

Jonah 1:1-17**Jonah Flees From the Lord**

1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: ² “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”

³ But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.

⁴ Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep.

⁶ The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”

⁷ Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”

⁹ He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

¹⁰ This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)

¹¹ The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?”

¹² “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”

¹³ Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. ¹⁴ Then they cried out to the Lord,

“Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.” ¹⁵ Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.

¹⁶ At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

Jonah's Prayer

¹⁷ Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Mark 16:1-8

Jesus Has Risen

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³ and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

⁸ Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

Please have your **Bibles opened** up firstly at **Jonah 1** and then we will look at

Mark 16.

Let me pray first...

Intro/A Sign

[Slide-Intro]

Humankind has been plagued with **2 problems** since Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden.

Those **2 problems** are **SIN** and **DEATH**

On **Good Friday** – we saw how Jesus dealt with the 1st problem of sin

We saw Jesus crucified for our sins on a cruel cross – and His death means the punishment for our sins has been paid for by Jesus

That's only the 1st part of the Easter Story

But we left Jesus dead in a tomb

The 2nd problem of death – still has to be fixed...

(pause)

The whole of Mark's Gospel has been written to show Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (Mark 1:1)

Mark has recorded Jesus' teaching and miracles as proof of who Jesus is.

Mark has recorded Jesus' conversations with His disciples – where Jesus even said He would die and rise again.

Mark has even recorded Jesus' conversations with the religious leaders who were often at loggerheads with Him!

[Slide-Sign]

We may even hear people today say, "If God would just give me a **sign**, then I would believe."

One time, the religious leaders said the same thing and asked Jesus for a sign – Jesus replied in Matthew 12:39-40

³⁹ "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the **sign of the prophet Jonah**. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth".

The story of Jonah is like a **preview** of Jesus' death and resurrection on that first Easter.

Let's compare the story of **Jonah** with **Jesus**

Please turn to Jonah chapter 1 in your Bibles...

Jonah and Jesus

1st - **Jonah Ran Away – Jesus stayed and Obeyed**

[Slide-Ship/Garden]

Jonah: In Jonah 1:3 – Jonah ran away to Joppa and hopped on a ship to Tarshish because he refused to do God's will and refused go to the city of Nineveh and tell the wicked Ninevites to repent and turn back to God!

Jesus: Jesus on the other hand did not run away – He went to the cross and laid down His life for us - because He always does the Father's will. Remember Jesus prayed to God the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane - He prayed – *"Yet not what I will, but what you will"* (Mark 14:36)

2nd – **Jonah was a willing sacrifice – Jesus was the perfect sacrifice!**

[Slide-sacrifice]

Jonah soon discovered – like we all do eventually – that you can't run away from God!

He thought he could sail away as far as possible from God – and that would be the end of it.

But God sent a storm on the sea (v4)

Which sent the sailors aboard into a panic – praying to whatever god they believed in (v5)

Meanwhile Jonah is having a nice snooze below deck (v5)

It should remind us of the time when Jesus and the disciples were in a boat on Lake Galilee and there was a storm – and Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat.

When Jonah does wake up and explains that He worships the God of Heaven – and the ship's captain and sailors find out Jonah is running away from God – they were all terrified (v10)

And when the sea got rougher and rougher – everyone knew it was down to Jonah!

Even Jonah knew this situation could not go on!

Jonah was **a willing sacrifice** – look at v12 – Jonah says - *“Pick me up and throw me into the sea and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”*

Jonah was thrown in to the sea to save the sailors from death!

In a far far greater way - Jesus was crucified to save sinners – like you and me – from the punishment of our sins – which is death!

As Jesus Himself says in John 15:13 - *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

Jonah was **thrown into the sea** – Jesus our Saviour was **nailed to a Cross** and made the **perfect sacrifice** for sin!

3rd – **Jonah was left for dead in the Belly of a Fish – Jesus was left for dead in the Belly of the Earth!**

[Slide-Fish/Tomb]

See v17 – *The Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights*

Jesus on the other hand was in the tomb for three days and three nights! Just like He said He would – when he gave the “**sign**” to the religious leaders!

