

The Lord Goes Before Our Fears

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 January 2020

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 00] In Mark chapter 16 we read verses 3 and 4. It said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?

And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, for it was very great. As we mentioned earlier with the children, there is here an example of these devout and faithful women here who are coming to what they see as an insurmountable obstacle, as indeed it would be. They have come to anoint the body of Jesus with the spices and with the ointments that they have bought. Now of course, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have already well and truly done that job already, but either they don't know that, or they want to add their own contribution out of love to what they perceive to be and think to be the dead body of their beloved Jesus.

But they have a problem. The stone rolled over the mouth of the tomb is a great big heavy stone, such as we must assume, of such weight and size that even, and there appears to be at least three women here, three women with their combined strength could not move.

And also the fact that the tomb is meant to have been guarded by soldiers, that too might be a problem. But notice what happens here. They don't say, or they don't sit at home and say, well, we saw the stone that was rolled over the tomb, and we've got our spices, but you know, no way we can move that stone, so we might as well just sit here at home and do nothing.

[1 : 41] We might as well just not go to the tomb. We might as well just not act, because we can't do anything. We can't roll the stone away. We can't open up the tomb. There's nothing we can do.

They would have, we might think, a perfectly logical excuse for not doing anything, because they think the problem is insurmountable. But rather we read, when the Sabbath was passed, I believe John's account actually says, when it was still dark.

So yes, the Sabbath is passed. The dawn does not yet arrive, such as the intensity of their zeal.

They want to be there. They want to do what they can. They're going in faith.

When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint them. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher, at the rising of the sun, and they said among themselves, who shall roll us away from stone, from the door of the sepulcher?

There is a problem, and it was a genuine problem. It's not a problem that, it's just of the imagination. It was a genuine problem. It's there. How is it going to be done?

[2 : 51] But they go forward, nevertheless, in faith. Despite the fact they believe, this insurmountable problem exists, and is there, they are still going to it.

They are going onward towards it, in faith, seeking to do whatever they can, and if, well, they're turned back, they're turned back. If they can't fulfill their task, they can't fulfill it, but they are going to have a good try.

They are going to go forward in faith, and they're going to do what they can. Matthew tells us, in this delightful explanation, of the stone being rolled away, we read, The angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it, as though it was to sort of demonstrate his complete power over it.

Not only one angel, just rolls it back, and sat upon it. Now, in one sense, this is an unnecessary act, because, of course, the resurrection Jesus, the resurrection body of Christ, is able to pass through locked doors.

He appears to his disciples, we read in Mark 16 there, as they sat at me, he can pass through walls, he can certainly pass through, the stone of a rock cut too. So it's not necessary, for his benefit, for the stone to be rolled away.

[4 : 17] It's not so that Jesus can get out, somehow, but rather, the stone is rolled away, to demonstrate, that he is out, that he has risen.

We can speculate, you know, endlessly about, does Jesus only come out of the tomb, when the stone is rolled away, or have you already left it, or whatever.

Let's not go down that road, because the Lord hasn't given us, that information. But suffice to say, he would not have, needed the stone, to be rolled away, in order to rise, and pass through, and ascend, into heaven, before appearing again, to his disciples.

So, it's not for his benefit, it is for the benefit, of those who love him. It is for the benefit, of those who have come to the tomb, so that they can see, that the tomb is empty, so that they can see, that he is not there.

The angel rolled back the stone, from the tomb, rolled back the stone, from the door, and sat upon it, Matthew tells us. But here they come, with their spices.

[5 : 24] Here they come, seeking after Jesus. And their first thought, apart from wonder, and amazement, they looked, they saw that the stone, was rolled away, for it was very great.

They thought, well who rolled it away? It would take, the strength of several men, to do it. They thought the tomb, was guarded. They thought, well who's going to be able, to do it? The body's gone.

And entering, into the sepulcher, they saw a young man, sitting on the right side. Notice the specific detail. Only Mark, has this kind of, specific detail again. It's another of these little, instances in Mark's, attempt of the gospel, with this unique detail.

Sitting on the right side, the right side, of where the body, had been laid, clothed, in a long, white garment, and they were affrighted. He said, be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified.

