

Open in prayer

Read John 1:17-2:10

¹⁷ The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

¹ Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish:

² I called to the Lord in my distress, and he answered me.
I cried out for help from deep inside Sheol; you heard my voice.

³ When you threw me into the depths, into the heart of the seas,
the current overcame me.
All your breakers and your billows swept over me.

⁴ And I said, "I have been banished from your sight,
yet I will look once more toward your holy temple."

⁵ The water engulfed me up to the neck;
the watery depths overcame me;
seaweed was wrapped around my head.

⁶ I sank to the foundations of the mountains,
the earth's gates shut behind me forever!
Then you raised my life from the Pit, Lord my God!

⁷ As my life was fading away,
I remembered the Lord,
and my prayer came to you,
to your holy temple.

⁸ Those who cherish worthless idols abandon their faithful love,
⁹ but as for me, I will sacrifice to you
with a voice of thanksgiving.
I will fulfill what I have vowed.
Salvation belongs to the Lord.

¹⁰ Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Introduction

Å Think of the worst mess you have ever made. Not someone else's mess that spilt onto you. A mess you made. • Perhaps it was a lie that began small. But it needed a second lie to hold it up. And then a third to hold up the second. • Perhaps it was money. A debt you hid from your family. A risk you took. An amount you pray others don't find out about. • Perhaps it was relational. Words said in anger. A line crossed that shouldn't have been crossed. Someone you hurt who has not spoken to you since. ••

ð When you are in a mess with consequences, who do you call out to? Not who do you blame. Who do you cry out to for help out? • Your friends? They will take your side, or they will take their leave. • Your own cleverness? You dug the hole for yourself in the first place. You can't dig your way out. • God? • Why would a holy God answer a wretch like you? ••

R Last week we watched the prophet Jonah run. The Lord told him to go to Nineveh. But Jonah fled in the opposite direction. Away from the Lord's presence. Down to Joppa. Down into a ship. Down into its hold. • So the Lord hurled a great wind on the sea, which terrified the sailors. Each cried out to his own god. They threw the cargo overboard. They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. He told the truth, and what they must do. Throw me into the sea. And they did. And the sea went still. And the sailors feared the Lord. And they offered a sacrifice and made vows. ••

ð And Jonah? • That is where we pick up this morning. • Jonah 1:17, The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. • Jonah is in the dark. In the deep. With no way out. • He caused his own mess. This was not a mistake. Jonah's disobedience resulted in consequences. • Now, who will he call out to? ••

~ Here's the author's main idea in Jonah 1:17-2:10. Salvation belongs to the Lord, so cry out to him, even if you caused the mess. ••

R We will see this argument made in four steps. • First, Jonah 2:1-6. Where can you turn when you cannot climb out of the grave? • Second, will you call on the One who hears? • Third, Jonah 2:7-10. Who can deliver you from the Pit? And fourth, have you thanked him for what he has done? ••

Å To start we must go down with the prophet to the watery depths. Down to where Jonah is. Down to the place where no light reaches. And ask the question, where will you turn when you cannot climb out of the grave? ••

1) In over your head (Jonah 2:1-6)

R Jonah is inside the fish. Three days. Three nights. No light. No way out. • Miraculously preserved. And what does he do? • Jonah 2:1, Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish. • Notice the name. The Lord his God. Jonah ran from his God. But now in the dark, there is no other name to call on. ••

ð Listen to his prayer. • Jonah 2:2, I called to the Lord in my distress, and he answered me. I cried out for help from deep inside Sheol; you heard my voice. • Sheol is the realm of the dead. The dark place below, cut off from the land of the living. • Jonah is not describing discomfort. He is describing his grave. ••

on And he knows exactly who put him there. • Jonah 2:3, When you threw me into the depths, into the heart of the seas, the current overcame me. All your breakers and your billows swept over me. • Not the sailors. Not the storm. You. Every wave hurled came from the Lord's own Hand. ••

Å Then comes the horror. • Jonah 2:4, And I said, I have been banished from your sight. • Jonah fled from the Lord's presence. Now he has what he wanted. • He is out of the Lord's sight. And it is the worst place he has ever been. ••

on But look at what he does next. • Yet I will look once more toward your holy temple. • Not a confession. Not a plan. Not a bargain. Only a face resolved to turn toward God. ••

