



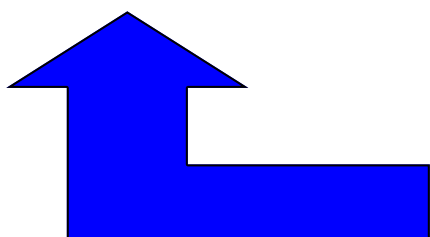
## ***THE WORD FOR TODAY***

### **SINKING IN THE STORM** **Matthew 14, 22—33**

Some of us might well feel there is a “perfect storm” around us at the moment. Energy prices are rocketing, other prices are rising noticeably, and there is talk of food shortages which will undoubtedly raise food prices further. There’s a war going on in Europe, which is uncomfortably close and which is being driven by the unpredictable and seemingly unfeeling leader of the vast country of Russia, a nuclear power and a provider of gas and oil. Covid-19 has not gone away and its effects are widely felt. How are we going to keep our heads above water?



The Bible has something to say about storms and sinking, in a story from Jesus’ years of ministry. He had just fed more than five thousand people from very little, and was about to send them home. Follow the words of the story told in Matthew 14, beginning on the north wall of this little building and then continuing anti-clockwise round the church building. Please say the prayers too if you would like to, and perhaps pause on the benches if the weather is good. We are using the New International Version of the Bible, which you can find on the internet under Bible Gateway.



***Turn immediately left to find panel 1***

***“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.”***

**1**

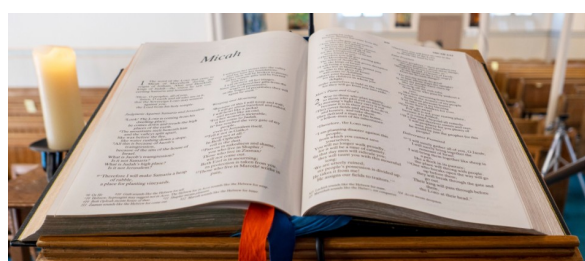
Jesus had just fed the crowd miraculously from a tiny amount of food. He was sending everybody home now, so that he could have a little while on his own with his Father. His disciples would cross the lake by boat—it was a lovely afternoon. Jesus would find a spot on the mountainside where he could be quiet and pray. We learn from the Bible that this was something he needed and wanted to do on a regular basis, part of his daily routine. He would give thanks for what he had been able to do and ask for guidance and strength for what lay ahead.

If regular prayer doesn't feature in your routine, then perhaps it's something to think about as you face some of the challenges of life today. Don't miss out on the support from God which Jesus himself found so essential! Don't miss out on getting to know him better!



***Father God, thank you for the example set by your Son Jesus.  
Help me too to draw closer to you day by day in prayer,  
and so draw strength and guidance for whatever I have to face.***

***You will find the next panel on the east wall of the church***



***THE WORD FOR TODAY***



***“When evening came, he was there alone,  
but the boat was already a considerable  
distance from land, buffeted by the waves  
because the wind was against it.”***

**2**

Lake Gennesaret, or the Sea of Galilee, was prone to sudden changes in the wind. It could suddenly whip up the water into quite frightening waves. So a lovely afternoon turned into quite a frightening evening. The disciples, with experienced fishermen among them, were struggling. It was going to be a long night. Possibly Jesus could see them from his vantage point on the mountainside.



One thing we can be sure of—Jesus had a plan. He did not intend to leave his disciples struggling and in possible danger out on the lake. Perhaps he had originally intended to walk round the lake and meet them when they landed, but if so, he changed his mind, because they needed him on the water.

***Lord, thank you that you watch over me day by day.  
You know my struggles and my worries.  
Come and help me when I am in need, I pray.***

***Panel 3 is on the Side Door***



***THE WORD FOR TODAY***

***“During the fourth watch of the night  
Jesus went out to them,  
walking on the lake.***

**3**

***When the disciples saw him walking on the lake,  
they were terrified. “It’s a ghost”, they said, and  
cried out in fear.”***

We are used to haar here in Edinburgh, billowing in from the sea and the River Forth in clouds, blotting out the sun, making everything look rather ghostly. Yet the disciples were constantly with Jesus, and had been with him all afternoon and seen him perform the most amazing miracle—might they not have recognised him? To be fair to them, they were a bit preoccupied with keeping the boat afloat, and it was dark, and they were probably expecting to meet up with Jesus again on the shore. They didn’t seem to have thought of praying for his presence in their difficulties.



