

Sunday 9 August 2026
The Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Liverpool Parish Church

OT: 1 Kings 19: 9-18
NT: Romans 10: 5-15
Gp: Matthew 14: 22-33

I don't half feel sorry for Peter, you know. Thursday it was the Transfiguration, where Jesus appeared with Moses and Elijah and was dressed in dazzling white robes. On this occasion, Peter becomes, I think a little flustered and asks Jesus if he should make three tents (that was his trade) for Jesus and his two guests. Peter, I think was a bit overwhelmed and wanted to try and capture the moment.

In the Gospel passage today, Peter starts off all brave and walks towards Jesus on the water, but when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened and began to sink and cried out to Jesus to save him. How many times have we felt overwhelmed, flustered, brave and then frightened? How many times has Jesus held out his hand to us and caught us?

Every single one of us knows what it feels like to be caught in a storm. Some storms are external, involving financial problems, broken relationships, or health issues that catch us completely off guard. Other storms are internal—waves of anxiety, dark nights of doubt, and the quiet fear that we are sinking under the weight of responsibilities we can no longer carry alone. In those moments, the world feels incredibly loud, and the presence of God can feel incredibly distant. We find ourselves exhausted, terrified, and wondering if anyone sees us.

Today, our two Bible readings come together to offer a powerful, life-transforming message for anyone sitting in the middle of a storm. Matthew 14 shows us the dramatic physical reality of the disciples trapped on a violently tossing sea, confronted by Jesus who walks on top of the very waves threatening to destroy them. Romans 10 show us how Jesus bridges the gap between heaven and earth to bring His saving word directly into our hearts. When we look at these passages together, we find a profound spiritual truth: faith is not the absence of a storm, but the presence of Jesus.

The gospel passage begins immediately after a high point in Jesus' ministry: the feeding of the five thousand. After this massive miracle, Jesus does something unexpected. He tells His disciples to get into a boat and go ahead of Him to the other side while He dismisses the crowds and goes up on a mountain by Himself to pray. Notice this detail carefully: the disciples did not wander into this storm due to disobedience. They were in the boat because Jesus told them to get in the boat.

As the night deepens into the fourth watch—somewhere between three and six o'clock in the morning—the boat is battered by the waves. They have been rowing for hours in the pitch black, exhausted, making absolutely no progress. The wind is completely against them. They have reached the absolute limit of human strength, strategy, and endurance.

And then, in the darkest hour of the night, Jesus comes to them. He does not shout instructions from the safety of the shore. He walks out onto the sea. The very waves that were threatening to swallow the boat become a pavement under His feet.

But look at how the disciples respond. They scream in terror, saying, "It is a ghost!" They are so conditioned by the harsh realities of the storm that they cannot recognize the arrival of

grace in the form of Jesus. How often do we do the exact same thing? We get so focused on our problems that when God begins to move, we may misinterpret His presence as another threat.

Jesus immediately speaks into their terror: "Take heart! It is I. Do not be afraid." This contrast between human exhaustion and divine arrival is precisely what Paul addresses in Romans 10. Paul is writing to people who are spiritually exhausted. They are trying to row their way to God through their own moral achievements, legalistic rituals, and self-made righteousness. Paul quotes Moses, noting that the person who practices the righteousness based on the law must live by it. If you want to save yourself by your own good works, your performance must be absolutely flawless. You have to row perfectly, without a single mistake, through the entire storm of life. But human effort always falls short. Trying to earn your way to heaven is just as exhausting and impossible as trying to row a tiny wooden boat across a raging, hurricane-level sea in your own strength.

Therefore, Paul introduces a breathtaking alternative: the righteousness based on faith. Paul warns us not to say in our hearts, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). Look at the profound connection here. Human religion always tells us that we have to do the climbing, the searching, and the heavy lifting. We think we have to build a tower to heaven or swim down into the dark depths of the ocean to find God. But Paul says that faith does not ask us to do that. Why? Because Jesus has already done it all. Jesus descended from heaven in the Incarnation. Jesus descended into the deep abyss of death in His crucifixion and rose again in His resurrection.

Just as Jesus walked across the chaotic waters to reach the disciples, He has already crossed the divide of sin and death to reach us. You do not have to climb up to heaven to find Him, and you do not have to drown in the abyss of your past mistakes to search for Him.

What does the righteousness of faith say instead? "The word is near you; on your lips and in your heart." This is the beautiful reality of grace. You do not have to search for Jesus; Jesus has already placed His saving word right within your reach. It is closer to you than the air you breathe.

Back on the sea, Peter hears this near word of Jesus and responds with a wild, beautiful, impetuous faith. He says, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus gives him a simple, single-word command: "Come." And Peter actually does it. He steps over the edge of the boat. He puts his feet down onto the liquid, shifting waves, and by the supernatural power of God, the water holds him up. He begins walking toward Jesus. This is a stunning picture of what happens when we trust the near word of Jesus. But then, something shifts, "But when he saw the wind, he became frightened and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'"

Peter's problem was not that the storm suddenly got worse. The wind was already howling when he stepped out of the boat. His problem was a shift in his vision. He took his eyes off the face of Jesus and focused entirely on the size of the waves. The moment you start measuring the size of your problems against your own strength, you will sink every single time. Doubts creep in. Fear paralyzes you. The water gives way under Peter's feet, and the cold darkness of the sea begins to pull him under. But look at Peter's failure. It contains one

of the greatest lessons on prayer in the entire Bible. He does not pray a long, elegant, formal prayer. He prays a desperate three-word prayer: "Lord, save me!"

This immediate rescue of Peter is the vivid, historical illustration of the absolute theological promise Paul writes in Romans 10:9–13. How are we saved from the drowning depths of sin, guilt, and judgment?

Paul writes: "If you confess with your lips, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." When Peter was sinking in the water, his mouth confessed Jesus as Lord, and his heart believed that Jesus had the sovereign power to rescue him. And just as Jesus immediately stretched out His hand to save Peter, God immediately saves anyone who makes this confession.

Paul goes on to smash every barrier of race, background, and status, declaring that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. Then comes the glorious, universal anthem of the gospel: "For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" It does not matter how deep you have sunk or how badly you have failed. If you call out, "Lord, save me," the hand of Jesus Christ is immediately extended to lift you out of the depths.

But the sermon cannot end inside the boat. Once Jesus and Peter get back into the boat, the wind dies down, and everyone worships Him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." They have experienced the rescue. But Romans 10 reminds us that this rescue is meant to turn into a worldwide mission.

Paul asks a series of urgent, piercing questions: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?" He concludes by quoting Isaiah: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Think about that image. Jesus used His feet to walk across the stormy waters to bring peace and good news to a terrified group of disciples. Now, He looks at you and me—we who have been rescued from the deep waters, we who have called upon His name—and He says, "Now, I am sending you out. Your feet are now the beautiful feet that must carry this message of hope to a world that is currently drowning."

So, for all of you here at Liverpool Parish Church- are you exhausted from trying to row through life in your own strength, trying to be righteous enough on your own? Hear the word of faith that is near you today. Stop rowing and surrender to the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus.

Are you stepping out in faith but finding yourself overwhelmed by the wind and the waves of your current circumstances? Take your eyes off the storm and fix them back on the face of Jesus. And if you are currently sinking, feeling the cold waters of despair or failure rising above your head, do not try to fix yourself before you talk to God. Cry out from the depth of your heart: "Lord, save me!"

He is not far away. He is near you. His hand is already extended. Call upon His name, experience His glorious rescue, and let Him send you out to share that incredible peace with a world that needs it most.

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