

Trinity Sunday - Discipleship 1

11/06/17 09:30 St Peter

Having magical powers is perhaps something we've all dreamed of, especially when young. It is one of the more frequent questions I get asked at home - "Daddy, if you could have anything, what magical power would you have?". Think about that one. Answers to me later!

Steven Frayne is better known as Dynamo: Magician Impossible. The title is apt, for he performs seemingly impossible feats before live audiences, such as levitating. In June 2011, Dynamo walked on the surface of the Thames in front of the Palace of Westminster, to the delight and astonishment of a growing crowd. He was photographed and videoed walking on water. Doing the impossible it seemed. In the English language we use the phrase "walking on water" to refer to doing the impossible, or the person who can do what others cannot.

We hear in our Gospel today that Jesus walked on water in front of the eyes of his disciples. To many who have always struggled with the Christian faith, this is an image that is a blockage to faith. How can anyone walk on water - its impossible. But perhaps, through the eyes of faith, we are not shocked by the thought of Jesus doing what is humanly impossible. He is God after all.

But perhaps the shocking part, we easily overlook, is when he stretches out his hand to Peter and says, "Come". Peter is invited out of the boat to walk on water too.

Now we have got used to the idea that the Gospel writers want us, the modern day disciples, to understand that in speaking to the disciples - this time to Peter - Jesus is also addressing us. So Jesus looks at us the disciples, reaches out his hand, and says "Come". We need to get out of the boat. Now that just might be impossible!

This Sunday sees the start of another sermon series, lasting eight Sundays. We have entitled it "**Step Out Of The Boat!** Being a Disciple in 21st-Century Caversham". For the call out of our boat is the call of Jesus to walk with him. And that is one definition of a disciple - someone who walks with Jesus. Over the coming weeks our readings and sermons will invite us to think through a number of different aspects to life as a disciple of Jesus. We will hear Jesus words to "Come and See". As disciples we are called to come close to Jesus, to recognise him for who he is, and to respond to his call to follow him. We will also explore in more depth the call of the disciple to walk with Jesus, to be where Jesus is and to do what Jesus does. We shall then think about the call of discipleship beyond ourselves to service of our community, and proclamation of God's love. We call this mission. We shall also take a look at the cost of discipleship, and how following Jesus is not a promise of an easy life. We shall also think about how faith put into action, building God's Kingdom, fulfils our lives. And finally we will think together about how the call to discipleship is never to act on our own, but always to be bound together through God's Spirit as the Body of Christ.

At our baptism each of us marked our as a follower of Jesus Christ. The cross is marked on our foreheads, and promises made (either by ourselves or by others on our behalf) that we will grow in the faith, and seek to walk with Jesus all our lives. Perhaps for many of us however, we recognise that our walk with Jesus is not all that it should be. Would we even call ourselves a disciple of Christ?

This series of sermon is designed to get us thinking, and to help nurture our faith. When Jesus called Peter out of the boat. he was eager to go with his Lord. To walk where he walked. But then he took note of the storm around him, and took his eyes off Jesus. And Matthew tells us, Peter began to sink. Stepping out of the boat to follow Jesus only works if we can keep our eyes fixed on him. When Peter began to sink, Jesus reaches out and rescues him.

We might approach this sermon series thinking we can't even begin to imagine ourselves as a follower of Jesus - but would like to be. Or we might think of ourselves as a Christian, but want to refresh our faith. Or we might feel our faith is real, but there is always the need for it to be stronger. Wherever we are - in the boat of our lives - Jesus calls us to step out, to keep our eyes fixed on him, and trust. Together over these coming weeks we will think and pray together about how we might become better disciples of our Lord.

Father God, we look to you now for encouragement, for hope, for direction and for purpose. Our faith is little but your love is great: so call us and strengthen us, we pray, to let go of where we found Jesus yesterday and to follow him joyfully today, wherever he may lead. Amen.