He is risen. He is not here. Behold the place, where they laid him. But go your way, and tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you, into Galilee. There shall you see him, as he said unto you.

[6 : 26] Now, John's account of the gospel, tells us of course, that they, they found the grave clothes, very specifically. You know, and stripping down, when they saw the linen clothes lying, yet they went not in.

Then cometh Simon and Peter, following, and went into the sepulchre, and see that the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together, in a place by itself.

Now, anybody who had come to steal a body, is not going to go to all the trouble, of unwrapping all the strips of cloth, first of all, and taking the napkin off the head, laying it separately aside, they're going to just lift it up, wrapped as it is, and take it away.

You can unwrap it later. Whatever you want to do with it, you can do that later, but you just lift the body, and you take it, and you go, however many people it takes to carry. If the body had been stolen, the very last thing you would find there, would be grave clothes.

Who is going to go to the trouble, of unwrapping a corpse? But there isn't a corpse. There is a living resurrection body.

[7 : 36] Christ is risen. Now, this is not to say to the women, well, how foolish you are, looking for the living amongst the dead. No, he was dead. They were right to be concerned, about the problem of the stone.

It was a genuine problem, but the Lord, was way ahead of them. He had gone ahead of them. He had rolled the stone away, so that they could see, that he was dead, he was buried, but now he is risen.

And you see, bound in with this great good news, is the recognition, and acknowledgement, of the fact, he was dead. Come, see the place, where he was laid.

The angel, points it out to her, and said, look, you're seeking Jesus, of Nazareth, who is dead. Well, he's not here. He is risen. Behold the place, where they made him.

As John tells us, you can see the grave clothes, lying there. That's where his head was. That's where his feet were. That's the napkin, that was around his head. This is the tomb, they laid him in. You can probably still, get the fragrance, of the spices, in which, Joseph and Nicodemus, laid him, and wrapped the body, with the strips of linen.

[8 : 47] Remember we said, just a few days ago, how linen was there. The very finest, of the garments. Clean, white linen, is what the priests wore, in their ministering, about the temple.

The armies of heaven, are described as being, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. So it was the best, of the best, for Jesus, but it had been left behind. The resurrection body, of Jesus, is not going to say, well, I don't think, I'll just help myself, with this fine linen, and smell these good spices, shave the waste nose.

No, the linen cloths, are all mine there. No doubt, with the scent, of the spices, still upon them. The body is gone, because the body is risen. Christ is risen. Come, see the place, where he was laid, because he was dead.

Friends, your salvation, and mine, is dependent, upon the fact, that Christ, was dead. It's not that, he never died, that's why he's alive.

No, he was dead. He was buried. Had he not died, your price is not paid. Not as mine. It is the fact, that that payment, has been made, with the death, of the son of God, with the shedding, of his blood, the laying down, of his life, in the once, and for all, perfect sacrifice, so your price is paid, if you are trusting, in Christ.

[10 : 07] The fact, that he was dead, is paramount. That is why, the angel, is pointing this out. Yes, you're seeking Jesus, of Nazareth. He is not here, he is risen. Behold, the place, where they lay there.

See the fact, that he was dead. See the fact, that he was buried. See the grave clothes, in which he was laid. This, Jesus, whom you seek, was dead, and is alive again.

He has risen. And that is the other side, of the coin. Now, realize this is a common phrase, other side of the coin. But of course, if you think about it, if a coin of the realm, is going to be genuine, you need both, the over, reverse, that is the face, the head of the queen, on one side, and you need the reverse.

Whatever the design is, on the other side, of the coin, you have to have both. If you have a double-headed coin, you know it's a fake. If you have a double-tailed coin, you know it's a fake. You have to have both sides, of the coin, otherwise, it is not genuine. And likewise, you have to have both sides, of the coin, of the fact of Jesus' death, and resurrection, otherwise, we are yet in our sins.

[11 : 17] Because the fact that Jesus died, which is testified to, not only by the angel, pointing out where his corpse lay, but, if you remember, as we looked at previously, by the professional killers, of the Roman army, who had done hundreds, of crucifixions, they knew how to kill a victim, they knew how to keep him alive, as long as was absolutely necessary, to dry out the pain, but they also knew how to kill.

