

Mt 14:22-33; Romans 10: 5-15

St. Andrew's, Totteridge: 8:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m.

10<sup>th</sup> August 2011: 8th Sunday after Trinity

Water plays a big part in all our lives – each one of us men is made up of 60% water and women a little bit more – about 70%. Infants can be a little bit more still, up to 75% of their body weight is made up of water, but as we get older this percentage usually drops – we are, quite literally, drying up as we get older.

So it's no surprise then that we can't do without water for very long. On average, a human life can only survive in a human body for about three days without water, or a water-bearing fluid of some kind. Some of us may prefer to take our water with other things mixed in, especially something that may have been brewed or distilled, whether that's alcohol or tea, but all of these processes rely on water as well! There are many things we need in order to survive: air, food & gravity to name a few, but there's no doubt about it, we, and anything that wants to grow, are heavily reliant upon water.

Fortunately, the world, the beautiful blue planet earth, is two-thirds covered in water – but of course this is mostly salt-water, water we can't actually drink. But just having this seawater available means that a system can exist that turns the undrinkable into something we can live on – how wonderful is that!

So the next time it rains, don't get cross about getting wet; without the clouds and the rain there wouldn't be any fresh water to drink. Water is a marvel – it's clear, it's beautiful, it can clean, it can purify, it helps with cooking and it can quench our thirst. If we think of it like that, then we can almost begin to think of it as being symbolic of God, in all his goodness and purity and providence.

But water can take life away as well as sustain it – we only have to think about Tsunamis or some-such to see how that can happen. As scary as these are, in Jesus day people were very much more at the mercy of the properties of water than we are today. With engines and propellers, modern boats are no longer at the mercy of the wind and tides, but even they can still get into trouble. But if an earthquake does strike and large bodies of water all move at once, then water can be a supremely destructive force as well.

Did you see the way I mentioned Jesus just now – did you like that? Well, I suppose you've got to expect it coming to church – and I suppose you'd expect me to say that I think he's terribly important. I read a story recently about a man of roughly my age who remembered a sermon a vicar preached to him when he was ten. The preacher said, “if you remember nothing else from what I've said today, just remember this, - **Jesus is what God means by man, and what man means by God.**” (*Repeat*) What I understand this to mean is that, in Jesus, *God* sees the full potential of man, and in *Jesus* we see a human version of God.

Just now I also used the word ‘grow’, about how if anything wants to grow it needs water. But with human beings, we don't just talk about them growing up in size or body, but also in the mind and in the Spirit. We go to school or university to help us grow in the mind, but sadly we often don't do anything at all about growing in the Spirit. What do I mean about growing in the Spirit?

Well, yesterday here in church we called on the Holy Spirit of God to bless the waters of baptism in our font, asking God that, in them, we may wash the spirit of baby Daniel Dugdale to help him fend off sins and start him on his spiritual journey. Water, the

essential ingredient of all life on earth, was the medium through which the Holy Spirit worked, and in it began the process of Daniel's growth in that Spirit. So water's not the source of all life – it's an essential ingredient.

Growing in the Spirit means learning to place more and more faith in God and Jesus and in developing our relationship with them. In the story we heard just now, Jesus makes his followers, his disciples, get into a boat to go on ahead of him, but they soon run into trouble. The water is beginning to be stirred up into big waves and I imagine they were all a bit scared. But Jesus knew they'd be worried because he suddenly appears walking towards them across the waves.

At first they didn't know who it was, but Peter believed that it was Jesus and remembered that he had saved them from a storm earlier in Matthew's gospel. Peter has begun to believe that Jesus can help people in any situation and is determined to show his faith. He says, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water', and so Jesus does. As long as he has faith in Jesus, Peter can walk on the water too, but the minute he begins to be afraid, he begins to sink.

There's no easy way to explain how Jesus was able to do this, and how Peter ultimately failed, though don't forget, he did succeed at first whilst he believed. Some think that Jesus didn't actually walk on water, that he must have been walking near the shoreline through the surf; some believe this to be just a symbolic story where Jesus asserts a spiritual power over the material source of all life, enabling him to save anyone who gets into spiritual difficulty even if our faith is small; and some believe as I do that, because Jesus was the incarnate God *who is the source of all life*, who walked with the power of the Holy Spirit, he could actually walk on water.

Whatever you believe about Jesus and the miracles he performed, you need to be aware that whatever the kind of storms life brings you, Jesus is there and ready to help. But he can only help if you are prepared to cry out to him in prayer like Peter, 'Lord, save me!' And then, one way or another, you'll hear something like those wonderful words Jesus offers back to Peter, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

And this is what we hope for with baby Daniel and all those who are baptised into the faith. That whatever life throws at them, they will have the courage to turn to Christ, and ask him for his help. Prayers may not be answered in a way to be expected, but they will be answered, because our God is a loving God – and just as in Jesus he wanted to save Peter, so he loves and wants to save us all. Not just when we get into trouble, not just when we're near death, but right now, when anything gets in the way to stop us having a living, loving, faithful relationship with our living, loving Lord. Because **Jesus is what God means by man, and what man means by God.** Amen.

28 Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.'<sup>29</sup> He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus.<sup>30</sup> But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!'<sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'<sup>32</sup> When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.<sup>33</sup> And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

### **1 Kings 19.9-18**

<sup>9</sup>At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'<sup>10</sup> He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

### **Elijah Meets God at Horeb**

<sup>11</sup> He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;

### **Matthew 14:22-33 Jesus Walks on the Water**

<sup>22</sup> Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.<sup>23</sup> And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,<sup>24</sup> but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.<sup>25</sup> And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake.<sup>26</sup> But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear.<sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

<sup>12</sup>and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

<sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' <sup>14</sup>He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.' <sup>15</sup>Then the Lord said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. <sup>16</sup>Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. <sup>17</sup>Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. <sup>18</sup>Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.'

<sup>8</sup> Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. <sup>9</sup> Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

<sup>10</sup> Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. <sup>11</sup> Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. <sup>12</sup> The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. <sup>13</sup> Righteousness will go before

him, and will make a path for his steps.

## **Romans 10: 5-15**

## **Salvation Is for All**

<sup>5</sup> Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that 'the person who does these things will live by them.' <sup>6</sup>But the righteousness that comes from faith says, 'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?"' (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup>or "Who will descend into the abyss?"' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup>But what does it say? 'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup>because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. <sup>11</sup>The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.' <sup>12</sup>For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. <sup>13</sup>For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be

saved.'

14 But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? <sup>15</sup>And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'

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