But God was not finished with either Jonah or Jesus

4th – After 3 days - **Jonah leaves the belly of the fish alive** – After 3 days - **Jesus rose from the tomb alive**

[Slide-Alive]

Look at Jonah 2:10 - *the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.*

And in our NT reading from Mark 16:6 – when the women went to anoint Jesus’ body in the tomb – the tomb was empty – and an angel told the women “*Don’t be alarmed - You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him*”

So let us now turn to that first Easter morning and our NT reading from **Mark 16:1–8** and see what the women discovered when they came to the tomb – and let's see what lessons we can learn from Jesus' Tomb...

Jesus' Tomb (Mark 16:1-8)

1st – **The stone was rolled away**

[Slide-stone]

We pick up the story in verses 1 and 2 where the women – Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Salome – out of deep love and devotion to Jesus - go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body – very early on the first day of the week – Sunday. It is the women's last tribute to their Master!

And v3 – As they are walking to the tomb, they are concerned about who will roll away the stone from the tomb – so that they can anoint Jesus.

They expect Jesus to be dead, lying in a sealed tomb – sealed by the stone which will require 2 or 3 men to move it!

But v4 – to their surprise - the very large stone has already been rolled away. God has solved the problem before the women have even arrived.

In Matthew's Gospel [27:65-66] we are told that there were guards place at the tomb. This shows that the stone could not have been rolled away by the women (they were not strong enough) or by the disciples (even if they were brave enough, they could not overcome the armed guards). And Matthew 28:2 tells us that it was **an angel who supernaturally rolled the stone away.**

The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out of the tomb. John 20:19 tells us that Jesus, in His resurrection body, could pass through material barriers. It was

rolled away so that witnesses could see into the tomb and be persuaded that Jesus has risen from the dead.

The stone being rolled away:

- Proves the tomb is empty
- Proves Jesus is alive
- Proves Jesus has power over even death!

If we compare the women’s expectations with what God did – we see...

The Women Expected	What God Did
A Dead body	Raise Jesus – our Risen Saviour
A Sealed tomb	Left an Empty tomb
A Stone obstacle	Removed the Stone Obstacle
To be grieving and mourning	Had Victory over Death
It’s the End of the story	Gave believers a New Life leading to eternal life

What **stones** do we have – that need to be **rolled away**?

Here are some “stones” we might have...

- **Death**
- **Cancer**
- **Broken marriages**
- **Broken relationships with family members or friends**
- **Wayward children**
- **The reversal of wrong choices our loved ones have made**

- Addictions
- Depression
- Church decline
- Decline in Christianity in our nation
- Guilt over past sins
- Financial burdens
- Unemployment
- Ageing

Whatever the stone – we need to remember

“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

And so – we keep praying for a miracle...

One of my favourite songs at the moment is *“Don’t Stop Praying”* – the chorus goes like this...

Don't stop praying

Don't stop calling on Jesus' name

Keep on pounding on Heaven's door

And let your knees wear out the floor

Don't stop believing

'Cause mountains move with just a little faith

And your Father's heard every single word you're saying

So, don't stop praying

2nd – **The tomb was empty**

[Slide-Empty tomb]

The angels' announcement in verse 6: **"He has risen! He is not here."**

Should **not be a surprise** because Jesus predicted three times that He would die and He would rise from the dead (Mark 8:31; 9:31 and 10:34)

Unfortunately, Jesus' disciples focused so much on Him dying – that they didn't really take on board the part about Him rising again in 3 days!

There are several examples in the Bible of people being brought back from the dead - such as the **widow's son in the days of Elijah** (1 Kings 17:17-24) and the **widow's son in the town of Nain** (Luke 7:11-17) and of course **Lazarus** (John 11:38-44). Each of them was raised in the same body they died in and raised from the dead to eventually die again. Resurrection isn't just living again; it is being raised in a new body, based on our old body, which is changed perfectly for life in eternity.

The Apostle Paul describes it this way in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44:

The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Jesus was not the first one brought back from the dead, but **He was the first one resurrected – with a resurrection body!**

What we need to understand is: Jesus' resurrection was: *planned, predicted, and promised.*

The resurrection shows nothing is impossible for God.