And if they said, he's dead, and they confirmed to Pilate, he's dead, then he was as dead as there could be. Pilate is not going to give permission, to Joseph of Arimathea, to take down a living Christ, from the cross.

He's dead. He is buried. His death, is part one, if you like, of the absolutely crucial fact, required for your salvation. But, if his death, was the end of it, if Christ is not risen, as Paul writes to the Corinthians, we are yet in our sins.

What does he mean by that? Well, the payment is made, but who's to say, that it has been accepted? You know, let's say you get, you get a bill, you get an invoice, through the post, for some work that's been done.

And so, you write your cheque, and you send it off in the post, or else you try and send it electronically, or whatever. And then a few days later, you get another reminder, saying, you know, why haven't you paid this bill?

[12 : 41] I said, I did pay the bill. You know, as far as I knew, I sent it electronically, I wrote the cheque, sent it in the post. Was it never received? And the fact you've got a reminder, means, it wasn't received.

The fact you may get another reminder, means, all your best efforts, it hasn't been received. They never got your letter, they never got your email, they never got whatever communication you sent. And it can go wrong just as easily, in the electronic world, as it can in the postal world. We've had emails sent to people, and say, I don't know if you got my email, of such and such December here. Oh, no, we never got it. But now, what happened? How did they not get it? How do people not get, they just say, but things do go astray. They go astray in the, the cybersphere, just as they go astray,

in the post.

But until and unless you get, the receipt, in your hand, you don't know for sure, that your payment, has been received. Now, that's what receipt means.

[13 : 40] It means received. Stamp, accepted. We have had your payment, here's your receipt. That bill, is clear, paid, dealt with. Now, the resurrection of Jesus, is heaven's receipt, given to earth, given to mankind, to say, yes, his death, has been paid.

The price of sin, has been paid. The debt is clear, here's your receipt. The receipt is Jesus, coming back to life, that all is done, all is finished, all is paid.

It is the statement from God, yes, sin is paid for, in full, for all who will trust, and believe, in my beloved son. So, the death is critical, but also, likewise, is the resurrection, two sides of the same coin.

And this is the greatest news, that the followers of Jesus, could ever hope for. Now, if one was of a worldly mind, then, how might you view, or read this passage?

To be of a worldly mind, and have these women, who have bought sweet spices, now remember that spices, for burial, were not cheap. They would be expensive.

[15 : 02] And these are women, who have already, outlaid a huge amount, for Jesus, and his disciples, they've ministered to him, of their substance, they have bettered themselves, spent all that they had, looking after Jesus, and his disciples, in the days of his flesh, during his earthly ministry.

And now, here they are, it has probably taken, everything they had, to buy these spices, and these ointments, for anointing the body. And now, the tomb is empty.

A worldly mind, would think, oh for goodness sake, you might have told us, beforehand, here we are, having spent, all this money, on these spices, on these ointments, and so on, and now, now what are we going to do, with them?

For goodness sake, if only we had known, sooner, this isn't exactly compassion, this isn't a loving God, is it? Come on, look at what we've done, look at our outlay, and the fact that he has risen, is lost to them.

Yes, they have lost, a certain amount of money. Maybe they can sell, the spices again, maybe they can, pass them on, to somebody else, that doesn't even, notice, doesn't even, rate, I'll mention, what do they do, with the spices afterwards?

[16 : 12] Doesn't trust, anybody's money. But it says, specifically, they had, bought them. They didn't make them, themselves, they didn't pick them, from someone else, they weren't letting them, they had bought them, they had outlaid, hard cash, for something now, that would prove, to be completely, unnecessary.

Is this a waste, then? Is this, God, not appreciating, what they have done? No, they have expended, yes, they have expended, physical money, for physical service, to show, physical anointing, love, love, for the body, of Jesus, because the living, Jesus, as far as they're concerned, has already gone.

This is all they can do, and they're prepared, to give all that they have, to show their love, for Jesus. Well, such is God's love, for them, then he is giving them, something far better.

