



**Sunday 9 August 2026 to
Sunday 16 August 2026**



Sunday 9 August 2026

Heaven meets earth

by Pauline Simonsen

Truly you are the Son of God! (Matthew 14:33b)

Read [Matthew 14:22-33](#)

Jesus is mourning the death of his relative John the Baptist, executed by Herod. Jesus has tried to withdraw from the crowds to grieve, but they pursue him, and in his compassion, he tends to them. He feeds 5,000 men (plus women and children!), and when all are satisfied, he dismisses them. Once more he withdraws, sending his disciples off in the boat across the lake, while he goes up into the hills to be alone with his Father.

What happens next reveals Jesus in a different realm than us mortals. After communing with his Father and receiving divine comfort, refreshment and energy, he decides to rejoin his disciples. Being far out on the lake, battling a savage headwind and buffeting waves, doesn't appear to be an issue for Jesus. He walks out to catch them up, striding powerfully through the waves as though walking along a dusty road in Galilee. This Jesus is also the Son of God, Creator Lord of this natural realm.

This is how the disciples encounter him – a pale figure in the darkness striding past them on the water. A phantom?! This extraordinary figure, untroubled by wind, waves and darkness, greets their terror with the words, 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'

For a moment, Peter glimpses the divine realm, his Master's home, and he wants to experience it. When Jesus invites him, Peter climbs out of the boat and walks towards his Creator Lord. What an experience! In Jesus' presence, the divine and mortal realms meet; heaven intersects with earth, and humans walk on water.

It only lasts a moment. Like the pull of gravity, Peter's mortal nature reasserts itself. He sees the waves and feels the wind buffeting him, and he is once more merely human, now sinking into the Sea of Galilee, crying out to his Lord for salvation.

Immediately, Jesus reaches out his hand to catch Peter, to save him and bring him into the boat of safety. 'You of little faith,' he says to Peter, 'why did you doubt?'

Why do we doubt our Lord Jesus when he brings the limitless power of his divine home to our cramped, mortal lives, when his hand alone saves and restores us to the safety of the boat with our fellow travellers?

Lord Jesus, forgive my doubts and fears, and stir my faith to see your true identity as my Saviour Lord and my God. Remind me that one day, your home will be mine as well. Amen.

Pauline lives in sight of the ranges in the beautiful Manawatu region of New Zealand with her husband Roger and their two cats. There, she leads Emmaus Bible College and offers spiritual direction and supervision to people from a wide range of backgrounds and denominations.

Monday 10 August 2026

Our God saves!

by Pauline Simonsen

... all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God (Isaiah 52:10b).

Read [Isaiah 52:7-10](#)

Israel languishes in captivity in Babylon ...

Suddenly a voice cries out, the voice of the Lord. 'Wake up, my people and my holy city! Shake off the dust, put on your finest clothes – because your salvation has come! Too long have my people been oppressed, and my name slandered. But now, my people will know my name – *I AM!*'

The God who delivered his people from Egypt will deliver them from Babylon; the great 'I AM', Yahweh, returns with his people to his holy city Jerusalem, and the watchmen on the ruined walls shout for joy. The Lord has comforted his people, lifting his mighty right arm of power to redeem them from slavery. All nations will see that the God of Israel saves!

What glorious news for Israel in captivity!

But Isaiah's beautiful message of hope rings in our ears even more gloriously, because we have seen Yahweh's *greatest* act of salvation: our Lord Jesus defeating sin, death and the devil on the cross and rising to everlasting life. All nations of the earth see how the God of Israel saves: through his Son, now enthroned as king of all creation.

And one day the king will return in glory to his domain, earth, bringing final justice and *shalom* in the fullness of his kingdom.

What an astonishing, beautiful message of salvation and hope in these days of war and struggle and the apparent triumph of evil. *Our God reigns!* Our God of mercy and steadfast love lifts his powerful, holy arm to save his people – lifting Peter from the waters of Galilee, lifting you and me from our sinful struggles. This is the good news we carry and bring to other struggling sinners: receive the grace of this God who saves; rest and rejoice in it.

Those are *our* beautiful feet Isaiah describes!

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'

Lord God, our Saviour and King, remind us daily how you have saved us – that in our baptism we were joined to Christ our redeemer, and we belong to you. Spirit of God, renew in us each day the joy of our salvation, and make us willing messengers of hope to those who need this glorious news! Amen.

