

# Who will roll away the stone

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[ 0 : 00 ] We read there in the Gospel of Mark that last part of the Gospel of Mark that we know. And the text that we might take from it is possibly in three parts.

Firstly, verse 3, where the ladies said, Who shall roll us away the stone? And then a couple of ancillary bits at verse 6 and 7, where the angel said, the angel spoke to the ladies, He is risen, he is not here.

Behold the place where they laid him. And subsequently he goes before you into Galilee. And there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

Here we have the account which tells us of these three blessed ladies, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the best of intentions and goodwill in their hearts, and yet with a great burden and a great dilemma on their minds.

And this dilemma really mirrors dilemmas which so often confront all of God's people, all of God's faithful people, both individually or collectively.

[ 1 : 34 ] For example, a situation that fits this congregation well. We have no minister of our own currently.

Dilemma. How can we survive as a congregation? Individually, we come across these kind of dilemmas as well.

We can see God's will for us. God is asking us to do something. I've never done this. How can I accomplish this? It's something I haven't done before.

How can we carry it out? Who shall roll us away the stone, in other words? None of us is getting any younger, and even in our human mind, as the years pass and pass ever more quickly.

We can see the inevitable in God's providence coming closer and closer as the days and the months and the years roll on. How are we to withstand it?

[ 2 : 42 ] Who shall roll us away the stone? The same dilemma, and as many of these dilemmas as there are people and hearts and souls.

Who shall roll us away the stone? And as people, when we think of ourselves, and we can look into the mirror of our own minds, we always see the mountain, and we so easily forget him who has promised to remove the mountain from our path.

And we still ask, who shall roll us away the stone? But, the fact is, and we read that in Isaiah, every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.

Because, in the outworking of God's providence for us, in any situation, whether it be in his calling of us, or be it in any of those inevitable aspects of life, which our humanity pushes as far away from us as we can.

We come face to face with him who has ordained it. Because in all of these situations, he himself is there with us.

[ 4 : 12 ] In all of these situations, he who has ordained it, is there with us. And the valleys of our lives, in which we meet him in these situations, become with his grace, forever afterwards, high points, which forevermore mark for us, not valleys, or dark places, but uplifting milestones, to which we can point others, and ourselves, reflect and remember for ourselves, as proof that, at this low point, in the depths of this low valley, we met with God.

Because, there, in these despairing depths, he was there, waiting for us, to pick us up, and to carry us onward, upward, and onward.

The, the, insurmountable mountains, which so often, seem to confront us, in the path of life. And, every one of them, as they come, one after the other, they, they, they, they, they roll on, as we seem to, to move towards them, perhaps.

Every one of them, seems to be, that last wall, which we just, can't climb anymore. We don't go, willingly, towards them.

The fact is, that they relentlessly, roll towards us, as if they would, roll over us. But, let's think for ourselves, put ourselves, into the, into these situations, that we might remember, in the context, of our own lives.

[ 6 : 04 ] As they, come closer, have we noticed, eh, instead of them, seeming, higher and higher, and I think of this, sometimes, in the context of, eh, a children's, eh, computer game, where, a child might find himself, flying, flying towards a mountain.

But, the closer, and closer, that mountain gets, have we noticed how, instead of, seeming, higher and higher, as we reach it, it, almost, eh, changes, until, as if we were being, as if we were being, lifted over it, so that, it passes underneath us.

And all of a sudden, we find ourselves, on the other side. We find ourselves, on the other side.

Perhaps with, somewhat surprised, that we've survived.

But also, with a renewed realization, that, through to his promise, God was on that mountain, and we have been, literally, been uplifted, by his grace.

Every mountain, every valley, shall be exalted, and every mountain, and hill, shall be made low.

Now, let us ask the question, who shall roll away, the stone?

[ 7 : 37 ] these, three ladies, their, everyday, normal humanity, if you remember, back three or four days, had been intensified, by the events, of the crucifixion, of the last three days.

they, they could only see, the stone, in their mind's eye. They could only see, in their mind's eye, the obstacle, which lay, between them, and the body, of their Lord.

However, we, we, we don't read, that having seen, that obstacle, and having, that obstacle, having imposed itself, in their mind, so heavily.

We don't read, that they stopped. They carried on. They continued. And, perhaps, if we had the privilege, of asking them, tonight, why?

What, what, encourage you to, to, to, carry on? Perhaps, the answer, might have been, the answer, might have been, that looking back, and now, they weren't very sure.

[ 8 : 56 ] But, that they somehow, felt carried. And, let's, put that into, our own minds, and, we use that, as a mirror, for, our own lives.