ð And still the water rises. • Jonah 2:5-6, The water engulfed me up to the neck; the watery depths overcame me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. I sank to the foundations of the mountains, the earth's gates shut behind me forever! • Forever. Not for a while. Not until things calm down. Forever. Jonah is dying. ••

ð Think of a swimmer who swam out beyond the breakers because he wanted to be far from the shore. • At first he treads water. He tells himself the shore is close. He tells himself he can turn back whenever he likes. • Then his arms burn. A wave breaks over his face. He swallows the sea. His legs go heavy • And he stops telling himself anything. He has no strength left. No clever plan. No one within reach. • So he does the only thing left to him. He cries out for help. ••

Å That was Jonah. • Every step had taken him lower. Down to Joppa. Down into the ship. Down into the hold. Down into the sea. Down to the roots of the mountains. • Jonah knows he did not fall into this by accident. He walked down into the depths intentionally. He got what he deserved. ••

R Here's the main idea in **Jonah 2:1-6**. • When you're in over your head, having caused your own ruin, and the Lord has sent waves of judgment on you, call to the Lord in your distress. It's all you can do. ••

Ø The Lord threw him in. The Lord banished him. The gates are shut. • Will the Lord come to the aid of a rebel runaway? ••

2) **Application to non-Christians – Cry out to the Lord** (**Jonah 2:2**)

on The gates slam shut. All hope is lost. • And then Jonah says the last thing we expect. • **Jonah 2:6**, Then you raised my life from the Pit, Lord my God! ••

~ Here is the author's main idea. • Salvation belongs to the Lord, so cry out to him, even if you caused the mess. • Jonah cried from the bottom, and the Lord heard. The One who threw him in is the One who brought him up. ••

R But a question hangs over this prayer. **How can a holy God hear a man who dug his own grave?** • Jonah does not explain. He only tells us what the Lord does. For the explanation, we must turn to Jesus. ••

R And we do not need to force him into the story. Jesus walks in himself. • **Matthew 12:40**, For as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. • Jesus says Jonah's descent is a sign of his own. ••

R Look at the pattern. Both went down. Both came up. • But not for the same reason. • Jonah went down because he ran. Jesus went down because he came for runaways. ••

Å Think of what Jonah feared most. I have been banished from your sight. • At the cross, Christ stands in that place. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? • The Father who heard Jonah does not answer his Son. • Not because Jesus ran. Not because he rebelled. He was the only man who never earned the Pit. • He took the abandonment we deserve. Like a man who pays the fine you owe, so that you can walk free. • Justice is not bypassed. It is satisfied. Because the Son was abandoned, the rebel who cries out is not. ••

R Jonah cried out long before the cross. Yet the Lord heard him. God saved his people looking forward to the cross, as a gift can be given before the bill is paid. ••

~ The tomb was sealed. It was over. Everyone went home. But God on the third day, he raised him. He is risen. • Jonah was lifted by mercy. He did not earn it. • Jesus was raised by right. The resurrection is the Father's verdict. •

The debt is paid. The Pit has no claim over him. ●●

~ Do you see what this means? ● Without the cross, Jonah's rescue is a riddle. ● Without the empty tomb, his cry is a gamble. ● We do not cry out on the strength of Jonah. We cry out on the strength of Christ. ●●

~ The Lord saves rebels. Not the tidy. Not the deserving. Not those who cleaned up first. Rebels. ●●

ø Perhaps you are not yet a Christian. Is there a mess you believe is too deep? ● A lie. A debt. A person. ● Who will you cry out to for help? Your friends? Your own cleverness? Will you wait until you feel clean enough? Or will you call on the One who went to the bottom before you? ●●

P Romans 10:13, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Not everyone who prays well. Everyone who calls. ● Your cry does not save you. He does. But he has promised to hear you when you call and respond. ●●

~ Will you call on the One who hears? He is not far off. Plainly. Today. In your own words. ●●

R He hears. But what does he do with a man at the bottom of the sea? Who can deliver you from the Pit? ●●

3) Salvation belongs to the Lord (Jonah 2:7-10)