Tuesday 11 August 2026

Grace, not death

by Pauline Simonsen

Salvation comes from the Lord (Jonah 2:9b).

Read [Jonah 2:1-10](#)

Like the Old Testament people, I have a wary respect for the sea – for its relentless waves, vast expanses and profound depths. I've swum in the sea, travelled in boats over it, gazed at it from the beach – but the sea remains a powerful, untameable vastness that would swallow me in an instant.

So when Jonah says to his fellow sailors battling a fierce storm, 'throw me overboard', I feel the terror. So do the others. They try everything: chucking cargo overboard, praying to their gods, rowing – but nothing helps. Finally, asking Jonah's God for mercy, they throw Jonah into raging waves. The sea grows calm, and the sailors are stricken with greater fear of this Hebrew God who is more powerful than the sea. They worship Yahweh.

What did Jonah experience as he went over the rails into the violent sea? Fear of mighty waters runs throughout the Old Testament. Jonah feared the Lord more. He knew his rebellion against God's command to preach to Nineveh caused the storm. He submits to what he believes is his punishment: certain drowning. Jonah lives by the law.

But he doesn't drown. God sends the great fish to swallow him up. More terror – he will surely die in the belly of this fish!

But he doesn't die. In the swirling darkness of this strange would-be grave, he remembers Yahweh. He reaches out in faith to the God he spurned and remembers with thanksgiving that 'salvation comes from the Lord'.

It surely does. Jonah is vomited onto the beach, alive.

However, this narrative (and Jesus took it seriously – see Matthew 12:39–41) reveals the nature of Yahweh. This God who calls Jonah to preach against Nineveh also sends storms, great fish and vines that reveal God's *heart of mercy*. God desires to *save* people – Jonah, the sailors and Nineveh – and goes to extreme lengths to do so.

Jonah is famously displeased with God's mercy (Jonah 4:1,2) and would rather die than watch God's compassionate grace on Nineveh. The very same grace that Jonah pleaded for in the belly of the fish!

Thank God, his divine love and mercy are not frugally portioned out, only for those *I* think deserve it. God's grace is lavish and indiscriminating – extending to whoever calls out to him and pursuing those who don't.

Have mercy on my hard-heartedness, Father. Thank you for your endless grace to me, secured in Jesus Christ. Give me the same heart of grace and compassion for all those I meet today. Amen.

Wednesday 12 August 2026

God with us

by Pauline Simonsen

It is I; don't be afraid (John 6:20b).

Read [John 6:14-24](#)

Earlier this week, we meditated on Matthew's narrative of Jesus walking on the water. John's account contains some differences. After miraculously feeding the crowds, Jesus leaves them. He goes up into the hills alone to prevent the crowd from trying to force him to be their king. John's account also doesn't mention Peter's experience of walking on the water and Jesus saving him.

John's interest lies in Jesus' supernatural authority over the natural realm and people's different responses to it. The morning after the feeding miracle, when the crowd works out that Jesus didn't go in the boat with the disciples, they pursue him to Capernaum, asking how Jesus got to the other side. They are fascinated with Jesus and his miraculous powers, a fascination Jesus isn't interested in feeding, then or now (John 6:26,27).

What about the disciples? What do they learn about their master as they battle against heavy winds and waves in their small boat on the lake that night? They see the figure on the water walking out of the darkness towards them, and they are terrified. Then they hear the voice of their master calling out, 'It is I; don't be afraid!'

Perhaps Jesus' declaration is preparing the disciples for his 'I AM' statements, the first of which John records in the next few verses: 'I am the bread of life' (John 6:35). At the very least, the disciples must be recalling Old Testament Scriptures that speak of Yahweh as the one who controls the seas.

'The waters saw you, O God ... and writhed; the very depths were convulsed ... Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen' (Psalm 77:16,19). 'You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them' (Psalm 89:9).

The disciples witness Jesus, their master, doing what only God can do. Whether they fully perceive it yet, the 'I AM' of the burning bush is among them! Immanuel, God is with us!

The God who led Israel through the waters of the Red Sea is the same God who walked over the Sea of Galilee to the disciples' boat. And this is the same God who speaks to you and me in our storms, 'It is I, don't be afraid!' Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

In the troubles of my life today, Lord Jesus, grant me to see you with clarity and trust as the God of my salvation. Let your word quell my fears, and your presence bring me peace, today and always. Amen.

