

**Sermon for 9<sup>th</sup> August 2020 – Year A – Trinity 9 – 1 Kings 19:9  
– 18 and Matthew 14:22 – 33**

*“Please, God, if I do this, please make the X happen.”*

Does this sound familiar to you? Have you said something like that not so long ago?

These kind of trade-offs with God and Jesus seems to be part of our DNA as Christians. Whatever we go through in our lives, especially if we feel that God and Jesus aren't present in the most difficult moments, we move on to trade-offs.

I know how those happen. I'm not immune to that kind of behaviour, *“Please, God, if I do this, please make the X happen.”* Yet, somehow, the longer I've walked with God and Jesus, I've realised that trade-off doesn't necessarily work as I wish they did.

Today from Matthew's Gospel we hear how Peter is trying to do 'trade-off' with Jesus. Peter, together with other disciples, are on the boat, crossing the Lake Galilee middle of the night, when high winds and waves grow strong, making the disciples journey a struggle. Jesus had stayed behind them in solitude and prayer up in the hills. Then sometime before dawn, the disciples see Jesus coming towards them, walking on the water. They are terrified, but Peter wants to be sure that it really is Jesus and not a ghost, so he plays the game of trade-off, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

He asks Jesus to confirm that he really is the Lord, the promised Messiah, whom the people of Israel have been waiting since King

David. If Jesus really is the Lord, then he makes it possible to Peter to walk on water too.

Peter is very lucky because Jesus agrees to play his game of trade-offs there and then. *"Come,"* Jesus says, and so, Peter steps out of the boat. But it only takes one or two steps before he comes to his senses and realises that what he is doing should be impossible, so he begins to sink. It seems that the trade-off game Peter played was too much for him. Rather than walking on the water to Jesus, his own disbelief, fear and doubt causes him to fail his own game.

It is easy to relate to Peter, isn't it. And just like he cries out to Jesus, "Lord, save me!" We too cry for help when we are overwhelmed with fear and doubt of those things we face in our lives. These moments of darkness, which we cannot escape from; bereavement, job loss, mental health issues, illnesses, financial difficulties and so on. They are the moments when we too cry to the Lord or if we aren't maybe we should.

I think it's clear from what happened to Peter on that stormy night that we cannot do things on our own strength, but only with full faith and trust in the Lord, working together with Him.

This story tells us something about our relationship with God and Jesus. As we cry "Lord, help me!" or "Lord, bless me!" or "Lord, be with me!" or "Lord, where are you?" and if we don't hear anything back or we doubt the response – we try to make trade-offs, *"Please, God, if I do this, please make the X happen."* Peter started with the trade-off and ended up crying for Lord's help. Whichever way we go with the trade-off game, we won't be winning.

Rather than trying the trade-off game at all, we should be more

like the prophet Elijah. Elijah was God's messenger to the people of Israel and their kings and queens but they really didn't like what he preached, so Elijah need to find a place of safety.

Elijah reaches the mount Horeb, the mountain of God, where he spends a night at the cave where an angel of the Lord instructs him to wait for the Lord who is coming to meet him.

We, too, should be bit more like Elijah, waiting for the Lord, instead of trying the trade-offs like Peter. After all, God and Jesus aren't in the trade-off business. They are in the business of meeting us. They are in the business of saving us. They are in the business of being present in our lives, as long as we let them be.

The Prophet Elijah was told by the angel of the Lord to wait for the Lord who would be present in his life when the time was ready. And just like Elijah, we should realise that we may hear God's or Jesus' voice not in the cacophony of life but in the silence.

I think the Good News today is this: the wildernesses we experience in our lives, is not a proof that God is absent. Rather we have to learn to hear the whisper of God and Jesus, just like Elijah did. We also have to learn that God and Jesus aren't in the business of trade-offs. They are in the constant business of reaching out to us, just like Jesus reached out to Peter that dark stormy night after his trade-off failed.

**Amen.**