungry, I'll just send them away. But what we've got to remember is that Peter, James and John, these men, in the early days we find James and John, they were the sons of thunder.

As the years go on, they change. You read John's writings, you read Peter's writings, they've mellowed, they've changed. How have they changed?

Because God has worked in them. You know, we can be quite bad for pigeonholing people, of logging people into a particular situation or where they are and say that's how they are forevermore. It's not. The Christian should never be staying just in the same place. We should all be changing and changing to reflect the image of Christ more and more. That's what God's great work in us is doing.

That's what he's doing all the time. It's changing us, working in us to conform us more and more to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 10 ] So anyway, we find that the disciples have asked that they go away and Jesus said, no, we'll feed them. The disciples are kind of saying, feed them? We've only got here five loaves and a couple of fish.

How's that going to happen? And of course, we know the story of what's happened and we find that Jesus feeds them and there's a whole lot left over afterwards.

But it's interesting then what happens because immediately following this, immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side while he dismissed the crowds. And after he dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. There's two things in this first that we really need to look at. In one of the other gospel accounts, I think it's in Mark's, it tells us that the disciples didn't consider the miracle that took place because their hearts were hardened.

They didn't read, although they were involved in the miracle, they were the ones that were used, we read about it elsewhere, of serving the food and taking the food round as the great miracle took place.

[ 31 : 24 ] it passed them by. It didn't really mean that much to them. Oh, that's what Jesus does. It didn't really affect them.

And it's quite extraordinary because you'd say to yourself, that would have blown me away if I'd been there. But you know, sometimes we can be a wee bit like that as well. We can become complacent.

We can just begin to accept what God has done for us in our life. our hearts can become hard too. And so we find that as the disciples have shown this kind of hardness in their heart, that Jesus is going to deal with them.

And so, as I say, we need to be careful that we don't develop the hard heart and just begin to accept that what God has done for us is no big deal. Because sometimes we can just drift along in our Christian life and we forget.

You know, that's one of the beautiful things about having our communion. Because the Lord knows what our memory is like. And he knows that every so often we need to refocus upon what he has done.

[ 32 : 36 ] And that's one of the great things in our time of communion. We do this to remember him. Do this in remembrance of me. So that on a Sunday of our communion we are actually in a very focused way remembering what Jesus has done for us until he comes again.

And I believe that's one of the reasons why this is set out for us. Because we're so liable to forget. There are certain things in the Bible that the Lord says to us to be sure to remember.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. To young people remember your creator in the days of your youth while you're still young. Remember him because you're prone to forget. When Israel were crossing into the cross of the Jordan and were going into the promised land the Lord kept saying to them beware that you don't forget what I've done for you.

And he said when you've built good houses and when your crops develop and flourish and you've got cattle and sheep and vineyards and everything be aware that you forget not the Lord your God who gave you all this.

And we know that they did. So often they would forget because God knows just how prone we are to forget. And so this is what's happening here.

[ 33 : 58 ] And we live in a world where there's so much influence, so much to draw us aside, not just our own heart, but there's so much going on in our life. And I suppose one of the great drawbacks of things that take us away is idolatry.

Now idolatry we tend to often think of as card images and statues and things. But anything that takes chief place in our heart, anything that we put above, however legitimate and right above the Lord Jesus, where we give it our all, becomes an idol.

We're told in Scripture, for instance, that covetousness is idolatry. And so there's lots of things. Idolatry is incredibly sinister. Well, anyway, the Lord sent the disciples away and he sent them into a storm to shake them up.

They needed a good shaking. And sometimes, not always, that's not always the reason why storms come into our lives. Sometimes the Lord will allow a storm into our life.

And I'm sure as you look back over your Christian life and sometimes things that have, you could say there might be big storms or there might be little storms. But you look back and you say, you know, how often have we said that?

[ 35 : 18 ] You know this, I needed a bit of a shaking. I had started to drift. Even although we might be going through all the motions, we might be going through our own daily devotions, but our heart isn't in it.

We might be coming to church, but our heart isn't in it. We can be going through all the outward things, but our heart isn't in it. The Lord knows. So sometimes a wee storm comes into our life to wake us up, to refocus back onto the Lord.

Well, that's what Jesus was doing with the disciples here as well. And the other thing we find that Jesus sent the disciples away was that he needed time to pray.

That's what we find. After he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.

alone. And that is one of the great features of the life of Jesus in this world, was his life of prayer.

You always find Jesus in prayer. And so we find here that really in a sense every step of his life was marked by prayer.

