

# RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

## 13 September 2020

nights in the heart of the earth.’ This is a powerful image: three days is just enough to prove that the person is really dead and therefore that the return to life is real too. Clearly, retrospectively, this foreshadows the experience of Jesus himself being crucified and buried and rising to life again on the third day.

**Repentance and Resurrection.** We need to face the issue of whether the people of Nineveh repented or not. We’ll look in detail at how Jonah tells the story over the next couple of weeks, and Jesus takes that line here—they repented, and that, according to Jesus, gives them the right to stand up and testify against the ‘wicked and adulterous generation’ who will not repent. The judgement of Nineveh through Nahum and the witness of history begs to differ, as Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire were actually wiped out. This only heightens the value and purpose of Jonah as a morality tale, even more so in the hands of Jesus, allowing them and us to reflect on all the available possibilities by asking all those hypothetical questions, such as ‘what would have been different if Nineveh had actually repented?’ Furthermore, the ‘resurrection’ (symbolic) of Jonah from the big fish gives him a new start, but how will he use it? It’s a great description: ‘And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.’ But will he now go and obey the call of God, and on what terms? Where will Jonah’s heart be moving forward?

**The Evidence Before Us.** We live in a society, a generation, that claims to be evidence-based. We are told regularly that political decisions follow the science. Research projects are commissioned at great cost, whilst the evidence of poverty, crime, addiction, abuse, injustice, inequality, white privilege, racism, xenophobia, domestic violence, cruelty and neglect, staring at us from right under our noses, are too often excused or ignored. The call to repentance and transformation is strong, compelling and real. It isn’t just about others, about those in power, it is also about us. What are we doing? What will we do? How is the resurrection life that we claim to live in Christ any different from what we see around us every day?

### SUGGESTED SONG

My Lighthouse  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSn9HW5P-sA>

### BLESSING

Sing the praise of the Lord, you his faithful people; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. (Psalm 30:4-5)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and always. Amen.

<https://rydebaptist.xyz>

Dear Friends,

During September we are looking at the story of the Prophet Jonah, and alongside this we are reading from the prophet Nahum. However, we take a short break from Nahum this week, just as Jonah is taking a break from his journey in the belly of an enormous fish, and instead turn to Matthew’s Gospel where Jesus has something to say about Jonah.

Returning to the big fish, I wonder if it came as a surprise to you to discover that Jonah may not have been picked up by a whale after all. All the modern translations of the Bible refer to a large fish, or a huge fish, or a great fish, the point being made that the original language points to a fish of considerable size to accommodate a human male, and of course a whale is a mammal not a fish. In truth we do not know what the specific marine creature would have been, but although now fewer in number there were certainly whales and sharks in the Mediterranean at the time of Jonah.

You may have experienced a similar bewilderment when you found out that Jacob may not have given his son Joseph a coat of many colours but possibly a long-sleeved coat, or a long coat with

sleeves, or an ornate robe, as modern translations render it. (Genesis 37:3)

We learn new things about translating ancient languages all the time, and the update certainly doesn’t change the overall meaning and purpose of the story and the lessons it teaches us. Thankfully, translators are increasingly honest in their footnotes when certain words in the original Hebrew and Greek can have a range of meanings or when they are uncertain what they mean.

It is the appearance of the big fish to rescue Jonah that causes difficulty for many to believe that this story actually happened in the way described. Commentators point to a few accounts where people have survived in such conditions, although three days and three nights is a stretch. But then, these are not ordinary circumstances and it is ‘the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land’ who has arranged for all this to take place.

Whether we are reading Jonah as biography, or a story about him designed to teach a lesson, Jesus certainly saw in Jonah a sign of the power of repentance and the provision of God’s mercy and grace through his Son who would die and on the third day raise to life again.

