

Reflection on Matthew 14:22-33 and Romans 10:5-15

9th August 2026

I'm bringing you another story from my fictional church friend, Morag. It's been checked by Nick. **All the characters** are imaginary, except for Nick who is mentioned but doesn't appear. But the **situations** in the story are the **real experiences** of many different people.

It was Sunday, some weeks after Pentecost, and Morag got herself down to St James church for the morning service. There, she heard the Gospel for the day - the story of Jesus walking on water, and Peter trying to do the same.

She'd heard it several times before and she'd **never** been able to believe it.

But she listened to the sermon carefully. Nick was away that week, and it was a Reverend Maisie, a visiting preacher. Morag was interested to hear what she would make of the Gospel.

Morag was a bit disappointed that Revd Maisie didn't say a word about whether or not she believed that Jesus actually walked on water, let alone Peter (before he started to sink, that is).

Revd Maisie's take was that focussing on Jesus made difficult or even apparently impossible things **become** possible. She implied that by focussing on Jesus, **anyone** could do amazing things, with Jesus' help. And that Jesus was there to catch you when you failed or fell. Morag found that hard to believe and she felt very guilty about her lack of belief. But - walking on water by focussing on Jesus, indeed!

Morag was also perplexed by the Epistle reading. On one hand it seemed to be saying that **only** if you really believe in Jesus and his resurrection could you be saved. And then the next minute, it was saying that anyone can call on the Lord. What a contradiction! How did that work?

Morag thought about these two readings over the next few days, and, skepticism aside, decided to try a bit of Jesus-focussing for herself.

She had a dentist appointment on the Wednesday and like most of us, she really didn't enjoy dental treatment. In fact she was always terrified and the dentist and dental assistant had to spend a lot of time calming her down before she could even open her mouth.

"Right", she thought. "I'm going to focus on Jesus being there with me and holding my hand and making it OK".

She knew this was a **very** trivial and maybe selfish reason to focus on Jesus, but she thought it was worth giving it a go.

In the waiting room, she repeated the Lord's Prayer to herself - words that she loved. And once in the dentist's chair, she closed her eyes and imagined Jesus right there with her, holding her hand. Before she knew it, she'd opened her mouth without fuss, and within thirty minutes, the treatment was over.

"Goodness me, that worked anyway!" Morag thought to herself, rather surprised.

She wondered how else she could experience “focussing on Jesus”.

She certainly wasn’t ever going to try to walk on water down the river Esk!

There must be more serious things that could do with a bit of Jesus focus. After a bit of thought, she knew what was next.

Every now and then, she’d meet with friends in the Storehouse for a coffee and cake. Several times, she’d noticed a middle aged gentleman sitting alone, with a cup of tea. He was fairly ragged, even down and out, which was a bit off-putting. Every time she’d seen him, she’d felt sorry for him, and her conscience had twinged, as if telling her to go and say hello. But she never had. She even felt slight revulsion. And after all, she was with her friends and it would be rude to leave them, wouldn’t it?

But deep down, she felt moved to do this thing which until now, she had found just too difficult.

So with her new Jesus-focus, that Friday, she went into the Storehouse alone, and found him there in his usual seat. She fixed Jesus at the front of her mind, ordered a coffee, sat at the man’s table and said “Hello”.

From there, a wee conversation arose, stilted at first but getting easier. She learned he was a Muslim immigrant and his name was Omar. In his past life, in his own country, he had been a teacher. He had never been able to find work in Scotland, and was hardly making ends meet. He was taking advantage of the Storehouse's "pay it forward" scheme, where anyone could go and get a coffee pre-paid by a previous customer.

Intrigued, Morag asked him about his faith and what was at the heart of it. He said "Love and Light".

This surprised Morag. This was very similar to the Christian faith! They chatted a while and Morag found that she had enjoyed the encounter, and decided that she'd do this again. After a while, a bit of a friendship blossomed.

And so it went on - Morag practiced focussing on Jesus in many different situations that she found difficult, until a real crunch came. Her daughter was involved in a bad car accident and it was touch and go whether she would survive her injuries. She was in intensive care for three months and then her healing was very slow.

Of course Morag was deeply distressed and worried.

But she found that her new habit of focussing on Jesus came to the fore. Each moment of crisis was filled with Jesus - giving her strength she didn't know she could summon up to go from day to day, helping with the grandchildren, visiting her daughter and giving her love and positivity, and giving a daily dose of hope to her son-in-law.

Of course there were times when she couldn't stop crying - especially late at night after making sure the grandchildren were tucked up. But she remembered the part of the story where Jesus reaches out for Peter after he started to sink, and she began to understand that Jesus was reaching out and holding on to her too, in her distress.

Surprisingly, one source of comfort and strength came from Omar. She was able to offload her anxieties and stress to him over a cup of coffee each week, and he was a gentle and understanding listener.

Well, her daughter did recover in time, and after she came home from hospital, Morag found that she understood that Gospel reading a whole lot better now. She saw that it didn't matter two hoots whether or not she believed that Jesus or Peter actually walked on the water - that wasn't the point, as Reverend Maisie had explained. **Focus on Jesus** was the important bit, and the **growing of faith** that He'd hold you in the worst times..

Morag had lived this experience, as I'm sure many real people here today have lived it, one way or another.

Having another coffee with Omar after her daughter was more or less back to normal, Morag asked him how he had become such a kind and understanding listener.

He said it had come in useful when he was a teacher, but he learned his greatest lessons during the war that had killed his family and driven him from his home. He had learned compassion and empathy for others.

Morag was aghast - and asked him how he had got through such trauma. "I focussed on the Light and Love of Allah" he said.

In amazement, Morag realised that in the deepest and most dreadful trouble of his life, Omar had focussed on the very thing that she had focussed on in her own trouble - Light and Love - the essence of Christ Jesus. Although Omar would never name it as such, it seemed to Morag to be exactly the same experience.

That tricky Epistle reading made more sense now. **Light and Love - the essence of Christ Jesus - really are available to anyone who calls for, and recognises, divine help, whatever name they give the experience.** Christians - through their belief in Jesus, the Son of God. Others - through their own cultural or religious experience of Light and Love.

Amen

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