

Loosing Focus!

1 Kings 19⁹⁻¹⁸; Psalm 85⁸⁻¹³; Romans 10⁵⁻¹⁵; Matthew 14²²⁻³³

But when he saw the strong wind he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' (Matthew 14³⁰)

My grandfather had a saying: *There are no so blind as those who will not see!* That is what we discover in Kings and in Matthew's readings for today - not people who had never seen what matters, but people who had seen and shifted their focus.

Paul, in this passage from Romans, is clear, concise and focused: **If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** It doesn't matter who you are, under God we stand equal and equally in need of salvation and we are equally responsible for sharing that Good News.

The Psalmist is focused - God is dependable and saves those you would expect him to! Everything is in place: **steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.**

Jesus is focused - he takes time out on his own to pray because that is what resources his ministry: being the Son of God doesn't mean he doesn't need to pray (a lesson for us all). It does mean that the storm on the lake doesn't affect him - and prayer does that: we may not be able to walk on water but we will always be able to walk through any storm!

But in the stories of Elijah and in Peter we have two individuals who lost the focus they had:

- ✦ Elijah had just had the moments experience of challenging the prophets of Baal - and he won. As a result of that he went into a depression - and God looked after him as he slept and ate and then challenged him: **what are you doing here?** He defends himself as being **zealous** and then moans that **I alone am left.** God tells him to go and stand by the mountain and then comes **wind, an earthquake and fire** and God isn't in any of those but makes himself known in **sheer silence.** After being challenged again - **what are you doing here** - he is sent back to prepare for a new chapter as he anoints and new king for Aram and for Israel and to find his replacement as a prophet, **Elisha.**

You could interpret this in two ways: i) God is gracious and looks after his servants when they are worn out, or ii) None of us are indispensable and God replaces someone who is beyond their use-by date!

I fear that Elisha wouldn't allow God to refocus his life and ministry - **what are you doing here?** - and so God has to respect his choice and use someone else.

- ✦ Peter begins well when they get over the understandable shock at seeing someone walking on water in the middle of a storm: Jesus says to them, **Fear not! It is I!** and then Peter says **Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.** And the record says, **So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on water and came towards Jesus.** In that we have a fully focused faith until he was distracted by the storm and Jesus gets hold of him and remonstrates, **You of little faith, why did you doubt?** In this we can often recognise ourselves when we begin so well and get distracted from the things that matter and take our focus off Jesus and see things around us.

Unlike Elisha, Peter managed to refocus in the simple words, **Lord, save me!** In that he is a lesson for us all, for we all know that, despite getting things wrong, Peter becomes the foundation on which the Church is built!

When you and I loose our focus on faith we have the choice - are we Elijah or Peter? Do we find our focus again or not? Do we choose to hear God's invitation to us or are we those who will not hear?