Now, if God, were to respond, to the worldling, with what the worldling, might want, then the equivalent, might be saying, well, you know, I was going to rise, from the dead, but you know, here's these women, they've got the spices, they've gone through, all this expense, that wouldn't be very loving, now would it?

I'll just stay dead, so that they can, anoint my body, so that they can, show how much, they love me, and that will be showing, much more love, for them, will it?

[17 : 39] No, greater love, that no man, amiss, the Lord said, that a man, laid down his life, for his friends, and Jesus had done it, but having laid down, his life, for his friends, now, he is coming back, from the dead, showing even, greater love, to them, to reveal himself, to them, do you think, they care, about the money, they've outlaid, on the spices, on the anointings, you know, it's the equivalent, of supposing, a widow, or a child, lost their father, or whatever, somebody lost their spouse, somebody they love, and yes, they had to pay, the younger baker, for the funeral, and yes, they had to, fact, buy a new suit, or whatever, for the services, and so on, and smart themselves up, and go to all the trouble, and expensive, because it's not cheap, you know, and then, their loved one, was found, not to be dead, there'd be no mistake, or else, if they'd been lost at sea, in fact, they'd been washed up somewhere, and they were alive, after all, wouldn't you give, all the money,

in the world, wouldn't you spend, everything that it took, just to have, your loved one back, you wouldn't say, oh come on, look at all I've spent here, come on, and here you are, coming back alive, my goodness, show that, you think that's love, no way, of course, you don't care, you'd spend, any amount, just to have, another day with them, you'd give, whatever it took, just to have them alive, again, just to have them back, for most of us, in most cases, that doesn't happen, the money you spend, yep, it gets spent, you need to buy, a new suit, for the thief, you know, you get to wear it, brilliant, you spend all the money, on a coffin, flowers, whatever, yep, it gets put to the use, you expend it for, you spend the money, on the spices, the anointing of the body, like these women here, yep, that's the use it's put to, congratulations, what do you like, laid, that's what you get, but the Lord, is not a worldly, minded God, the Lord, desires to give, much more, than we could ever, imagine, the Lord, desires to give, what these women, couldn't even think of, and not only, does he give it to them, he appears, to them as well, this is what we read, verse 9, when Jesus was risen, out of the first day, of the week, he appeared, first to many man, out of whom he had, cast seven devils,

John gives us, that account, with such beauty, and simplicity, she thinks he's the gardener, he doesn't know, who he is, and he just says, one word to her, maybe, he says her name, he appears to her, and to, perhaps also, to some of the other women, as well, separately, who had come, to anoint his body, for Benio, who had made this outlay, yes, they made that expenditure, in one sense, without diminishing, the cost, to them, of their love, so what, he's back, from the dead, he's alive again, wouldn't you do it, for any loved one, that you so missed, and that your heart, broke over, how much more then, for Jesus, so he is back, he is alive, and the problem, that we envisage, which is a genuine problem, nobody's pretending, it isn't a genuine problem, the problem, they envisage, has already been solved, in Matthew, we read, the angel answered, and said unto the women, fear not, for I know, that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified, he is not here, for he has risen, as he said, come, see the place, where the Lord lay, and go quickly, and tell his disciples, that he has risen, from the dead, and behold, he goeth before you, into Galilee, there shall ye see him, that be what, lo I have told you, as they went, to tell his disciples,

Matthew says, behold, Jesus met them, saying, all hail, and they came, and held them by the feet, and worshipped them, and Jesus said to them, be not afraid, go tell my brother, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see you, see Jesus gives them, something far more, than money, far more, than spices, and oil, he gives them himself, he gives them life, and it's completely, different, from the way, that we think, in worldly terms, if we were to say, well, God is no man's debtor, here now, if he's going to make it up, for these women, well, he got to pay them back, the price of the money, that they spent, on their, on their spices, and on their appointments, and so often, we think in terms, of worldly transactions, to pay us back, if God is no man's debtor, well, look at all this, that I have spent, look at all this, that I have outlay, isn't that how we think, until such time, as the Lord, changes our hearts, and it's not that, that, yes, okay, he forgets about, these things, it's that, what he has, to give us, is just, it's a completely, different league, it's a completely, different ball game, it's life, from the dead, and yes, as it happens, he will enrich us, in so many other ways, as well, he is, nobody's debtor, what the Lord, blesses, nobody can diminish, nobody can take away, this is life, in all its fullness, the problem, they thought, they were going to have, is of a big stone, they can't run away, the problem, they end up with, is how on earth, do they get to his disciples, quick enough, to be able to tell them, how do they even convince them, because it says in Mark, they didn't believe them, at first, how do you make someone, believe the best news, that you've ever heard, in your life, and they won't believe you, so much for the stone, the stone's been rolled away, that was, that was this morning's problem, that was saying, this is not,