ø Jonah is dying. ● Not figuratively. The water is over his head, the weeds are around his skull, and the gates of the earth have shut behind him. ●●

on And then Jonah says in 2:7, As my life was fading away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, to your holy temple. ●●

R Notice what he does not say. ● He does not say, I fought my way up. He does not say, I found my strength. ● His life was fading. He had nothing left. He remembered the Lord. And his prayer reached the temple. ●●

P The temple was where the Lord's presence rested. To look toward the temple was to look toward the Lord. ● Jonah has been banished from the Lord's sight. Yet his cry crosses the whole distance. Up through the water. Up through the dark. Up into the holy place. ● Nothing stopped it. Not the depth. Not the distance. Not even his own disobedience. ●●

□ Then Jonah turns and speaks of others. ● Jonah 2:8, Those who cherish worthless idols abandon their faithful love. ● Idols are things worshipped other than God. The things you hold on to. You can make an idol of anything. ● Money.

Comfort. Your own plans. • Idols promise a rope, and they give you nothing. • And when the water rises, the idol-holder lets go of the Lord's faithful love, and clutches at what cannot save. ••

P But as for me, Jonah says, I will sacrifice to you with a voice of thanksgiving. I will fulfill what I have vowed. Salvation belongs to the Lord. • Let that last line sink in. Salvation belongs to the Lord. ••

R Those are not new words. They close Psalm 3. • There David has fled from his son Absalom. Many enemies rise against him. He is hemmed in. Yet he cries aloud, and the Lord answers him from his holy mountain. And David confesses, Salvation belongs to the Lord. ••

R Jonah borrows the confession of the hemmed-in. The tested faith of God's people is now in his mouth. • But David was chased by his enemies. Jonah was chased by nothing but his own choices. His trouble was of his own making. And still the same confession stands. Still the Lord saves. ••

R Now think about what Jonah means by salvation. He does not mean forgiveness of sins explained in full. Not yet. He means rescue from death. The first audience would hear a man delivered from the grave by the Lord. Salvation, rescue, deliverance belongs to the Lord. Not to the strong. Not to the clever. Not to the one who deserved it. To the Lord. ••

R And an Israelite who was rescued paid his vow. He brought his sacrifice. He gave his thanks. Jonah promises he will do the same. ••

R Then the story moves. Jonah's prayer ends. And the Lord acts. • Jonah 2:10, Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. ••

~ Do you see who is in charge? In Jonah 1:17, the Lord appointed the fish to swallow. • In Jonah 2:10, the Lord commands the fish to vomit. • The fish never acts alone. The prayer is bracketed by the Lord's word. Jonah prays, and from first to last the Lord rules the fish, the sea, and the outcome. ••

P Think of Jonah standing on a cold shore. • He is soaked. He is coughing. He is alive. • He did nothing to earn it. And he knows exactly who to thank. ••

~ So who can deliver you from the Pit? Only the Lord. The One who hears from the depths. The One who commands the fish. The One who lifts a rebel out of the grave and sets him on dry ground. Salvation belongs to the Lord. And the Lord saves rebels like you. ••

R But if that is true, what do you owe him? Have you thanked him for what he has done? ••

4) Application to Christians – Give thanks to the Lord (Jonah 2:9)

P Jonah has not yet reached the shore. He is still in the fish. Still in the dark. And he says, I will sacrifice to you with a voice of thanksgiving. I will fulfill what I have vowed. ●

R Thanks is the answer to the rescue. So here is the burden for those of us who know the Lord. Thank the Lord who saves rebels like you. ● But thanks looks different depending on where you stand this morning. So let me speak to three types of people in the room. ●●

Å Some of you are believers who are drifting. ● You stopped praying. You stopped drawing near. A lie still standing. A debt still hidden. A person you have not faced. ● Not a mistake. Not a weakness. Rebellion. And now you think the gates have shut. ●●

on Hear this. Jonah was the Lord's own prophet. He ran. He dug his own grave. And his prayer still reached the holy temple. ●●

R So begin like Jonah. With thanks. ● Thanks admits he is still there. That he still hears. Confess your sin. ● Name the lie. Name the debt. Name the person. ● Then bring it into the light with someone who loves you if you must. ● And then thank him, because Christ was banished from the Father's sight so that you would not be. ●●

