

Christian Prayer 5a i

Guided meditation - Walking on water

It is helpful to begin the meditation with a brief quietening-down exercise, using breathing or a mantra to quieten and centre the group.

Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a head-wind.

In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. 'It is a ghost' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.'

It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 'Come' said Jesus.

Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord! Save me!' he cried.

Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' he said 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

It had not been the best of days to begin with.

We had just heard that John the Baptist had been murdered by Herod. And Jesus had called us to go with him across the lake for a quiet time together. When we got there, there were crowds. He sent us off by ourselves - and that upset us. Then he told us to feed the 5000 but we only had five loaves and two fish. So we had a bit of a row with him, and then he did feed the 5000 with the five loaves and two fish. Which was amazing. Then he asked us to gather up what was left over. We didn't mind, but it was rubbing our noses in it a bit, and some of the crowd went out of their way to point that out.

Anyway. It was wonderful. And at the end, when the crowd was finally gone, we really wanted to talk with him; and say sorry and be forgiven; and for things to be alright again.

But he sent us away in the boat and went off by himself.

We got into the boat and set sail, but there was a fair bit of grumbling, I can tell you.

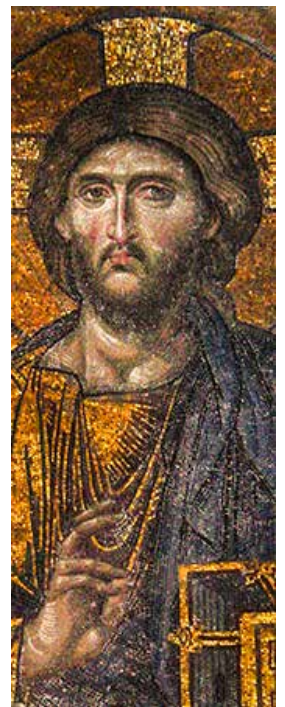
I just wished everyone would go away and leave me alone. I could not wait to get home.

With all the moaning and groaning, we didn't see the clouds building up over the hills, or the wind. But we did notice when the first wave broke over the prow of the boat and soaked half of us.

PTO

★ *The exercise is written as a script. You can read it to a class. But leave lots of pauses, to allow people to notice how they are feeling etc.*

An accompanying PowerPoint includes the script read for you. The 2nd screen with the scripture passage runs for 2mins 15 secs; the meditation screen - the 3rd screen (which will play without being preceded by the scripture passage) lasts c.10 minutes. There is a 4th screen which includes the sound of a concluding bell. All you need add is the closing 'Glory be...'



We are fishermen and we know how dangerous a storm on the sea of Galilee can be. Most of the time it's like a millpond, but when the storms get up, it's dangerous and we were right in the middle of the lake. No point turning back, we had to press on, but the wind was against us. And we really made little progress. We took the sail down and were relying on oars. It was tiring rowing, after everything else that day. But at least we'd stopped moaning and arguing. We got our backs into the wind and rowed and rowed.

- *Have you ever been out there in the thick of things, and fearing you were never going to get back somewhere safe?*
- *If you have, remember it. And if you have not, imagine it. It is frightening. And it really focuses the mind on what's most important. For sure, you stop moaning...*

And then... I couldn't believe it. I thought I must have got food poisoning from that miraculous fish or something. I could see someone standing, walking on the water. No boat, no nothing, just this person.

Couldn't make him out, but then I knew – even before I saw him clearly – I knew. There was not anyone else it could be, it was Jesus, and Jesus was not just standing but walking, coming towards us.

No-one else had seen him, so I said 'Look it's Jesus. And someone, I won't tell you who, but it was John, said 'Pull the other one, it's got bells on'. But they did look and they saw.

And they just gasped. And they didn't think it was Jesus. They were frightened it was a ghost, or a demon or an evil spirit. Anyway they were frightened.

- *Have you known that? That sort of fear?*

But Jesus walked right up close. And he looked at us all, and said. 'Courage. It is me.' And, like he always said when we were in trouble, 'Don't be afraid.'

And he wasn't mocking us, laughing at our fright and fear. You only had to see him to know his love for you. And even in the storm we knew, we did not have to be afraid, because of his love. His love was our rock, our safe place, even in the storm.

- *Have you ever known that security? Is there someone whose love is that sure, safe place for you? Whatever is going on. Whatever you've done. That is there for you, as you are. If you have: remember it, and if you haven't, then imagine it, and know Jesus is that one there for you.*

Then... I don't know what came over me. I don't know why I said it. But I did say it, and I heard myself say it.

I said, 'Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.'

You have a word for it. I was a wally, a right wally.

But Jesus said 'Come on'. And there he was, saying, 'Come on'.

And up I got, and clambered over the side, onto the water. And I walked on it. I did. But then the wind, and the waves and the spray and he no longer seemed so close and I did begin to sink.

I screamed: 'Lord! Save me!'

And he did. Jesus put out his hand at once and held me.

And I was **not** sinking. I was safe, held. He lifted me into the boat and came in after me.

And the wind dropped and everything was still.

But my heart raced. And I heard him say 'Man of little faith, why did you doubt?'

We were silent before him for many minutes. And then one of the others spoke up, and spoke for all of us, speaking to him, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

It had not been the best of days for us. But as it ended he gave us the gift of eternal peace and trust and hope. Of course, storms still come, and go, And sometimes we still doubt, sometimes we still fear. But in it all we have his peace, and we are safe.

- *For a minute or two, let's sit still now, and place our storms and worries before the Lord, and receive his peace.*