

UNRAVELLED

SEEKING GOD WHEN OUR PLANS FALL APART

What happens when our world falls apart? How do we press onward when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose ends? What do we become when our identity—or the path we're on—comes undone? What if all this is not the end we fear it will be?

In our unraveling, sometimes life surprises us with unexpected joy, love, and hope—with a new beginning we couldn't have imagined. Sometimes we need God to unravel us, for we long to be changed. Throughout the summer we will explore biblical stories of unraveled shame, identity, fear, grief, dreams, and expectations. There are stories where God meets us in the spiraling, unraveling our plans—and us—into something new.

Matthew 14:22-33 – Peter Sinks in the Water: Unraveled by Uncertainty (see other side)



“Step Into the Swell” by Lisle Gwynn Garrity |
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From the artist: At the start of this chapter, John the Baptist is brutally beheaded. Jesus withdraws from the crowds to a deserted place, yet is followed by the masses—perhaps many of them former followers of John the Baptist. Moved with compassion, he heals the sick and miraculously generates bounty from a meal of five loaves and two fish.

Then he “immediately” rushes the disciples into a boat, dismisses the crowds, and retreats to a mountain by himself. Perhaps he needs space to grieve John and grapple with the gravity of his calling. The crowds and demands of his ministry were surging; in the same way, the waves and the wind begin to batter the boat that had drifted far from shore. If you’ve ever been in open water during a storm or even high winds, you know the shockwave of fear that pulses through your veins. Yet, as dawn breaks, a mirage beckons to them, casing out words to buoy them up: “Do not fear.”

What I find in Peter’s response is not a challenge or a profession of doubt, but a willingness to step into the swell, like a trust fall into the unknown. Perhaps in seasons when our sense of certainty and security unravels, our desperation is more likely to convert into courage. Is there something about unraveling that makes us a bit less risk-averse, a bit more willing to try what we wouldn’t have dared when everything felt predictable and sure?

Guiding Questions:

- What has unraveled and/or is unraveling in this story?
- Why do you think Peter asks Jesus to order him to walk on water in Matt. 14:28? What is he hoping to accomplish? Do you find yourself acting similarly when you are filled with doubt or fear?
- During seasons of uncertainty, how do you release anxiety and practice trust?
- Imagine you are Peter. What are the stormy waters that threaten and overcome you? What events and forces unravel your trust? What difference does Jesus’ outstretched hand make?

**Prayer or journal prompt:

- Write a short prayer to God naming something that has unraveled in your life, or asking God to unravel something in you that you wish to release.

O God, unravel my uncertainties, my fears, and my doubts into courage to step forward. Amen.

Scripture for June 23, 2019 – Peter Sinks in the Water: Unraveled by Uncertainty

Matthew 14:22-33

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

²²Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land,^[a] for the wind was against them. ²⁵And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

²⁸Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he noticed the strong wind,^[b] he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³²When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Footnotes:

- a. [Matthew 14:24](#) Other ancient authorities read *was out on the sea*
- b. [Matthew 14:30](#) Other ancient authorities read *the wind*

Romans 10:5-15

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁵Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that “the person who does these things will live by them.” ⁶But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷“or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say?

“The word is near you,
on your lips and in your heart”

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because^[a] 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. ¹⁰For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ¹¹The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. ¹³For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

¹⁴But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ¹⁵And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Footnotes:

- a. [Romans 10:9](#) Or *namely, that*

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***Notice the round tapestry that is taking shape in the front of the sanctuary. The torn pieces of fabric represent our hopes and dreams unraveled, the way our life and plans sometimes disintegrate under our feet, leaving us scrambling for the footing God is leading us toward. Throughout this worship series, we will take the fabric strips and weave them into the tapestry to remind us of the ways God is present in our moments of unraveling as well as the promise that God hems us in—behind and before. When our plans fall apart, may God weave us together with love.*

You are invited to write your prayers on the ribbons or fabric strips found in the pews and place them in the offering plate on in the basket up front. They will be woven into the tapestry each week.