

There are some days that you remember for the rest of your life and of course I hope that this will be one of those for Rosie Foster as she is baptised later in our service. It does help now that we can take photos and video so that you can relive the day over and over again. With today being such a positive event I hope Rosie that you will always want to revisit the day.

But of course there are days which we would rather forget. I did feel sorry for Michael Fish again this week as he was reminded how on the evening of 15<sup>th</sup> Oct 1987 giving out the weather forecast he commented that a woman had rung in saying she'd heard that there was a hurricane on the way and he then said "if you are watching don't worry there isn't" before one of the fiercest storms ripped across the South east destroying buildings and uprooting hundreds of trees. A day I'm sure he'd like to forget but isn't allowed to.

Well in our passage Peter seems to have had one of those days doesn't he?

### **1. What happened...**

That day there were some good things. He'd seen Jesus healing people and presumably listened as Jesus taught. Then he'd been involved as Jesus took 5 loaves and 2 fish and with them fed 5000 people.

Not bad so far.

But then the day turned a bit sour. He and the rest of the team of disciples were sent in their boat back across the Sea of Galilee. The going was tough with a head wind and then late in the night they were aware of this figure walking on the water.

Having ascertained that it was Jesus, Peter got out of the boat and walked towards him. But seems suddenly to have realised what he was doing and began to sink and had to shout for Jesus to help him. As if that wasn't bad enough Jesus words must have echoed round his head for days, "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" (14:31).

It wasn't one of Peter's best days and, while the others may have enjoyed recounting it, I don't think Peter did. Rosie hopefully today won't end up like that!

But of course some here may say well Rosie's day can't end up like that because humans don't walk on water. Indeed I can remember way back talking with some Jehovah's witnesses and saying something very much like that. I could not see how miracles could happen. Today I see things very differently.

I have been in schools this week doing assemblies and I'm sure I could write a book on the answers I have had to questions I have asked. I did hear of one Vicar who was in school and he asked the children this question, "What is small, brown, furry with a bush tail, runs up trees, and hides nuts in the grass?" A little boy looking perplexed said, "please sir I know the answer must be Jesus but it

sure sounds like a squirrel to me!” When a Vicar asks the question the answer is Jesus. For me just six months after talking with those Jehovah’s witnesses I became a Christian and knowing who Jesus is changed my perspective.

## **2. the big question....**

The big question is who is this Jesus? At the end of this event the disciples said, “Truly you are the Son of God” (14:33). Now it is hard to understand exactly what they meant by that and possibly it was only after Jesus’ death and resurrection that they understood this man to be God.

But this is why he could walk on water. This is why he could feed 5000 with five loaves and two fish. This is the big question for all of us, who is this Jesus? I know him as God and I know that Rosie sees it that way. I see it that way for good reason. What we believe as Christians is based on the historic record of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. We have four records of his life in the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Matthew begins with a genealogy to set Jesus in his historical and human context. Mark records very succinctly that Jesus came from Nazareth but clearly shows him to be God. Luke presents himself as a historian who has, “undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses” (Luke 1:1-2) and John makes it clear that he wrote his record “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

We are dealing here with eyewitness accounts that through the centuries have led many men and women from all kinds of backgrounds to a rational decision that Jesus is God.

Such was the decision made by CS Lewis the Oxford don. He describes himself being brought into Christianity like a prodigal, "kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape." In his book *Surprised by Joy* he wrote, “You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England”. He was reluctant but he could not avoid it because he knew it was rational and above all he knew it was true.

It is the historic truth of the Christian faith that has led Rosie today to come for baptism because she wishes to testify to her faith in Jesus as God. She wishes to take this step because faith is not just a matter of believing something but acting on it. Faith is the trust in God that makes us act in reliance on him.

## **3. A matter of faith**

When Peter got out of the boat on that stormy sea it was an act of faith. It was an act of trust in Jesus as God and made in reliance on him. It was an act of faith made in response to the call of Jesus to “come”. However it wasn’t long before Peter began to sink and Jesus summed up the reason in one sentence, ““You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” (14:31).

When he said Peter had little faith what he meant was it was a faith that was still emerging. He had been with Jesus for some time now and had heard him and seen what he did but still was not fully sure that this man is God.

In addition Peter was aware of his situation. He was walking on water, which I think he may have realised was more perilous than skating on thin ice. For him at that point he saw it as an impossibility. He was overtaken by his doubts which began when he took his focus off Jesus and put them onto himself.

He was a man of doubt as are many people. I have often spoken with Christians who are struggling with doubts.

Sometimes the doubts are because, like Peter, we have not yet fully understood who Jesus is. Not understanding we may not have not fully come to faith in him. If that is your situation today then let me encourage you to read a gospel, such as the gospel of Mark, and see for yourself who Jesus is, the man who is God. But some here will say I am a Christian but still have doubts and those doubts will be because you still have much to learn about Jesus, who he is and what he can do. That’s fine we are meant to grow in the Christian faith. But if that’s you, and in a sense it is all of us, then take time to read, talk, listen, think about Jesus and be reminded that he is the son of God, God in human form. He is the one who died in our place on the cross that we might know forgiveness of sin and acceptance by our Heavenly Father. It is as we learn about him we grow in our faith and trust of him.

However, sometimes the doubts come because of our circumstances, events which threaten to swamp us. It may be the loss of a job, the breakdown of a relationship, illness, the death of a loved one. It may be a friend attacking us for our faith and deriding our belief in Jesus.

At those times too we need to refocus on Jesus but perhaps in the company of other Christian friends who can help to bring the light of Jesus into the problem and put our situation into perspective.

I remember many years ago going to Portugal. We were booked into a nice hotel. We got there in the evening and when I looked out of the window I could see very little except when I looked down I could see the dustbins. Great I thought a nice hotel on the Algarve and I have a view of the dustbins. Next morning when I got up I opened the blind and there before me was an amazing view of the swimming pool and beyond the golden beach and sea. Yes if I looked down I could see the dustbins

but when I lifted my eyes it was the amazing view that held my gaze. In life many tough things happen and they can take our gaze off Jesus and onto ourselves and create doubt which in turn can destroy our faith.

As Peter cried out to Jesus for help so Jesus gave it and brought him safe into the boat. If you are floundering and doubting because of some event in your life then be reminded again of who Jesus is and his power as God towards us.

The answer to our doubts is to focus on Jesus. To recognise who he is, the Son of God, to remember what he has done for us, he died that we might be forgiven and to realise that the whole of our lives are safe with him – we can trust him. It is in the light of that that as Paul put it “We live by faith, not by sight” 2 Cor 5:7.

Peter’s day was not exactly great but I am sure that through it he learned a little more about Jesus, about himself and about faith in Jesus.

Rosie I hope that today is a good day for you but I hope also that through it you are brought closer to Jesus that you may follow him with a surer step.

And for all of us here this morning that through thinking about Peter, through sharing in Rosie’s baptism and through being involved in Christian worship we too are encouraged on our path whether it be towards Jesus or with him.