God is way ahead of you, how does God then, convince the disciples, well he appears himself, he appears himself, to convince his own disciples, whatever the problem is, Christ is able to overcome it, what is the stone, that is over the tomb, of your heart, what is the stone, that has been rolled, over the problems, that we may keep, hiding away, in the dark, what is the obstacle, that we may think, is insurmountable, well you notice, as we said, what these women do, they don't sit at home, on their hands, saying well what can we do, nothing we can do, we can't do anything, about the stone, no point even doing, no, they go forward in faith, and time and again, in scripture we find, that when the Lord's people, go forward, in faith, that the Lord, blesses that faith, the Lord, honors that faith, I mean we look at, when the children of Israel, are about to cross the Jordan, to come into the promised land, and you know, the Jordan's in flood, they can't possibly cross, but the Lord says,

you know, go forward, into the water, as it came to pass, when the people, removed from their tents, as it's Joshua chapter 3, from verse 14, to pass over Jordan, and the priests, bearing the ark, of the covenant, before the people, and as they, that bear the ark, were come unto Jordan, and the feet, of the priests, that bear the ark, were dipped, in the brim, of the water, for Jordan, overflowed all his banks, and all the time of harvest, that the waters, which came down, from above, stood and rose up, upon an heap, very far, from the city,

Adam, that is besides Aratah, and those, that came down, toward the sea, of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut up, and the people, passed over, right against Jericho, and the priests, that bear the ark, of the covenant, of the Lord, stood firm, on dry ground, in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites, passed over, on dry ground, until all the people, were passed, clean over Jordan, now you see, that the crossing, of the Jordan, it's not like the Red Sea, where water, stands up, like a wall, on both sides of it, and the Lord, does that, by a mighty wind, that blows all night, no it's rather, as the priests, step into the water, notice they have to, actually do it first, they have to act, first, it's like you have to, push at the door, to make it open, you don't stand, in front of it, and say open sesame, it's going to do it, by itself, you have to push, at the door, you have to put your foot, into the water, you have to go, forward in faith, why stand ye still, says the Lord, you go forward, as though, the way, were going to open, before you, and what happens, as they step, into the water, the water begins, to flow away, but it's not being, replenished, from upstream, because it's beginning, to back up, it's beginning, to stand up, and it's, piling up there, not far from the city,

