

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost 13 August 2017

Jesus Walks on Water

I enjoy coming to church here at St Pauls Beaconsfield unfortunately that is coming to an end, I will move travel over to the east coast at Christmas and there is so much to be done so much detail to deal with before hand. We can get bugged down in the detail. Last week over a cuppa in the hall I heard a comment, and as I reflected on it, I thought it was a good thought to wrestle with as Christians. It was –

If God is not an interventionist then why should we bother to pray!

It's one of these details of life we get caught up as we travel through life.

In today's Gospel Jesus and his disciples were traveling and they got caught up in the detail. I would like to take a look at three aspects or from three angles

1/ Let's just look at the Gospel reading

2/ Briefly compare the two stories in Matt with Jesus in a boat as they move to the other side.

3/ The question of, Is God as a non interventionist God?

1/ Let's just ponder this passage. Which comes after the feeding of the five thousand.

Jesus sends the disciples ahead of him.

"23 After he had dismissed them[the crowd], he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone"

Jesus spends time in prayer on his own, Jesus values prayer – time with God the Father.

In verse '33' it states, Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

This is the first time in Matthew's Gospel where the disciples acknowledged Jesus is the Son of God.

Does the Son of God need to Pray.

Why did Jesus need to pray, maybe it was to stay in communion with God the Father.

In the same way we pray, consider what god's word says to us and through connecting through the on going meal of communion. And time in silence.

It is recreational, it is about rebuilding our soul.

"24 but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it." A great analogy of the troubles in life we face every day.

25 During the fourth watch of the night [for the Jews this meant early morning] Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," [they could not believe or trust what they were seeing] and cried out in fear.

And shortly we read that Peter could not believe or trust what he was doing. Our want to do God like things is a bit like wanting to eat of the tree of knowledge in the early story of Adam and Eve.

We are meant to believe and have faith in Jesus in God not to do God like things.
But there's a twist with this, we are the Body of Christ in the world.

2/ Matthew 14:22-33 Jesus walking on water and this should be read with the Stilling of the Storm account in 8:23-27.

In the first story, there is a great storm, waves swamp the boat, and the disciples fear for their lives while Jesus sleeps. Waking him up with the plea, "Lord, save us!" Jesus calls them cowardly "ones of little faith, The main difference, of course, is Peter's request for Jesus to identify himself by allowing him to walk on the water. In this case Jesus only questions Peters lack of faith.

Both stories are about lacking in faith when life seems dangerous or bad.

The boat was a symbol of the early church and these stories illustrate a lack of faith when Jesus is in the boat or church but quite or not to be found in the church we should trust God is not far away.

3/ Is God a non interventionist God, OR does God intervene – No and Yes!

[I want to state I did not want to tell you what to believe but I would rather encourage you to explore what it is you do believe and challenge it while praying for insight and truth to be revealed]

God the Father has intervened in the world through sending Jesus The Christ in person, God does intervenes in our world through God's Holy Spirit.

But the question is then how much?

Just remember....“We are the body of Christ”

Do we believe in praying for the sick, yes do we still go to the Doctor! Yes I believe in medical Science.

I was stunned a couple of years ago when it was suggested that they did not teach Science when I went to school. This young man must have been giving me an out! as I was religious and had never been taught science. I told him science is great medical science is awesome but there are still more things in God’s great world, yet to be discover and proven and some things will never be proven.

I do not believe that if I pray for a new car I’m going to get one however it doesn’t seem to stop me from praying for a new car.

Jesus when up the hill to prayer to be alone to be with God. Is God intervening if we connect with God in spirit and gain insight, wisdom and peace.

Henri Nouwen makes a comment on prayer.

"Without the discipline of prayer, the world retains its illusions. Without an hour of public prayers, or a half hour of private prayer, or ten minutes of quiet meditation, or saying a brief prayer of gratitude before or after a meal, we forget that God is present in the world and in our life.

When we remember to pray in the morning, when we are mindful of the present moment, when we set apart Saturday or Sunday as the Sabbath, God’s special day of the week, then all of life, and all times and places, and all people that we see are transformed by the light of God.

The more we pray—in the sense of living a prayerful life—the more we desire to be with God in prayer. Prayer creates in us a hunger and thirst to be with the One whom we have seen shining through nature and moments in time, people and events." #

Prayer is about being in communion with God not about getting what we want!

It is more important to be with God in spirit then to be like God but in being with God we will naturally take on the nature of God.

Chap Richard Whereat