

One day, after a busy time teaching and looking after thousands of people, Jesus sent his disciples - his best friends - off in a boat to go ahead of him to the other side of the lake. He stayed behind and sent all the people home, before going up on the mountainside by himself to pray.

Some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. And they all knew Lake Galilee very well. Actually, it's more like a sea than a lake: it's about 13 miles long, 8 miles wide, and if you wanted to walk all the way round the shore then that would be 33 miles.

So off they went, sailing across the sea together in their little boat.

We thought that some of you might like to have a ride in a boat today.

We haven't got a sailing boat, but we do have a parachute.

PARACHUTE GAME: BOAT RIDES

N.B. Always start any parachute play by stressing the importance of everyone listening and following instructions, and immediately stop any game to re-emphasise the safety rules if there's a risk.

A child sits midway between the centre and edge of the parachute, facing the direction of travel. Adults behind the child hold the edge vertical to keep him/her from falling over backwards. Others haul on the front or sides of the parachute (not walking backwards) to give the child a ride along the length of the hall. N.B. the back players are responsible for the child's safety (keeping upright) and must be strong adults, not children. The child riding can say stop at any time and everyone will gently stop.

Ok, let's all sit down around the parachute to hear what happened next.

Remember that Jesus had stayed on the shore on his own, to spend some time praying to Father God, while his friends were sailing across to the other side of the lake in their little boat.

It was late when they set off, and it was hard work sailing in the dark, with the wind against them. As the wind grew stronger and stronger, so the waves grew bigger and bigger, and the boat got slower and slower.

I wonder what it was like to be in that storm? Let's see if we can imagine it.

PARACHUTE GAME: MAKING A STORM

Start by holding the parachute flat, then gently make it ripple, then increase the storminess ...

PARACHUTE GAME: A WINDY DAY

... until at last you mushroom it and let go so it floats away.

So there the disciples were, out in the storm on the lake in their little boat. It was dark, and by now they were exhausted after a long day looking after people, and now a long night battling against the storm in the dark.

But suddenly, just before dawn, Jesus went out to them ... *walking on the water!*

Well, when the disciples saw him, walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost!” they shouted. “Help!”

But straight away, Jesus said to them: “Take courage! It’s me. Don’t be afraid.”

Wow. Imagine that. Jesus *walking on the water*. Who’d like to see what that might be like?

PARACHUTE GAME: WALKING ON WATER

Hold the parachute tight and low. A child crawls round it while everyone else gradually raises the parachute until the child is off the ground. Gently lower again.

So there the disciples were, in their little boat in the dark storm, and there Jesus was, walking on the water towards them and telling them not to be frightened.

And do you know what one of his friends did next? “If it’s really you, Lord,” said Jesus’ friend Peter, “then tell me to come to you on the water.”

“All right,” said Jesus. “Come.”

Then Peter got down out of the boat, *walked on the water* just like Jesus, and started to come towards Jesus.

I wonder what that was like for Peter? Even better than surfing, I guess. Actually, that gives me an idea. Who’d like to try surfing?

PARACHUTE GAME: SURFING

Like boat rides, but the child stands in a surfing position. Very important to start and stop gently, and immediately if s/he wobbles.

So there were most of Jesus' friends, in their little sailing boat. And there was Jesus, walking on the water. And there was brave Peter, walking on the water towards him.

Amazing.

But then ... Peter took his eyes off Jesus.

Then ... Peter began to look at the waves.

Then ... Peter began to hear the wind.

Then ... Peter began to be afraid.

And then ... Peter began to sink.

"Lord, save me!" he shouted.

And straight away, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.

"You of little faith," he said. "Why did you doubt?"

Peter began to sink down into the water. He was ok, because Jesus saved him. But it can't have been much fun, on a deep lake in the middle of a stormy night, even for an experienced fisherman like Peter. I wonder what kinds of things there were, down in the water of Lake Galilee? Sunken treasure, maybe? Let's see if we can find any.

PARACHUTE GAME: DIVING FOR TREASURE

Roll foam balls under the parachute. Adults ripple the parachute a

foot or so off the ground while children crawl underneath to retrieve the balls.

We know that there were fish in the lake, because Peter and some other disciples were fishermen. I wonder what else was wriggling about under the water. Let's see if we can catch anything.

PARACHUTE GAME: FISHING

A larger child (the fish) crawls underneath the parachute while those around the edge ripple it and a smaller child crawls on top, trying to catch the one underneath.

Jesus saved Peter, and they climbed into the boat together. And as soon as Jesus got into the boat with his friends, the wind died down.

Then all the people in the boat worshipped Jesus, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

I guess we've all had times when our lives have felt a bit like that dark and stormy lake. Everything's against us and we don't seem to be getting anywhere. It seems so dark that we can't even see which way we should be going. We feel bruised and scared, just as if we were being battered by wind and waves in a little boat on a big sea.

But that's when Jesus comes alongside us. He's right there with us, if only we'd stop panicking for long enough to recognise him. When we cry out to him, like Peter did, then he'll save us. No matter how bad things look, he won't ever let us down. When we ask him into our lives, like the disciples welcomed him into their boat, the storms become calm and everything seems different, because he is with us.

So let us pray ...

Let's stand to praise the Lord for his great goodness. We'll use the parachute to help us.

PARACHUTE WORSHIP

Sing a worship song while raising, walking around, etc. the parachute

Let's end by saying the Messy Grace together.