***Lord, open our hearts to ask you to help us when we are struggling.  
Open our ears to hear your voice.  
Open our eyes to see you.***

***Panel 4 is on the back door***



***THE WORD FOR TODAY***



***“But Jesus immediately said to them: ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.’”***

**4**



**“Don’t be afraid” (or similar words) occurs many, many times in the Bible—a loving God reassuring his people. God wants us to know we are his children and he wants good things for us. He doesn’t want us to fear, but to trust in him.**

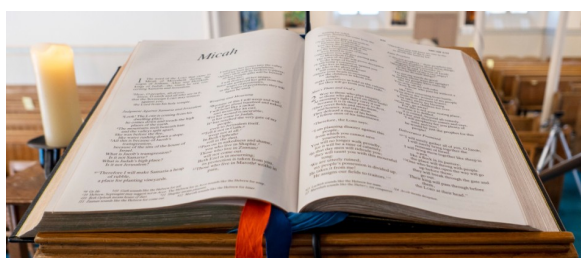
**We sing these words in Liberton Kirk, which are taken from the Bible, Isaiah Chapter 43.**

***“Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you,  
I have called you by your name;  
You are mine.  
When you walk through the waters  
I’ll be with you,  
You will never sink beneath the waves. . . . .  
You are mine, O my child; I am your Father,  
And I love you with a perfect love.***

***(Gerald Markland, © Kevin Mayhew Ltd., CCL 98176)***

***Lord, thank you for those reassuring words “Don’t be afraid”.  
Hold me in your loving arms and take my fears away.  
Help me to have faith in your power to help and your love for me.***

***Panel 5 is on the Side Door***



***THE WORD FOR TODAY***

***“Lord, if it’s you’, Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’***

***‘Come’, he said.***

**5**

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

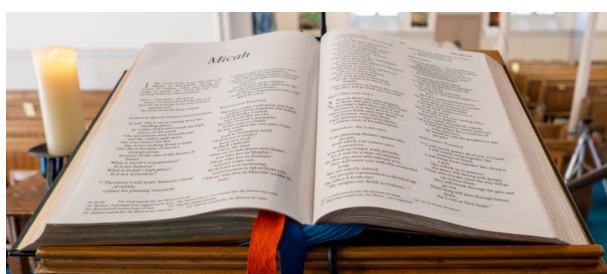


There are times in this country, particularly in the Western Isles, when taking a short cut across the water might seem appealing, particularly when it is completely calm. Would we feel the same if the water was being tossed around by the wind and it was getting dark? In any circumstances it would take courage just to step off the land or out of the boat. Some would say it would be foolhardy.

Peter was convinced that he would be safe when Jesus said “Come”, and got out of the boat and walked towards Jesus. Imagine his excitement! His courage in taking that step of faith had been rewarded. Would we have the same faith?

***Lord, help me to trust you to enable me to do amazing things.  
Give me the courage to take that step out of my comfort zone,  
to take that step of faith.***