Zoom has become the safest way for most people to meet during this time. Our Zoom Sunday Morning Fellowship Meeting is at 10.30am, and our Monday Prayer Meeting is at 7.00pm—following [Pray For Ryde](#) until 23 September. If you are able to join us, you will be welcome. If you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can also click on the readings and songs. There are other helpful links at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

## PRAY FOR RYDE 2020

Launched on 1 July 2020, the themes for prayer are published daily. Visit [prayfor-ryde.org](http://prayfor-ryde.org) for more information, videos and the link to the daily 7pm Zoom prayer meeting. On 23 September the Zoom prayer meeting will be at 1.45pm. Last week's themes: 6 September, Uniformed Groups; 7 September, Children's Clubs & Societies; 8 September, Social Workers; 9 September, Dentists, Opticians & Hearing Specialists; 10 September, Hairdressers & Beauticians; 11 September, Manufacturing Industries; 12 September, Tradesmen & Women. We are updating this list each week.

## CALL TO WORSHIP

I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me. Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit. (Psalm 30:1-3)

## BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 30](#)

[Jonah 1:17-2:10](#)

[Matthew 12:38-45](#)

## SUGGESTED SONGS

Happy Day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIWPGWfivwU>

Thank You For Saving Me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7IFYvJHi8k>

## PRAYER

Father God we thank you for the precious gift of this new day. Today's readings from your Word remind us to be thankful, and to remember that all our days are in your hands. We bless you Lord Jesus that through your death on the cross and being raised to life on the third day, you have rescued us from the darkness of sin into the glory of your light and life. We are reminded of the contrast between being asleep and being awake, being dead and being alive. You are the Lord of Life. Holy Spirit, wake us up to the reality and purpose of the life of Christ living in and through us. Continue to cleanse, renew, anoint and empower us for our lives of Christian service, giving glory to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May we, and as your church, always live our lives in ways that demonstrate your Good News. Amen.

## THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving Psalms are a special category of psalm, of which there are eighteen in the Book of Psalms (twelve are mainly personal: 18, 21, 30, 32, 34, 40, 66, 92, 103, 108, 116, 118, and six are largely corporate: 65, 67, 75, 107, 124, 126); there are examples elsewhere too, such as 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and Isaiah 38:9-20. Thanksgiving Psalms seem to usually have five components, although the order may vary: i) a thank you for being rescued; ii) a description of what one has been rescued from; iii) a reminder of the appeal to be rescued; iv) an outline of the rescue; v) a promise to go on being grateful for the rescue and to live life differently as a result. Fascinatingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, Jonah's prayer from within the belly of the big fish takes the form of a Thanksgiving Psalm! Take some time to think about your life and how the Lord has upheld you and rescued you. What would your Psalm of Thanksgiving contain? How grateful are you? What danger or peril were you in? When did you reach out or call out to God? In what ways did God come to your aid? What promises to God will you make, how will you live life differently as a result of being saved?

## SUGGESTED SONGS

You Alone Can Rescue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYcjz30R3G8>

Abide With Me

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84YASWe3\\_2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84YASWe3_2Q)

## MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

**Introduction.** Jesus' comments about Jonah in Matthew 12 all came about because the Pharisees and teachers of the law wanted to see a sign from him. They wanted proof, they wanted evidence beyond what they were hearing with their ears and seeing with their eyes. In John's Gospel the miracles are referred to as signs, by which Jesus' glory was revealed and through which people came to believe in him. Whether it is because he was being tested or because their request wasn't genuine, Jesus would have none of it. There would be no new sign, other than already given through the prophet Jonah.

**The Sign of Jonah.** One of the important insights that Jesus brings is that although he inaugurates the New Covenant there is something significant that is not new at all. The Old Covenant with the people through Abraham should have been enough, the Law and the Prophets should have been sufficient, to maintain the relationship between the people and their God. God fulfils his side of the covenant, but the people have given up. They expected much from God, but put little of much value into the relationship. Yet God had not given up and sent his Son with a mission—or rather the Son of God is the mission! '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