R Some of you are young in the faith. ● Beware of calling on the Lord in a dark season and making promises. ● I will change. I will never go back. ● Those are good things to pray. Mean them. ● But think about Jonah. Scripture does not say whether he paid his vow. It leaves the question open. ●●

ð There is a warning there for us. ● Fear makes bold promises. Comfort forgets them. ● So do not build your thanks on your resolve. ● Build it on Christ, who went down into the grave and rose on the third day. Rehearse the gospel each morning. He bore my abandonment. He is risen. The gospel will carry your thanks when the feeling is gone. ●●

Å Some of you have walked with the Lord for years. ● You are faithful. You are here. But the thankful heart has gone quiet. Your prayers have become a list. Please heal. Please provide. Please fix. ●●

Å Jonah says, Those who cherish worthless idols abandon their faithful love. ●● Not in a day. Slowly. ● Comfort. Routine. Your own plans. ● That is drift, and forgetting is how the hole begins. ●●

~ So thank him before you sleep this evening. Thank him with others on the

Lord's day. Thank him as you eat. And thank him as you give. ●●

P And if you have walked with him for decades, you have been lifted out of more than one pit. ● Jonah says, As my life was fading away, I remembered the Lord. ● Remembered. You are this church's memory. So count the rescues. And tell them. Tell the new convert how the Lord held you when you thought he had left. ●●

P Think again of Jonah on the cold shore. Soaked. Coughing. Alive. ● He did nothing to earn it. And he knows exactly who to thank. ● Thank the Lord who saves rebels like you. Not because he needs it. Because you do. ●●

Conclusion

Ø When you are in a mess entirely of your own making, who do you call out to? ●●

Å We began with that question. A lie that outgrew you. A debt you hid. A person you hurt. ● Not mistakes. Not accidents. Messes of our own making. ●●

Å Jonah was in the dark, in the deep, with no way out. And he did the one thing left to him. He called out to the Lord. And the Lord heard. ●●

~ That is the author's argument. ● Salvation belongs to the Lord, so cry out to him, even if you caused the mess. ● And that is why we can say this. Thank the Lord who saves rebels like you. ●●

~ If you are a non-Christian, cry out to the Lord who raises the dead. Today. Plainly. In your own words. ● If you are a Christian, give thanks to the Lord who brought you back. ●●

~ He has not stopped hearing. So do not stay in the hole. Call. And when he lifts you out, do not forget who did it. Give him all the thanks and all the praise. ●●

P Amen. ●●

Close in prayer

Homiletic indicators

- The operative word in the sentence is underlined.
- R – Instruction
 - **Body:** Natural, one hand gestures.
 - **Voice:** measured, firm.
- ^ – Uncion
 - **Body:** Forward, expressive.
 - **Voice:** Raised, faster.
- Ø – Fear
 - **Body:** Narrow eyes, still shoulders, lift your chin slightly (exposed posture).
 - **Voice:** Breathy, higher pitch, quick shallow breaths. Speak into the back of the throat.
- O' – Anger
 - **Body:** Jaw forward, stable feet (no shifting weight), sharp hand strikes (karate chop motion).
 - **Voice:** Hard attack on consonants. Drop pitch slightly, but increase volume on key syllables. Staccato.
- P – Happiness
 - **Body:** Relax shoulders, soften the brow. Open palms, wider stance.
 - **Voice:** Rise in melody at the end of phrases. Bright, forward resonance (smile while speaking).
- Å – Sadness
 - **Body:** Heavy eyelids, slight forward slump, hands still or clasped low.
 - **Voice:** Lower volume, monotone descent (each phrase ends lower than it started). Use mostly single-syllable words.
- □ – Disgust
 - **Body:** Wrinkle nose, pull back your head, sharp turning away from the pulpit.
 - **Voice:** Nasal, sharp, with a "negation cadence" (rising then falling sharply on the sin's name). Hard glottal stops.
- ʊ – Surprise
 - **Body:** Eyebrows up, slight backward step or open-mouth inhale.
 - **Voice:** Bright, high onset. Use a sudden upward interval (a leap in pitch on the unexpected word).
- • – Pause
 - **What it does:** Allows the last sentence to land, convict, or heal.
 - **Length:** 1 second (colon), 2 seconds (period), 3+ seconds (after a weighty statement or call to worship).
 - **Body:** Stop moving. Hold eye contact. Do not smile or nod. Let the silence be uncomfortable.
 - **Delivery note:** A pause feels longer to you than to them. Trust it. Hold one more beat than you think is comfortable.

