

Trinity 10 St Thomas-on-the Bourne 10. 8. 2026

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During August the Eucharists at St Thomas's are more relaxed.

But one thing I do miss is the gospel procession. The reading of the gospel is a high point in the service. The gospel book is raised up and taken to the center of the congregation. Why? Because the words from Matthew Mark Luke and John are their accounts of Jesus's life, his teaching, his ministry. They are the foundations of our faith.

Having said that Jesus' words and actions are often puzzling.

Take for instance last week's gospel reading of the feeding of the 5,000. How could anybody possibly have fed 5,000 people with two little small fishes and five loaves. And now today we have the account of Jesus appearing as a ghost and coming to the disciples who were stranded in a boat in the midst of a storm and walking on water.

Do you believe these events really happened word for word as you read them? Some Christians do. Or do the stories invite you to consider how we might live our lives, how we might structure our society, how we might cope with failure, disappointments, setbacks and fears.

The feeding of the 5,000 is a wonderful account of how what seemed impossible - became possible. What was available was blessed, shared and distributed. And the whole occasion was presided over by Jesus assisted by his disciples.

Does that not remind you of this morning's Eucharist.?

But what about today's Gospel reading?

I mean Jesus appearing as a ghost. Do you believe in ghosts ?

I'm not sure that I do. I don't totally disbelieve because I know people whom I respect who do. Forty years ago, when our family first moved into the lovely Old Rectory at St Andrews, hearing strange noises always at midnight coming from the attic, it really was very disturbing. It turned out to be mice.

And then there's the account of Jesus walking on the water, and there's Peter who Jesus invites to do the same thing, but who ends up having to be rescued.

It's a story which I'm sure most of us will know. I have spent a lot of time this week trying to discover what this story can teach me. How can I discover God in the midst of crises?

Or challenges which are out of my control ? Maybe the novel I'm reading might help.

Novels are great for exploring situations which seem hopeless. The novel I'm reading is called 'The Lifeboat' by Charlotte Rogan. In the summer of 1914, a magnificent transatlantic liner suffered a mysterious explosion en route to New York. 40 people all very different from one another. Here they are adrift on the Atlantic in an open wooden lifeboat. Waves are slopping over the gunwales, people are quarreling, people are desperate.

Not unlike the story in today's Gospel story.

The trouble is I haven't finished the novel yet and I'm not sure whether anybody at all will be saved !

In today's gospel Peter cries out "Lord save me"

And in today's Epistle Paul talks a lot about being saved.

I then thought about the word saved.

What do we mean by being saved? That thought took me back 50 years when I was a young curate in Poplar. Julian Reindorp a fellow curate and I ran an Induction Course for new nurses from Malaysia (which we enjoyed very much !) One day we took a group of these nurses to hear Archbishop Michael Ramsey speak to students at Queen Mary's College in Stepney E London. They were all Christians and very keen to hear the great man

After the Arch Bp had given his talk a rather intense nurse asked a question "Archbp have you been saved!! " I nearly died.

Arch Bp Michel Ramsey very calmly replied "My dear, do you mean" " I have been saved" " I am being saved " or "I will be saved. "

"Being saved" as the Archbp said is not a straightforward question. But it is food for thought !

Today's gospel like the one we heard last week is perplexing and yet wonderful. If we try to analyze it, we can get in a muddle.

Why did Jesus make the disciples get into the boat and then leave them? Was he fed up with them and wanted to be alone by himself? Maybe. Was he wanting to test their faith - maybe.

Last week's Gospel and today's Gospel do give me much food for thoughts. But above all they give me hope. Even if we can't solve the problems, the conundrums the mysteries and the many crises that we face. God is present in our midst no matter what. I often forget that.

So did the disciples; they thought it impossible to feed the hungry. Above all eventually learnt their utter dependence on God

Peter thought he could walk on the water by his own strength of faith. He could not !

When Jesus said to "Peter "You of little faith" I don't he was saying Peter your faith is not strong enough, but rather Your faith is tiny it is just beginning" But then Peter and the others began to get the point.

They worshipped him and cried out "Truly you are the Son of God"

The same words that the centurion declared at the Cross

They understood Jesus the Son of God was in their midst.

Just as he was at the feeding of the 5000.

Just as he was on the lake.

Just as he is when we are confronted by the storms and challengers in the world in the church in my life and yours.

(No anthem today let us keep a time of silence.

(You might find it a help to read very slowly the Psalm on your sheet. It's a wonderful poem of God's goodness to us.)