Thursday 13 August 2026

The grace of Jesus

by Pauline Simonsen

... they knew it was the Lord (John 21:12b).

Read [John 21:1-13](#)

The disciples are lost; they don't know what to do. Their master was crucified, dead and buried, but now he is miraculously alive again. How can this be? And what are they supposed to do now? Confused and disoriented, they return to the one thing they know: fishing. But today, they're not even successful at that.

And then: the man on the shore in the early morning light, the call to try once more and the catch of fish – so big they can't get it on board and must tow it to shore.

Suddenly, the disciples' heads are full of echoes and memories of another morning three years before, of a man on the shore and another enormous catch. John turns to Peter: 'It is the Lord!' And Peter can't help himself; he leaps out of the boat into the water to go to Jesus. Like he did that night on the lake in the storm – 'call me to you!' he'd cried. And Jesus said, 'Come.' Peter, desperate to be with his Lord.

But there has been much water under the bridge in those three years. There has been 'Get behind me, Satan' (Mark 8:32,33)! There has been Peter's overconfident declaration (Mark 14:29-31) and then his falling asleep in Gethsemane (Mark 14:37,38). There was his foolish attempt to defend against Jesus' arrest (John 18:10,11). And, worst of all, there was Peter's denial of his Lord three times (Mark 14:66-72). The Peter who jumps out of the boat to go to Jesus is heartsick, ashamed and humbled.

But see how Jesus receives him. With a welcoming fire and bread and fish ready to eat. No rebuke or condemnation. Instead, he tells Peter to bring some fish they just caught. Surely, as Peter goes to help the others bring the haul ashore, he is remembering when Jesus called him three years before: 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching people' (Luke 5:10).

Perhaps the Lord still has a purpose for him?

As Jesus takes the bread and gives it to them, echoing another sacramental meal, Peter realises that above all else his master is grace. Jesus redeems failing humans like Peter, like us.

'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning' (Lamentations 3:22,23b).

Bless you, loving Lord, for your endless grace for us failing humans. Thank you that every day I begin again in your merciful love. Walk with me today, and use me for your kingdom purposes. I go out now in your peace. Amen.

Friday 14 August 2026

God never turns away

by Pauline Simonsen

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ (Romans 10:17).

Read [Romans 10:16–11:1](#)

Think of the times you've turned your back on God in the past week. When he's been speaking, and you've metaphorically put your fingers in your ears and started saying 'la, la, la' very loudly. Like turning over and going back to sleep when you wake early in the morning with an invitation to spend some time with God. Or ignoring the prompt to connect with the person who keeps coming into your mind. Deciding to indulge the bad habit, even though you know it's wrong. Telling yourself you'll read the devotion 'later'. Yeah, me too.

God is always speaking to us, calling us to him, but humans seem to be hardwired to reject him and to turn away from his invitations to come to him. Even we who have been redeemed by him, reborn in our baptism, made his children – we still struggle with this old nature that doesn't want God. The Apostle Paul knew the struggle too. He lamented: 'I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate' (Romans 7:15).

It's not like we haven't *heard* the word of God; we have, over and over, from parents, pulpits, podcasts! It's not like we don't *understand* who God is in Jesus and what God has done for us. The Israelites had the same struggle, as Paul says in today's reading. They heard, they understood – but many of them still rejected God's word about Christ. The problem is human wilfulness, our 'old Adam'. Paul quotes Isaiah quoting God: 'All day long I have held my hands out to a disobedient and obstinate people.' That's Israel in captivity; Jonah in the belly of the fish; failing, sinking Peter; you and me – we are all those disobedient, obstinate people. Surely God gets sick of our repeated rejections of him? Surely *he* will turn his back on *us*?

'No!' says Paul. God will *not* reject his people. God still speaks his beautiful message of grace, the good news: the word about Christ. We hear again that God's mercy in Jesus *never ends*, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we believe. We put our faith in the one who is grace incarnate – our Jesus, standing before us right now, saying, 'Come.'

Beloved Jesus, we hear you now, calling us to yourself, like you called Peter out of the boat. O loving Lord, help us to come to you and follow you today. Forgive our wilfulness, and with your Spirit's help, give us hearts to love you, Lord, and to obey you this day. Amen.