Jesus' resurrection proves:

- His death and resurrection have paid for our sin in full. **The death of Jesus on the cross was the payment, but the resurrection was the receipt, showing that the payment was perfectly acceptable in the sight of God the Father.**
- **Jesus' resurrection proves - Death is defeated** – and if we believe in Jesus – we do not need to fear dying
- **Our salvation and place in Heaven has been purchased by Jesus**
- **And Jesus is alive now and reigning in Heaven** and sits at God the Father's right hand and intercede for us!

Without the resurrection, there is no gospel.

As the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 - *if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.*

3rd – We learn – **Peter was not forgotten**

[Slide-Peter]

Remember when Jesus was arrested – the apostle Peter failed badly. He denied Jesus three times. It was an epic fail by Peter - especially given how vocal and confident he was about never denying Jesus and saying even if everyone else deserted Jesus, he wouldn't – and saying he would even die for Jesus. Poor Peter!

But in Jesus' grace and mercy – in v7 – the angel gives the women a message from Jesus – “*go, tell his disciples **and Peter**, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’*”

That part of the message “**and Peter**” would have cheered the heart of Peter who was so sad he'd let down Jesus!

But Jesus wasn't angry with Peter. No! He offered grace and forgiveness.

This little phrase teaches us:

- Failure is not the end!
- Jesus restores sinners!
- Jesus' grace is greater than our failures!

4th – **The Women were afraid – so what about us?**

[Slide-Women]

Look at verse 8 - the women are trembling and bewildered. They fled, and said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

This does not mean that they made no report of the resurrection because we clearly know that they did (John 20:18; Luke 24:9). It means that as they left the scene of the empty tomb, they did not talk to anyone on the way. They simply went to tell the disciples as the angel told them to do.

Their response shows:

- The resurrection was terrifying and overwhelming
- It was not what the women were expecting
- And it's like Mark wants to challenge us to also speak up about the resurrection!

You see sometimes as Christians – we respond with fear rather than faith...

Here are some occasions when we can be tempted to respond with fear rather than faith

- When our prayers seem unanswered
- When facing death
- When we face a health crisis
- When life seems uncertain
- When we fail like the Apostle Peter did
- When the future is unknown
- When following Jesus is costly

Mark is challenging us to respond to the Good News of the Risen Jesus.

Here are some ways we could be more faithful in sharing the Good News that Jesus is risen:

- Remember Jesus is alive – we have a Saviour who is alive and interceding for us – and has gone ahead to prepare a place in Heaven for us!
- Pray for courage and boldness to share our faith
- Spend time in God's Word to get to really know Jesus – He's everywhere in the Bible – as we saw this morning in the book of Jonah!
- Speak about what Jesus has done for us personally – people can't deny our own story
- Invite people to church / Bible study – so they can hear more about Jesus
- Follow Jesus' example of living – so people notice a difference in us – and are attracted to the way we live for Jesus

Conclusion

[Slide-Conclusion]

You might have noticed this morning we have only looked at verses 1 to 8 of Mark chapter 16 – and in some of your Bibles Mark chapter 16 has verses 9 to 20 in italics.

The reason that Mark chapter 16 ends at verse 8 and verses 9 to 20 are in italics is because the earliest Greek manuscripts of Mark's Gospel finish at verse 8 – and only later manuscripts have verses 9 to 20.

Therefore, scholars believe that verses 9 to 20 were **added later** as a **summary ending**. The verses contain truths taught elsewhere in the Bible, but scholars think they were **not written by Mark**.

[Slide-Conclusion]

Mark's Gospel ends very suddenly.

The women are afraid.

The tomb is empty.

Jesus is risen.

And the story just stops abruptly.

It's almost as if Mark is handing the story over to us.

The next chapter of the story is not written in the Bible — it is written in the lives of Christians who believe Jesus is risen.

We are the people who go and tell others about Jesus – *“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news”* (Romans 10:15)

We are the people who live for the risen Jesus.

We are the people who continue the story of the empty tomb.

The tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and now the story continues with us.

Let's pray

Heavenly Father, thank you that the stone was rolled away and that our Lord Jesus is risen indeed. Fill us with joy and faith in the power of the empty tomb. Turn our fear into bold witness, and help us to live each day in the hope of the risen Christ. In His victorious name we pray, Amen.