***Panel 6 is on the Tower Door***



***THE WORD FOR TODAY***



***“But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’***

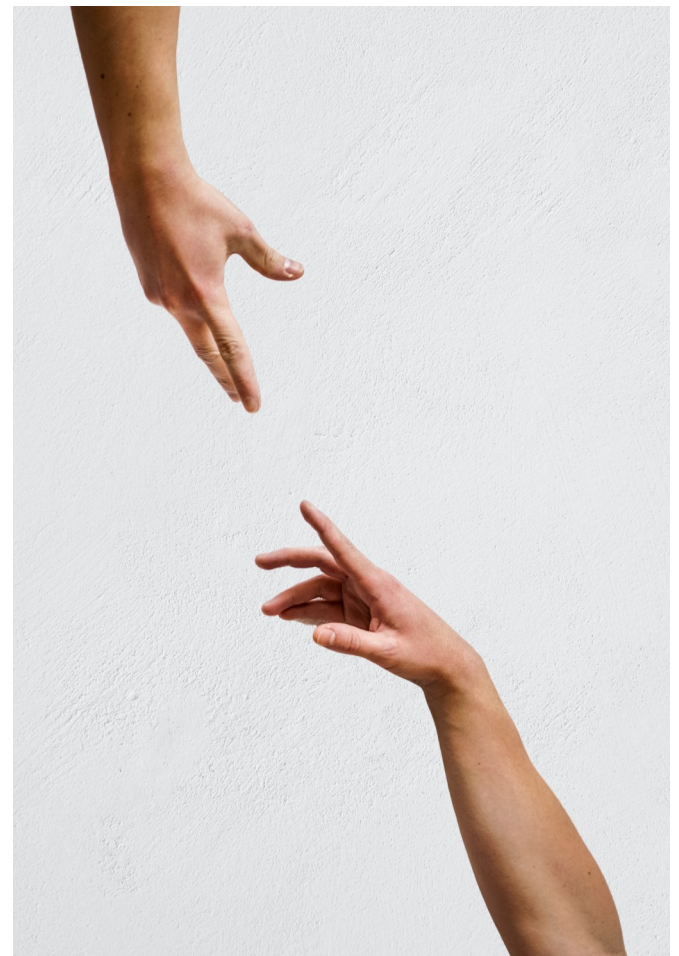
**6**

***Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith’, he said, ‘why did you doubt?’”***

Peter was walking towards Jesus when, instead of keeping his eyes on him, he looked round and thought “What am I doing? This is dangerous!” His faith in Jesus’ power which had led him to get out of the boat was forgotten—and he began to sink. When he called out to Jesus for help, it came immediately. Jesus made clear to him, however, that it was his lack of faith that had led to his downfall.

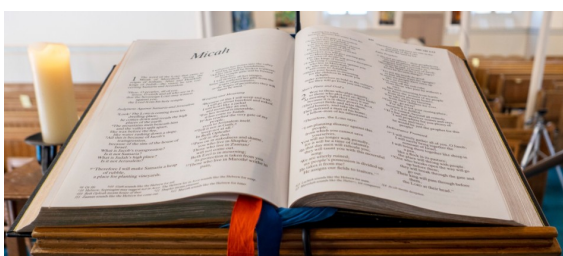
How often does that happen to us? We are fired up to do something and then we start doubting our ability. We take our eyes off Jesus. Yet he will never ask us to do something we will not be able to do.

We realise from this story just how important it is to stay focussed on the source of all our abilities and strength and not think we can rely on our own resources.



***Lord, you give us everything we have—you have all the power—  
and yet we think we know better.  
Lord, deepen our faith in you.***

***Panel 7 is on the wall behind the cairn***



***THE WORD FOR TODAY***

***“And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.***

***Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”***

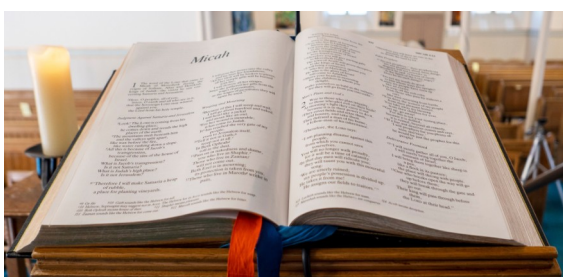
**7**



Those who were in the boat were Jesus’ disciples and friends. Jesus was their almost constant companion and they felt he was special, but today their eyes had been opened. He could feed a hungry crowd of people, he could control the wind and the waves, he could walk on the water and enable one of them to do so too. Moreover he had just rescued one of them from drowning and had released them from their struggles. Surely he was worthy of their worship! Who could he be but the Son of God?

Through the rest of Jesus’ life, his death and rising again, there are so many more reasons to worship him.

- Lord, I worship you—***
- as my God—mighty, all-powerful Creator***
  - as my Saviour***
  - as my Friend.***



***THE WORD FOR TODAY***



# PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

**Image of the Bible on all pages— Gary Ross**

## **Other Photographs:**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Li Yang on Unsplash</b>
<b>Page 1</b>	<b>Kai Bossom on Unsplash</b>
<b>Page 2</b>	<b>Drew Beamer on Unsplash</b>
<b>Page 3</b>	<b>Joel Bengs on Unsplash</b>
<b>Page 4</b>	<b>Jordan Whitt on Unsplash</b>
<b>Page 5</b>	<b>Ruth Davies</b>
<b>Page 6</b>	<b>Sebastian Dumitru on Unsplash</b>
<b>Page 7</b>	<b>Guillaume de Germain on Unsplash</b>