

Date:

The miracles of Jesus

PRAY Heavenly Father, as I read today, strengthen any areas where my faith is weak.

READ Matthew 14:22–33

REFLECT

I saw a television interview with an actor from the movie *The Da Vinci Code*. In response to criticism that the movie made untrue statements about Jesus, the actor said, ‘Well, I’ve always felt the Bible should include a disclaimer. A man walking on water... ? Come on!’

But just because we haven’t seen something doesn’t mean it can’t be true. Peter had never seen a man walking on water either; it might have been a mirage or a ghost or something worse. Still, he stepped out of the boat. That’s the essence of faith: the willingness to move forward, trusting God even when the way is unclear.

I wonder what Peter felt in that moment when he realised he was sinking into the raging waters? Embarrassment? Panic? Fear? Probably all of that. Now try to imagine Peter’s emotions when he felt the strong grip of Jesus on his arm. That was the moment he was sure it was no ghost. Once Peter was safely back in the boat, there was no need to quibble about whether a man could walk on water.

I remember facing a situation that scared the daylights out of me. I was inadvertently drawn into a financial scam that threatened to wipe me out. During those days, I typed the words that Jesus said to the disciples on a piece of paper and taped it to my work station. Whenever I felt fearful, I’d look at the words and say them aloud: ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid’ (14:27). I learned the lesson Peter learned from the middle of the lake: calling out to Jesus is the best way to overcome fear.

So how might I respond to that actor who wouldn’t believe that Jesus walked on water? All I can say is this: I know Jesus has saved me. I’ve experienced his ability to take away my fear. So it doesn’t seem so unbelievable that he could also walk on water. And I don’t need to see it to believe it.

APPLY In what area of your life do you need to trust Jesus and move forward in faith, even though the way seems unclear? How could you do so?

PRAY Spend a few minutes praying about any area where you sense a need to step out in faith.

Date:

The miracles of Jesus

PRAY Father, build my faith as I read your Word and pray today.

READ Matthew 21:18–22

REFLECT

It would be much easier for us to focus our attention here on Jesus’ encouraging comments about ‘mountain-moving faith’ rather than on how he miraculously withered the poor fig tree. But the two actions were linked and were intended to teach the disciples – and us – some important truths.

Some might explain Jesus’ outburst as a reaction to pressure. Even when they’re stressed out, Christian leaders need to remember the feelings of others; they also need the understanding and forgiveness of those around them. It’s hard to be perfect when you are in the public eye all the time.

But was this what was going on here? I believe the point of Jesus’ sharp words and miraculous withering of the fig tree was not about relieving stress but about bearing fruit. Some commentators see the fig tree as a symbol of Israel’s religion at the time; it looked good but ultimately was not satisfying the people’s spiritual hunger. But it also seems to be a statement by Jesus on the urgency of his mission. He wanted his followers to know that bearing fruit is serious business and there is no time to waste.

Producing fruit involves at least two things: *faith* and *prayer*. This is something far different from what some preachers call ‘naming and claiming’. It is *faith built on a deep relationship with our heavenly Father and prayer that changes us so that we can submit to his will* – which may be radically different from our original request.

But when we have waited before the Lord and honestly perceived his purposes, we can approach our ‘mountains’ with confidence that he will move them. Jesus reminds us that the size of the mountain is not a problem for God. Our challenge is to develop the kind of prayer life that is built on an unwavering trust that God will accomplish his purposes, his way. As we do that, we can expect him to do incredible things in our lives.

APPLY In what area of your life do you most need to experience ‘mountain-moving faith’? What step could you take in that direction today?

PRAY Ask Jesus to give you a sense of urgency about growing his fruit in your life.