



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus said to Peter, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" And I can totally understand if we're to think, after hearing this story about Peter and the disciples, that it is pretty cut and dry. I mean, it's Peter's fault, right? All was going well. He was walking on freakin' water! In the middle of a storm, no less. And then what happens? Well, he starts to notice what he's actually doing.

I mean, confidence is really easy when you are singularly minded, but as soon as you get distracted, you take your eyes off the prize, the world starts to creep in, you begin to second guess everything based on your surroundings, the risks, the probabilities, the storm, the wind, and you're actually walking on freaking water. Well, there's only one thing that's going to happen. You're going to get frightened.

So, what we need to learn from our brother Peter is to say no to the distraction. Put on those blinders. There's a reason that they're called blinders so you can't see anything else. And keep looking straight ahead. All eyes on Jesus, fellow water walkers. Don't look anywhere else. Don't think about anything else. And whatever you do, and I repeat, whatever you do, Do not be afraid, you of little faith.

Now, I love Jesus as much as you all do, but this story drives me freaking crazy, because I am seriously in the same boat as Peter, to mix a bunch of metaphors. And I think many of you would be too. In a wild windstorm, he faltered in his radical trust in Jesus. He failed in believing that Christ would take care of him against all odds. He succumbed to believing that what he saw was stronger than what he could not see. And yet Jesus chides him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" And I guess the extension of this is true for us. When you and I doubt that we can't walk on water, well, our faith is just as puny as Peter's.

But I want to point out what Peter was really doing. He was assessing his reality. He was taking stock of what he could see. He could see the waves crashing in all around him. He could feel that wind that was whipping around him. He could see, yes, he could see Jesus on water, but yes, he also saw his feet, and they were on water, too. And there was a lot of water underneath that water and there was no ground to be seen. I mean, placing this kind of blind trust in Jesus, it's not just hard. It's actually impractical because, folks, we cannot walk on water.

We cannot know what our future holds and trusting Jesus that we are going to be saved in all circumstances is not realistic and it's actually also not true.

Now a very weird thing happened while I was writing this sermon and was about to make this point. On Friday, I had spoken to my son Miles in the afternoon. He's 19 years old and he's living in Minneapolis and he told me that he almost got sideswiped by a truck. And it frightened me. So I said, well, honey, be careful, be safe. A cautious driver is a happy driver. And I hung up the phone and I went immediately to Jesus. And I said, Jesus, I am so far away. He is 11 hours away from me. I am totally entrusting you and totally entrusting Miles to you. I need you to take care of him. I need you to protect my baby. And I need you to keep him from harm. And know, Jesus, I truly trust you. I can only depend on you. And I completely leave it in your hands.

Now, I said this to Jesus because I know that nothing is promised in this life. But maybe because of this gospel text, I wanted Jesus to know that I'm not like Peter. I really do trust Him. Hoping maybe that He would protect Miles. It was silly. Five hours later at seven o'clock, I got a call from Miles and I heard sirens and commotion in the background. He was in a car accident. And let me assure you all that no one was seriously hurt. But he said to me, it's bad, Mom. And my heart went into my stomach.

So he was crossing the intersection and an oncoming car hit him. And the car that he was driving had five passengers and they spun all the way around and landed in the middle of the road. And he said that the crash was so loud that his ears were ringing. And as Troy and I hung on that evening to every shred of information that we could get from him, from one of the passengers being taken to the hospital because of a concussion, to the fact that the police were going to be delayed for two hours because of an active shooter situation in Minneapolis, I just kept talking to Jesus.

And Jesus never chided me for having little faith and I never believed that Jesus didn't prevent the car accident because I doubted or I was afraid. This is not how faith works. This is not how our relationship with Jesus works. Rather, through thick and through thin, through my own fears and my own worries, I knew that Jesus was taking care of Miles, and Jesus was taking care of me, no matter what was going to happen.

Faith is not a shield that protects us from disaster. And having too little faith is not an opportunity for the divine to pass heavenly judgment on us and find us wanting. Faith is knowing and trusting that whatever is going on, that Jesus is with you. And that was what I was missing from this gospel story the whole time.

So I did some digging, and I discovered something. In the Greek, when Jesus says to Peter, "You of little faith," it turns out that that's actually just one word. It's

like a phrase, or an expression, or a term. And in the old, revised, standard version, it gets translated as, "man of little faith." And this term, this expression is actually said by Jesus in the gospel five times.

So he's at the Sermon on the Mount, and He says, "If God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?" And then when He's asleep on the boat, and the storm is coming, and it's all crazy, and they're all worried that they're going to die, and they wake up Jesus, and they're like, don't you care we're perishing? He looks at them, and He goes, "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?"

And then when the disciples misunderstand him, and are worried about having bread, He says, "O men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves the fact that you have no bread?" It's not a term of condemnation, it's a term of endearment. It's like when I say to my cat Poppy, who I love, you little stinker. Jesus has a term of endearment for us. People of little faith. Because look what happens after Jesus says this to Peter, Jesus reaches out His hand. He grabs Peter out from sinking. He brings him up and I never caught this before. Peter actually walks on water with Jesus hand in hand back to the boat. So he gets to walk on water. And then they go into the boat and Jesus calms the storm and all those people of little faith worship the Son of God.