1) The Lord appoints a fish to swallow Jonah (Jonah 1:17-2:1)

¹⁷ The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

¹ Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish:

2) Jonah's prayer from the fish (Jonah 2:2-9)

i) Jonah remembers he cried out from the depth of distress to the Lord who heard him (Jonah 2:2).

a) ² I called | to the Lord | in my distress, | and he answered me.

a) I cried out for help | from deep inside | Sheol; | you heard | my voice.

ii) When the Lord threw Jonah into the heart of the sea he was overcome (Jonah 2:3).

a) ³ When you threw me | into the depths, | into the heart of the seas,

a) | the current | overcame me.

a) | All your breakers | and your billows | swept | over me.

iii) Jonah felt removed from the Lord's presence, yet resolved to look toward his temple (Jonah 2:4).

a) ⁴ And I said, | "I have been banished | from your sight,

b) yet I will look | once more | toward your holy temple."

iv) Jonah remembers drowning, yet the Lord raised him (Jonah 2:5-6).

a) ⁵ The water engulfed me | up to the neck;

a) the watery depths | overcame me;

a) seaweed | was wrapped | around my head.

a) ⁶ I sank | to the foundations of the mountains,

a) the earth's | gates | shut behind me | forever!

b) Then you | raised my life | from the Pit, | Lord my God!

v) As Jonah died he remembered the Lord, and his prayer reached the Lord's holy temple (Jonah 2:7).

a) ⁷ As my life | was fading away,

b) I remembered | the Lord,

b) and my prayer | came to you,

b) | to your holy temple.

vi) Unlike idolaters, Jonah promises to fulfil his vow, declaring salvation is the Lord's (Jonah 2:8-9).

a) ⁸ Those who cherish | worthless idols | abandon | their faithful love,

b) ⁹ but as for me, | I will sacrifice to you | with a voice of thanksgiving.

b) | I will fulfil | what I have vowed.

c) Salvation | belongs to the Lord.

3) The Lord commands the fish to vomit Jonah (Jonah 2:10)

¹⁰ Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: Jonah 1:17-2:10 **Preaching Audience:** Benoni Baptist Church, a diverse congregation, with non Christians in attendance.

1. How has the author organised this passage? a) Sections, b) Strategies, c) Emphasis.

- a) 1) The Lord appoints a fish to swallow Jonah (Jonah 1:17-2:1)
- 2) Jonah's prayer from the fish (Jonah 2:2-9)
 - i) Jonah remembers he cried out from the depth of distress to the Lord who heard him (Jonah 2:2).
 - ii) When the Lord threw Jonah into the heart of the sea he was overcome (Jonah 2:3).
 - iii) Jonah felt removed from the Lord's presence, yet resolved to look toward his temple (Jonah 2:4).
 - iv) Jonah remembers drowning, yet the Lord raised him (Jonah 2:5-6).
 - v) As Jonah died he remembered the Lord, and his prayer reached the Lord's holy temple (Jonah 2:7).
 - vi) Unlike idolaters, Jonah promises to fulfil his vow, declaring salvation is the Lord's (Jonah 2:8-9).
- 3) The Lord commands the fish to vomit Jonah (Jonah 2:10)
- b) I identified the text type as poetry (Jonah 2:2-9), with narrative portions bookending it (Jonah 1:17-2:1, Jonah 2:10). In Jonah 1:17-2:1, the Lord sovereignly appoints a fish to swallow Jonah. In Jonah 2:10, the Lord sovereignly commands the fish to vomit Jonah. In Jonah 2:2-9, Jonah prays to the Lord, climaxing in his declaration that salvation belongs to the Lord. I paid attention to parallelism of images, and the rhythm of the Hebrew words.
- c) The Lord's actions at both ends of the passage, and the declaration at the climax of the prayer reveal the emphasis as, Salvation belongs to the Lord.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? a) Literary, b) Historical, c) Cultural, d) Biblical.

