

Testing the water

Notes on the Bible readings

- In this story, something is revealed about Jesus' identity. 'It is I' are the same words (in Greek) that God uses to describe himself in the Old Testament. Matthew is hinting that something about Jesus' identity is beyond human. At the end of this passage, the disciples declare that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Jesus seems to set up this scene to test the disciples' faith. And there's something encouraging in this: if the disciples had doubts, it suggests that we're allowed to as well. And they are all changed as Jesus meets them in their doubt, fear and discomfort.
- Peter, by getting out of the boat, shows that he is willing to leave behind his old life and its safety, to follow Jesus. However, he still and always seems to find faith a struggle.
- Both Elijah – in the Book of 1 Kings – and Peter struggle to maintain their faith in God despite having seen God perform amazing deeds in front of their eyes. All three passages challenge us to consider whether we find it easy to hear what God says – and believe in it. The challenge for us is to take that risk of faith, and 'step out of the boat'.

Comfort and risk

Identify your own, and, if you like, your church's Christian 'comfort zones' and list them on a piece of paper. What risks might you have to take for the Gospel message to be heard beyond these Christian comfort zones? Can you consider following this through?

Questions for reflection

- ▶ Does this image speak more of faith or doubt?
- ▶ What step/leap of faith have you taken recently?
- ▶ Are we too risk-averse in living the Gospel?



A prayer for others

Lord God, we come before you to pray for all those people for whom taking risks is a way of life.

We pray for our emergency services – paramedics, the police, the fire service – all who daily face difficult situations as they seek to help to protect us and make our world a safer and more peaceful place.

We pray for people who work in troubled areas – the armed forces in war zones, those who bring humanitarian aid into areas of natural disaster, and many more.

We pray for people who take risks in your name, Lord Jesus – those who take your word where it is most needed – and for people who grapple with faith and doubt.

Lord, reveal yourself to them all and keep them safe.

Amen.

A personal prayer

*O Lord my God, you are worthy to be praised.
You are the Son of God who walks on water,
who mesmerises huge crowds with powerful words,
but who also calms a frightened Peter –
and you calm me and give me peace.*

Thank you, Lord.

Amen.

Live your faith

Encourage everyone to take a risk this week (NB within current social distancing guidelines). For example, they might say 'Hello' to someone they 'know' but have never spoken to; or make an apology that is overdue.