Saturday 15 August 2026

Joyful expectation

by Pauline Simonsen

May God be gracious to us and bless us (Psalm 67:1a).

Read [Psalm 67](#)

We have heard and seen this week our God's salvation for wilful humans, and that God's heart is grace: undeserved mercy. We've seen this repeatedly in the Bible, and we see it in our own lives. Pause for a few moments and think of God's goodness to you, entirely undeserved. Given to you, simply because the Lord loves you. Maybe name those gifts out loud – such as precious people, a home, daily food, good work – and thank God for them.

Truly, our only prayer as humans can be:

God, continue to be gracious to us! Continue to bless us with your wise provision and help. Continue to look upon us with your love. Continue, God, to *be you*: rich in mercy, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Then the people of the earth will know who you are, when they see your faithfulness and how you save and care for your people. And they will praise you too! All the people groups of all the nations will see, know and rejoice with us. They will see how our God rules with justice, and causes the earth to flourish for all people. 'God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will honour him.'

The psalmist's praise song sounds so positive, but it may seem a forlorn hope to us today, as we look at a world increasingly hostile to the God we know in Jesus. People are more wilful and rebellious against the Lord than ever. How unlikely that they will all recognise and praise the Lord!

But the psalmist's prayer is *right*. Like Isaiah (see Isaiah 52:10), the psalmist prophetically prays in faith, declaring that all people of the earth *will* see the grace and salvation of our God.

And as we say this psalm with him, we speak prophetically into the future, declaring that the Lord Jesus will return to judge with equity and to rule with goodness. Every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the praise and glory of God.

Psalm 67 looks back to God's faithfulness in the past, to his goodness in the present, and to his glory in the future.

Hold fast – God *will* bless us, and all the earth *will* praise our Lord!

Remind us, Lord God, when we see only the wickedness of our world, that your grace and salvation never fail! Lift our eyes to the horizon to look with joyful expectation for the coming of our King Jesus, when this psalm will be fulfilled. Amen.

Sunday 16 August 2026

A feisty faith

by Stuart Gray

Then Jesus said to her, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed at that moment (Matthew 15:28).

Read [Matthew 15:\(10-20\) 21-28](#)

The elements of this story are simple. A woman seeks healing for her daughter from 'The Healer'. However, her encounter with Jesus is quite profound. A Canaanite – historic enemy of Israel – and a woman, possibly without a husband, so an outsider even in her own country.

Yet this woman recognises Jesus as 'Lord, Son of David'. She pleads for mercy and, much to the disciples' annoyance, persists.

Jesus' initial reaction and conversation seem harsh. Firstly, he ignores her, which I'm sure is not a technique recommended by modern counsellors dealing with a distressed person. But the silence demonstrates how persistent the woman is and points to the strength of her faith.

Jesus then emphasises her 'outsideness'. 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' This does not stop her. She ignores what Jesus has said but takes advantage of the fact that he is talking to her. 'Lord, help me.' A simple and humble plea for help.

But Jesus has not finished testing her faith. 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.' Imagine the outrage that public statement would cause today! Social media would be white hot.

Again, this does not deter the woman, and her response is amazing. 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' That response would take me a day or two to formulate.

In her response, the woman recognises Jesus' purpose for the lost people of Israel. She trusts that he has mercy enough for those beyond Israel.

This is a story of powerful spirituality. The woman acknowledges her need, refuses to give up, trusts Jesus' mercy and approaches him with humility.

Jesus meets us in our individual situations, in the down-and-dirty harshness of life.

I wonder what the disciples learnt from this encounter. The Canaanite woman foreshadows the inclusion of Gentiles into God's kingdom. Yet even after the resurrection, some of the disciples struggled to understand that Jesus died for all people and nations.

Do we persist in prayer like the Canaanite woman?

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the examples of faith you have given us in Scripture. Help us to acknowledge our needs, be humble, trust in your mercy and be persistent in prayer. Thank you for accepting Jesus' sacrifice on the cross so that all people and nations can have a personal relationship with you. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Stuart lives with his wife Pamela Dalglish in Mansfield, in the beautiful High Country of Victoria. In between helping to maintain a large garden and domestic orchard with 80 fruit trees, Stuart is a volunteer mentor for learner drivers, a Red Cross patient transport driver and is involved in a very active

Mansfield Anglican church community. Stuart loves travelling, being outdoors and maintaining a fit and healthy lifestyle.