- a) In Jonah 1, the Lord told Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah fled from the Lord's presence. In the midst of the storm, Jonah told the sailors to throw him into the sea, which they did. The sea went still, and the sailors feared the Lord, offering a sacrifice and making vows to the Lord. In Jonah 3, Jonah will walk through Nineveh, declaring the judgement against the city. In response the whole city will repent. This matters because the Lord who rescues a disobedient prophet from the deep will rescue a violent city from judgement, so Jonah's confession will be tested.
- b) The book does not name its author or date, and so the first audience is uncertain, therefore no historical context informs the meaning.
- c) The sea represents a place of chaos and death (Jonah 2:3, 5). Sheol, the Pit and the roots of the mountains are pictures of the grave (Jonah 2:2, 6). The temple was where the Lord's presence rested (Jonah 2:4, 7). To be banished from his sight was to be cut off from life (Jonah 2:4). To look toward the temple was to look toward the Lord (Jonah 2:4, 7). An Israelite who was rescued paid his vow and brought a sacrifice (Jonah 2:9). Salvation is a rescue from death, not yet a statement about forgiveness of sins (Jonah 2:10). This matters because Jonah's salvation is rescue from death itself, so the first audience would hear a man brought up from the grave by the Lord, not a man feeling relieved.
- d) Jonah 2:2 is very close to Psalm 120:1. In Psalm 120 the psalmist is in distress among liars and people who hate peace. He cries to the Lord, and the Lord answers. Jonah 2:9 ends with words found in Psalm 3:8. In Psalm 3 David fled Absalom, and many enemies rise against him. Yet he cries aloud, and the Lord answers him from his holy mountain, ending with the confession, Salvation belongs to the Lord. This matters because Jonah prays in the words of the hemmed-in, and confesses the tested faith of God's people. However, his trouble came from his own making.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

Salvation belongs to the Lord, so cry out to him, even if you caused the mess.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ? a) Connection, b) Function, c) Significance.

- a) Jonah 1:17-2:10 connects to the gospel by typology. In Matthew 12:39-41 Jesus says that as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. Both go down into the deep and the grave. Both are brought up by the Lord. But Jonah goes down for his own disobedience, whereas Christ goes down for ours. Jonah is a reluctant prophet who promises a thank offering, while Jesus is the obedient Son who offers himself in our place.
- b) The connection answers the question the prayer leaves open. How can a holy God save someone who caused the mess? Jonah tells us that he does. The gospel tells us how. Christ went down in the place of the guilty. This amplifies the author's point. Salvation belongs to the Lord, and at the cross and the empty tomb he has done it.
- c) For the drifting Christian, Christ went down for that very sin, so cry out with confidence. Your thanksgiving follows your rescue. For the non-Christian, you cannot climb out of the grave yourself. Repent and believe in Christ, who raises the dead.

5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

Thank the Lord who saves rebels like you.

6. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Title, b) Outline.

- a) Who can save you?
- b) 1) In over your head (Jonah 1:17-2:6) – Where do you turn when you cannot climb out the grave?
- 2) Cry out (Jonah 2:6) – Will you cry out to him?
- 3) Salvation belongs to the Lord (Jonah 2:7-10) – What do you owe the Lord who saved you?
- 4) Give thanks (Jonah 2:9) – Have you thanked him for bringing you back?

7. What applications will you make? a) Christians, b) non-Christians.

- a) Christians, give thanks to the Lord who brought you back. Point 4.
- b) Non-Christians, cry out to the Lord who raises the dead. Point 2.

On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:

8. How has the author organised this passage?

- a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
- b) Tools: Identify the text type (it might be the separation of the passage into stanzas), and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
- c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.

9. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?

- a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
- b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
- c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
- d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.

10. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.

11. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

What part of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) is in view? Every part of the Bible, every passage of Scripture, in some way relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What parts of the passage connect to the gospel? The connection must be legitimate and textually driven.

12. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

13. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

14. What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.

The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).

On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:

- 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- 4) must be found in the text.
- 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- 6) should flow from 5).
- 7) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5), and show relationship to 6).