[ 36 : 31 ] And the first thing we notice here is that Jesus went alone. And that's important as well. because Jesus says to us, when you pray, enter your closet or into your wee room, close the door, pray in secret, and your father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Now that doesn't mean that all our prayer time, that if we're going to pray, I'll have to go off over here or shut the door, because we pray together. It's important to meet together for prayer, united prayer, collective prayer, praying with one another, a brilliant thing, important, and it's so biblical. You often find that in the Bible, they met together for prayer. That is a key part of our Christian life. But it's very important also to pray alone.

Of course, the beauty is we can pray everywhere, we can pray anywhere. There are no barriers or things to prevent us. We can pray at work, pray in bed, pray driving, pray walking, pray in loads of company, lots, anywhere.

And we often do it, little prayers asking, Lord, I need help here, what do I do here? Lord, have mercy on me. Sometimes we're convicted even as we go about. The Lord says we need time to be alone.

[ 37 : 49 ] And you and I know that if you decide, and you say to yourself, you're sitting in the house, and you say, I'm going to have a wee time of prayer. Guaranteed, doorbell goes, or the phone goes, or there's some distraction, and then all of a sudden you remember, oh, I've got to do this, I'll pray afterwards, I've got to do this.

Satan's really good at doing anything and everything possible to keep you from praying, because he knows, Satan knows how vital prayer is in the Christian life.

He knows the power of prayer. And so he'll do anything and everything to keep you from praying. And that's why Jesus is giving us the instruction, get alone, shut the door, no distractions, it's an important time.

It doesn't put a length on the time, but that time to get just on your own with the Lord is essential within our day. So we find that the life of Jesus is a life that is devoted to prayer because he was always praying, praying about everything, praying in all the different situations.

And you'll notice that before the miracle, we find that he asked a blessing or he gave thanks. And afterwards, he's away to pray. And that's a great example to us as well.

[ 39 : 13 ] Because you know one of the most dangerous times, I shouldn't say dangerous in a sense, maybe one of the most vulnerable times is a time after blessing. When God has brought something great into our life or done something really good or has answered our prayer or been a time, maybe there's been a time within the congregation maybe a communion time or a special time and there's a alarm, there's a buzz, you're just feeling top of the world as a Christian.

That can be a very vulnerable time. Because so often we find that we've gone from there to there. And after a time where the Lord has blessed us, it's important that we cover the afterwards with prayer as well.

That's what Jesus has done. Here's this great miracle and you'd say to yourself, oh well, you can relax now Jesus. No, he's going again there to clothe everything in prayer.

A great example given to us is of, remember when there were ten lepers, when Jesus cleansed the ten lepers and it tells us that they fell down before Jesus and cried with a loud voice to Jesus to heal them.

Remember how Jesus sent them on their way to go to the priest to show themselves and as they were on their way, they discovered they were cleansed. It must have been a great moment.

[ 40 : 43 ] You're walking along there, a leper with all the horrible ugliness of leprosy and then all of a sudden you're healed.

And what does it tell us? That this man who was a Samaritan, he came back and he fell down before Jesus and with a loud voice gave glory to Jesus, thanked Jesus for what he had done. And Jesus, although he's not amazed, is also amazed and he said, he asks a question, where are the nine? Jesus had healed ten, only one, came back to give thanks and he was a Samaritan. See, the Lord expects us after the blessing to acknowledge him, to be still involved in prayer with him. And so it's important that we find that prayer is before and after.

And Jesus prayed constantly because fellowship with the Father was his chief delight. That's what he wanted to do. And you know, it will speak a lot about ourselves as well, about our own spiritual life, our own spiritual vitality or lack of it with regard to our desire to go alone with the Lord to pray. [ 42 : 09 ] If we find that we're saying to ourselves as we climb into bed at night, yes, I don't know if I've really spoken to the Lord today. And if we find that that's a pattern of our life, then we're not where we should be.

But if we have this desire to, there's a spiritual, it's almost like a spiritual pulse within us where there's a desire just to, I need to speak to the Lord, I need a wee bit of his word here, just a wee bit to help me along on my way.

That's a great sign, a great indication. Well, Jesus, all his time here, he wanted to spend as much time in fellowship with the Lord as possible.

And the other reason, or there's various reasons, another reason, of course, that Jesus goes to be in prayer there is that he lived his life in dependence upon the Father and the Spirit all the time. He had the Spirit without measure. Because Jesus, in order to be our complete representative, had to come and be one like us. It was like he had to suspend or eclipse the glory, the majesty, the power of his own divine nature.

[ 43 : 23 ] Remember, Jesus had two natures in one person. But to be our full representative, to absolutely stand for us in everything, he had to depend entirely upon the Father and the Spirit.