Jesus was there all along. He wasn't there to condemn them. He was there to take care of them. Jesus loves people of little faith. So I want to assure you that whatever your faith looks like, whether your faith is as large as a mountain or so small that you can't even feel it, our faith has little effect on God's participation and care in our lives.

So then what is the purpose of faith? I have three more stories that can help us understand what faith does for us. I'm going to title this sermon, Two Roberts and Two Accidents. You already heard about the first accident, so let me tell you a story about a Robert. And this story is to illustrate that our faith can actually help us get through the unknown.

Robert Carrigan is a beloved parishioner here, and he had a major health scare this past summer that required him to be hospitalized and have two operations. And he is thankfully on the other side of this. And this past week, he wrote a beautiful note to all of us.

"Dear clergy, staff, morning prayer group, and parishioners of Christ Church Cranbrook,

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your prayers concerning my recent health issue. Your prayers and concern made me well, physically and spiritually. I

know this from going through the experience. Each time before I got anesthetized, I prayed to God that I was in His hands and prayed for the doctors, my wife and daughter, and my Christchurch family that prayed for me. Thinking about God's love keeps me at peace and steady with recognition that your prayers have made me well."

For Robert and for many of us, when we have no idea what the outcome is going to be and everything's up in the air, our faith is what we turn to. We place ourselves and the ones that we love in God's hands and simply let God love us and give us peace. It's what people of little faith do.

Second, our faith can keep us going when ordinary motivations do not. And this is a story about another parishioner named Robert. On Friday, Robert Kremhelmer's mother died. And so I called him, and he shared that his mother had been battling mental illness for many, many years, and so he was so grateful that she was finally at peace and fully joyful with God.

But when I called him in the morning, Rob was at his neighbor's house, helping them redo their landscaping. And he said that his actual work gave him some days off to mourn his mother, and so he decided to help his neighbors, who have, like, no kind of green thumb. And he told me that people so often think that there's a catch when he helps people out. He said people don't know what to do with kindness. They know how to handle hatred. They know what to do with bad behavior. But they're so confused by kindness. He said that's why we say kill them with kindness. It stops people dead in their tracks.

Rob has a habit of doing good even when he's never been asked to do it. I'll never forget the one day that he shows up at the church and he's got a handful of these Christ Church Cranbrook crests. Our crest, which is on the back of your bulletin, our little shield, he has decals made of them, like stickers. And they're so that we can put them on the back of our car, or on our computer, or on our Yeti mug. And then when we had Pride Month celebration, he got them done in rainbow. No one asked him to do this. He just does things.

And so when I asked Rob, what he offers as the reason of like, why are you doing this? He said people always think there's a catch, like I want some money in return, or I want something in return, and I tell them everybody thought the same about Jesus, that there must be a catch. Why is He healing people? Why is he feeding 5,000 people? Why is He stopping storms? And there is no catch. That's faith. Faith is doing good in this world for reasons that are mysterious to all of us except you and God, oh person of little faith.

And finally, our faith reminds us that there are things we cannot see that are just as real as the things we can see. Brant Hansen, he's currently one of my favorite authors, and he tells a story of a time that he went to go visit a church, speaking

to their group, and as they were exiting the church, as they were leaving, he realized he left his keys back downstairs in their church kitchen.

So he decides, you know, wait for me, I'll be right there and he starts to take off and go back to the kitchen. He remembers sort of where it was and it was dimly lit, but he could sort of see his way, and he's running down the hallway and he spies a post. So he heads over to the left and runs down the rest of the hallway, runs down the stairs, goes to the kitchen, grabs his keys, gracefully pivots, goes up the stairs, runs through the hallway, avoids the post, and goes smack dab in a whole wall of glass. He hit it so hard that the building shook. The good news was it had wire mesh, so he didn't go all the way through it.

He writes, "In the emergency room, I remember thinking, you know, this is interesting. I was 100% sure there was nothing there. But there was, in fact, something there. I know this because I note that I'm bleeding profusely. It's funny how reality didn't change to fit my interpretation of things. And by funny, I mean, of course, funny ten years later."

And that is what our faith does for us. Even though we can't see it, we can't perceive it, we may not even be able to feel it, there is no doubt that it's there. Faith is knowing that we may be drowning, we may be afraid, but God is a glass plated wall, definitely there, that we are 100% sure there is nothing there.

So, faith is there when you are frightened and need Jesus to help you through the scary parts of life. Faith is there when you don't know what your future holds, so you simply let God take care of you. Faith is there when you're motivated to do good because of a fire in your belly that only you and God understand. And faith is there when you are 100% sure that God is not there, and your faith tells you you are 100% wrong. It is so good to be people of little faith.

Amen.