

Witness to the Word 9 August 2020

We have heard about water and there are many tales and achievements concerning this . Moses and the Red sea, Noah and the ark. Jonah and the whale. John the baptist at the Jordan river, Jesus at the well and the wedding the list from the bible are endless. During the Industrial revolution there was a desire to build impressive structures to cross bodies of water, the Clifton Suspension bridge, the Forth rail bridge, Sydney harbour bridge. They even created the famous seaside piers so people could promenade in their finery whilst seemingly walking over the waters.

However it is safe to say that most people do have a fear of water and its awesome power and ability to bring grief and tragedy is always at the back of our minds. We can never forget the Titanic, the loss of the Sydney in WW2 and the pain, conspiracy and controversy that lasted for so long. Who can forget the scenes of devastation from the 2004 Boxing day Tsnami, the ripples of which flowed down to Rockingham in WA. The pictures of flash floods in China and Europe or the cyclones which lash eastern freeboards of our country and America.

And so we come to the gospel reading which is about water and the fear that we have about it. Jesus has addressed the crowds and would now like some quality time alone with his thoughts and prayers so the disciples decide to go fishing. A storm arises and despite their breeding as men of the seas they are fearful of the conditions. They look around seeking for shelter or some words or signs that all will be right.

There appears before them Jesus seemingly walking on water. This makes them even more afraid nobody can walk on water this must be an evil spirit. Jesus speaks to reassure them and allay their fears.

Now Peter is the self appointed right hand man always wanting to be by his lords side and emulating him. He asks Jesus can he join him and receives the answer Come. He does so but along the way he is distracted by a gust of wind or a large wave. He takes his eye off Jesus and immediately sinks crying out for help. Jesus stretches out his hand pulls Peter back up saying How little faith you have.

We could get bogged down in the rebuking and chastising of Peter but there is more in the story.

We all have visions of what the goal is. We often see it on the football pitch as the coaches like Ron Barassi /Ted Whitten/ Kevin Sheedy/ Bill Shankley urge the players on reminding them of the ultimate prize and to focus.

It is easy on Sunday to focus the bible altar and cross are in front of us at the service but once we get in the car distractions abound;- is that pedestrian going to dash across the road/ will the lights change/ is this guy turning or going straight on.

Peter only sinks when he takes his eyes off Jesus and loses sight of his goal. Joe Cocker once sang Have a little faith in me. Imagine what Peter could have done had he trusted in Jesus.

No matter how good we think we are at walking on water one day we will start to sink. No matter how firm or fragile our faith the waves will soak our legs the terror will break through our vision of Christ and we will start to sink.

St. Nazaire story

We all have those times

What prevented you sinking

Who stopped you sinking deeper

How did you manage to stay afloat

This is not a story about imperfect faith and transactional grace,
you do this for me and receive this grace in return.

Sooner or later we all sink like a rock. This is what it is to be human. Yet
still Jesus chooses to build the church with waterlogged stones

Jesus had already spoken words of comfort

Be encouraged it is me. Do not be afraid.

He encourages the exuberant Peter and stands with him in the midst of
the storm.

Jesus does not make an object lesson out of the situation. God has little
interest in such transactional relationships. Our choices for God are
always trumped by Gods choice for us in Jesus Christ.

In a boat out of the boat or safe on shore Gods grace is for us all. It is
unearned. This is a story about grace and steadfast loving kindness. Our
faith our calling the momentary miracles amidst the chaos of life flows
from just such grace.

Graham Horrocks