And so that involved the constant prayer as well. And so it should for us as well as we journey on. Anyway, the disciples are well out into the sea and there this storm comes.

And then, as we said, in the middle of it all, they see this apparition coming towards them. And they cry out in fear. And into the darkness comes the most wonderful voice that they could ever hear. It is the voice of Jesus. And he says to them, take heart, it is I, do not be afraid. And you know, if you're a believer in all the storms in your life, don't for one minute think you're on your own.

You know, when Jesus sent them, he went up into a mountain, when Jesus sent them out into that storm, his eye was still on them. He hadn't forgotten them. He was going to come to them. But he had business to attend to with his Father.

[ 44 : 40 ] But they were still in his radar, so to speak. And so are you. The Lord hasn't forgotten you. There are many times actually we think. That's one of the beauties when you go to the Psalms.

One of the reasons I love the Psalms is the brutal honesty of the Psalm writers sometimes. And they almost use language I would be kind of scared to use.

You know, Lord, have you forgotten? It's almost like they're angry with God. They just pour, themselves out about how they feel. And sometimes we can feel a bit like that.

Lord, have you forgotten all about me? No, he hasn't. He will come at the right time and he will come and you'll hear that voice that is I, take heart, be not afraid.

And it's a wonderful thing and if you're here tonight and you've never come to know Jesus as your own Lord and Saviour, you're missing something wonderful. Because when Jesus says take heart, it is I, do not be afraid.

[ 45 : 48 ] Jesus, one of the great things he brings into our life is peace. It's not a peace that you can work up on yourself, it's not a peace you can purchase, it's not a peace that you can work up going through a system of self-help books and all these sort of things.

peace. It's a peace, my peace he says, I give you. When he was leaving, this is a legacy, this is a part of his will that he bequeathed to us, my peace.

And when Jesus gives his peace, it's not that he, it's not that like there's a, in heaven there are little shells with different things, that's a peace shell.

When he gives his peace, he gives himself. It's a giving of himself that brings peace. He is peace. He's a prince of peace.

And that peace, it's a peace that passes all understanding. Even in the midst of the storm in your life, underneath it all, there is still a peace. The world can't give it. That's what Jesus said, my peace

I give you.

[ 46 : 55 ] Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Because you see, whatever the world gives, it eventually takes it back. But the peace that Jesus gives, he never takes back.

And that's part of the wonderful thing of being a Christian. And if you haven't come to discover that peace for yourself, ask the Lord to come into your heart, to bestow that peace.

And of course, when we hear the voice, now there's a whole sermon in itself, I'm just going to say one or two things about it. When the disciples discover this is Jesus, of course, the immediate response of Peter is, Lord, if it's you, command me to come to you on the water.

I love Peter, Peter's so impetuous, you know, he's one of those, he acts, speaks before he thinks, he's just straight into things. That's one of the great things about the Bible, you find all the different faults, the different failings, the different positives, all the different personalities, they're all there. That's part of the wonder of the Christian. We don't become like a clique or a cult or everybody like, it's the beauty of the freedom of Christianity is we retain our own individuality, who we are in our shells, but being moulded in that framework more and more to be like the Lord Jesus.

[ 48 : 19 ] And so Peter says, Lord, command me to come to you on the water. Jesus says, come. Can I say to you tonight, if you don't know Jesus as Saviour, will you pray that prayer?

Lord, command me to come to you. I would say, I dare you, pray that. Because, you know, I know what it's like that sometimes we say, I'd like to be a Christian.

And you go so close, but there's something holding you back. That final thing, I don't know if I'm quite ready, how is this going to impact me? What will happen? What will my life be like?

What will people say? Lots of what's ifs. Forget that. Tonight, pray, Lord, command me to come to you. And you know, if the Lord commands you to come, you'll come.

You'll hear his voice, and he'll enable you, just as he enabled Peter to climb out of that boat and walk to Jesus. But of course, as we see, I think it's one of the greatest moments of faith in the Bible.

[ 49 : 26 ] Because of all people, Peter, that was where he worked, that was his fishing place. He knew that place inside out.

And the one thing he knew was an utter impossibility to do was to walk in the water. And yet he asks Jesus, Lord, help me to walk on the water. That was incredible faith.

But that faith, that came from his love of Jesus, his excitement, oh, it's Jesus, I need to get to Jesus. And so there's this wonderful enthusiasm in the heart of Peter.

And Peter begins to walk, but then it tells us, I say there's a sermon in here, but just in a word. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me.

You see, what happened to Peter was, initially when he responded to the word, come, he was able, by faith, because as he climbed over that boat, what was he doing?

[ 50 : 31 ] He was focusing on Jesus. He was looking at Jesus. But what does it tell us there? But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink.