[26 : 20] Adam, and so if there's, no more flow, coming down, then what's flowing, down the way, just flows away, down to the Dead Sea, and the ground, the ground beneath them, dries, the people walk over, on dry ground, but first, you have to put your foot, into the water, first you have to go, forward, first you have to act, in faith, just like these women, are doing, they go to the tomb, because they know, there's a stone, that he's rolling away, who's going to roll, away the stone, because they, they think, maybe they'll manage, to persuade, somebody to roll it away, from that, for them, but the fact is, God is way ahead of them, likewise, Jesus, in the New Testament, when you remember, the incident, of the ten lepers, in the boroughs, between Samaria, and Galilee, we read, he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men, there were lepers, which stood afar off, and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus master, have mercy on us, and when he saw them, he said unto them, go show yourselves, unto the priests, and it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed, we don't read, that they say, oh come on Jesus, just say the words, once we can see, that we're all clean, then yes sure, we'll go and talk, to the priests then, then we'll show ourselves, but come on, clean us first, put your hands in us, touch us or whatever, go and show yourselves, to the priest then, so as they went, they turn, and they start going, and as they go, as they act on what Jesus tells them, as they put their faith, into practice, and start walking towards, the destination they've been told to go, they are cleansed, and one turns back, to give thanks to Jesus, and that's a separate story, but the fact is, that as they go, as they came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed, the faith was to be put into action, and whatever may be your problem, whatever may be the thing there is, the big stone, over the sepulcher, the mouth of the grave, which is the obstacle, the thing that is blocking your way, to where you want to be, to where you want to go, or what it is you want to do, or what it is you've made such outlay for, you go on in faith, you walk forward in faith, you go right up to that stone, and what do you find, the stone has been rolled away, the Lord is way ahead of you, the Lord is opening the way, for those who are seeking to honour him, you see it doesn't follow, that God will simply bless, all our selfish little plans, and ambitions and ideas, that God will bless, and honour, and open the way, for the things which seek to honour him, and these women, they are seeking to honour Jesus, they're not able to do it, the money they've spent on the spices, as we say, you could say, that's money wasted, it's not a waste, you could Jesus back from the dead, if you've got the love of your heart, back from the grave, who cares, about the spices, who cares, about the money that has been spent, this is life, from the dead, this is life, in all its fullness,

God is in charge, Christ is in charge, of this new life, and whilst the world, and life is so uncertain, and it's frightening, in a sense, because if we don't know Christ, well, we don't know what the future holds, but once we are in Christ, well, we don't know what the future holds, anything can happen, because Christ is in charge, and Christ is alive, you don't have to be afraid, because he goes before you, and either the problems, will be literally like the storm, rolled away, or else, a way will be found, through them, they will be removed, or they will be overcome, or it is because, the Lord wants you,

to change direction, into a place, where he does, plan you to go, and what you find, and I can say that, spreads from, bitter and painful experience, that if you are, hitting your head, against a brick wall, time and again, and again, then the minute, you begin to follow, where the Lord, wants you to go, the doors begin, to swing open, the stones roll back, from the grave's mouth, the way is suddenly, playing before you, and you think, why wasn't this happening, before, why didn't it just, open up before, well maybe you were not, on the path, that the Lord, wanted you to tread, maybe he had, a different plan, from what you had, if we would truly, know, blessing on this year, that is ahead of us, then we can do, nothing greater, and better, for ourselves, than to get, into the way, and the path, that the Lord, would have you to walk, put your life, into his hands, put your future, and your road, into his disposal, and let him, lead, and I won't say, watch those stones, roll away, because the women, didn't see it happen, they didn't see, the angels sit there, they didn't see it, happen before their eyes, but when they got there, it was done, when they got there, the obstacle, was removed, when they got there, they found,

Jesus was risen, and then, as Matthew tells us, he met them himself, go forward, in faith, into this year, that is before you, do not fear, the obstacles, do not fear, the blockages, and the worries, and the troubles, that's not to say, you're just imagining them, you're not, the problem is real, the stone, is real, the difficulties, are real, the death of Jesus, is real, you're not stupid, for worrying about these things, you're not just in, getting all flighty, and all, and all, all worried, and all anxious, and all, narcissistic about it, you know, these things are real, it's okay to be worried about them, it's okay to be concerned, because they are real, and you're right, to recognize, that these are real problems, but, you go forward, in faith, to meet them, and you trust in Christ, and you will find, that they will be removed, or the way will be opened, it will be made clear, they are real problems, but they are there, partly to demonstrate,

Christ's power, over the greatest problems, the greatest stones, the greatest obstacles, the greatest blockages, the greatest fears, that you may have, real as they are, even death itself, Christ, Christ is greater, than all, these things, he is the resurrection, and he is the life, and if you would, encounter that, then you have to, step forward, in faith, taking whatever, outlay you have made, taking whatever, expense you have gone to, taking whatever, the risks may be, and whatever your losses, you think, are going to be, they will be made up to you, go forward, in faith, and watch, the Lord, overcome, all the problems, all the fears, all the obstacles, that were there, and were real, and they are great obstacles, but Christ, is greater, go, to where he is, go, to where he would lead you, and let him take you, through the year ahead, to where he could, go outside.