When he saw the wind, in other words, when he saw what was happening, when, remember, there's a storm, there's loads of waves, there'd be a noise, you know, that when there's a strong wind and sea, there's a kind of noise of the water and the howling of the wind.

So as he's hearing all these sounds going on, he's no longer hearing the voice of Jesus. He begins to sink. And you know, as we journey through this world, there's just 101 different sounds and voices that are trying to take us off track.

And if we keep listening to them, we won't walk very well, we'll begin to sink as well. And very often when we find in our Christian life that we've begun to sink, it's in the ABC of our Christian walk.

Again, the other thing is when he saw, you see, the circumstances became bigger than Jesus. As he began to sink down, then the circumstances were such, it's quite possible as he began to sink and the big wave, he's no longer able to see Jesus.

[ 51 : 54 ] And his natural reason comes in and he says, what am I doing here? This is beyond, this is crazy. And as he's thinking like that, he begins to sink. And you know, so often in life, when we face difficult things, and we look out these circumstances, they look big, they're challenging, they make us afraid, we're disturbed, we don't know what to do.

But you know, when our focus is brought back above everything onto Jesus, all of a sudden we find that we're able to deal with things, we're able to cope, we're able to walk.

But whenever we see the circumstances bigger than Jesus, down we go. And that's, it's a very simple explanation, but it happens to us all the time.

The importance of keeping our eyes focused upon Jesus. And Peter just shouts out, Lord, save me. Immediately, Jesus stretched out his hand and saved him.

Wouldn't be wonderful tonight if somebody calls out, Lord, Jesus, save me. Jesus stretched out his hand and saved. And there's no more, no safer hand to walk in than the hand of Jesus.

[ 53 : 13 ] You know, far too often we're like little children. And you know when children are very small and you're walking with them. And as they get a little, little older, they get a wee bit more independent and they don't want to take care of them.

I can't manage to find myself. And they walk on until all of a sudden there's something that frightens them or worries them. Something, what's that?

And you'll find the little hands going up. I need your hand. And you know, we're a bit like that as well. Because far too often we feel that, oh, I can't cope. I'm doing okay.

Life's all right. And you're going, and it's then when all of a sudden things go off, you say, oh Lord, I need you. You know, the best way to walk is to have a hand in the hand of the Lord all the time.

The great thing is, as we sang there in Psalm 37, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, because the Lord holds him with his hand.

[ 54 : 18 ] And that's so comforting for us. You know, just the way that little children, if you're walking with them and they stumble, they'll trip, but they don't fall all the way down, because you get a hold of them. That's what the Lord's saying, that's how I've got you.

But the best way is that we're conscious all the time of having our hand in the hand of the Lord.

Let's pray. Lord, we pray that you will bless us, and we give thanks for your word, and help us to be wise, help us to be wise to salvation, help us to be wise to what you are saying to us.

Give us an ear to hear and a heart to understand. And so much of your word, it is so simple, and yet it is so profound. we pray that we might be able to put our hand in your hand and to walk every day with you.

Forgive us, Lord, for how often we don't, how often we think we can manage ourselves, and so often as a last resort that we call to you.

Help us, Lord, to be putting you first at all times. Pray, Lord, then to bless us and part us with your blessing tonight, we pray. Bless this congregation. We give thanks for David and Mary and the family here.

[ 55 : 31 ] We give thanks for the ministry. We give thanks for the fellowship of this congregation, for the lovely spirit that is here. Ask, Lord, that you will prosper them and bless them, and that you will add to their number.

Watch over us, we pray, and take away sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 107. Psalm 107.

It's from the Scottish Psalter, these well-known words. Psalm 107 from verse 26.

They mount to heaven, then to the depths they do go down again. Their soul doth faint and melt away with trouble and with pain.

They reel and stagger like one drunk, at their wit's end they be. Then they to God in trouble cry, who them from strates doth free. The storm is changed into a calm at his command and will, so that the waves which raged before now quiet are and still.

[ 56 : 37 ] Then are they glad, because at rest and quiet now they be. So to the haven he then brings which they desired to see. These verses. They mount to heaven, then to the depths.

They mount to heaven, then to the depths. They do not go down again.

Their soul doth faint and melt away with trouble and with pain.

They reel and stagger like one drum, at their wit's end they be.

Then they to God in trouble cry, through them from saints of free.

[ 57 : 57 ] The storm is changed into a calm song.

As it's calm and and still. So that the waves which raged me forth, now quiet are and still.

then are they glad, because at rest and quiet now they be.

so do the heaven he then brings, which they desire to see.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more. Amen. Amen.