That they must have somehow, felt carried, in spite of, that wandering, pessimistic doubts. And, then, they reached, the, the, the grave, they reached the tomb.

That, place, which, in, in, in, in, one breath, really, seemed so much beyond, their reach, beyond their ability, and beyond their feeble power.

That, place, which represented such, heavy, and powerful, and awesome finality, as to make them powerless, and, and, and, made them, question their purpose.

Who shall roll away the stone? But, having persevered, and having reached it, there, they found the stone. They found the stone.

[ 10 : 12 ] But, again, there was something different about it. The stone was no longer, an obstacle. The, the, the stone, that great boulder, which separated them, from, the, from the Lord, it had been rolled away.

As, and it was now, a harmless, and an impotent, and a useless, lump, of stone. And, so it is, with all the obstacles, all the mountains, that we so often see, in our path, and, many of them, that we conjure up, for ourselves.

Things which we can see, as big enough, to, to, stop us, potent enough, to stop us, in our spiritual tracks. Yes, we can, still see them.

We can, still see them. And, we can, still understand, why they seem, so threatening. But, the big difference is, that now we see them, in a new light.

We see them, in a new light. They are impotent, and they, are harmless, and they are, in the past. and far, from being, obstacles, and barriers, they are, reminders, to us, and they are, witnesses, to us, of, the power, which overcame them, and the power, which carried, us, with it, to a place, beyond their reach.

[ 11 : 52 ] The power, which carried us, past them, and beyond them, to a place, beyond their reach. And, when they looked, they, saw the stone, this is at, verse 4, in, in, in Mark, verse 4, when they looked, they saw the stone, it was rolled away, for it was very great.

And, entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man, sitting on the right side, clothed in a long, white garment. And, he said unto them, don't be afraid, you are looking for, Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.

He is risen, he is not here. Behold, the place, where they laid him. The, supreme act, had been accomplished.

And, these three ladies, who had come, to carry out, the final service, humanly possible, for their Lord, and they had come, with prayerful, prayerful hearts.

They not only, very quickly, forgot the obstacle, that had previously, filled, their mind's eye. But, they very quickly, realized, that God, in his glory, had been ahead of them.

[ 13 : 19 ] He'd been there, he'd been there, before them. And, he had answered, their prayer, far beyond, what they could ever, think, or ask.

Now, let's pause there, and just, just for a moment. in our prayer, a question, that I, I have asked, often and often, of myself, and, of other people, in, several, or maybe, many congregations.

In our prayers, when we visualize, an answer, that we, hope for, or perhaps expect, do we, form that answer, do we see that answer, do we visualize that answer, only, within, the context, of our own understanding, or our own, experiences, or, our own, personal knowledge.

because, God is greater than that. God is much, much greater, than, anything, and we sometimes, articulate, in, a public prayer, when we're praying, for something, or for somebody, that, we ask that God, would, do for them, or for him, or for her, beyond, what we can think, or ask, or understand.

But, do we really, take these words, to heart? And, I was surprised, when God goes, beyond that.

[ 15 : 01 ] Because, we shouldn't be. And, that's, what these ladies were, surprised, at what had happened. Because, God, they had been, they had come, with prayerful hearts.

I'm sure, they had prayed, that way, from whatever they were, to the, to the grave. That, that, that they would find it, easy to shift the stone, or something.

And, there they were. The stone had been rolled away, and beyond that, he who was dead, he is risen. He is not here.

And, there's the proof, from God himself, through his angel. Behold, the place, where they laid him. The stone had been rolled away.

Now, I used to ask myself, a question, years and years ago, about this, this stone. After the resurrection, Christ appeared, through closed doors, another humanly, surprising, if not impossible, circumstances.

[ 16 : 15 ] So, the question, that I ask myself often, did the stone, really have to be rolled away, from the grave? Did the stone, have to be rolled away, to let him get out?

And the answer is, no. The stone did not, have to be rolled away. The stone, did not have to be rolled away, for the risen Christ, who is gifted tomb.

The stone was rolled away, so that all the world, could, look in, and see, the vacant emptiness, and prove for themselves, the vacant emptiness, of that, tomb.

So, this open, and this empty tomb, was, and is, a most eloquent witness, declaring, to all the world, and to the end of time, he is risen, he is not here, behold, this empty place, this is where they laid him.

He had been victorious, over death, and over the grave, and to the end of time, that empty grave, is a witness, to all the world, of its own defeat.

[ 17 : 37 ] a witness, of its own defeat, and all of God's people, can confront, that same grave, with confident, defiance, echoing, the words of the apostle, O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where now, is thy victory?

He is risen, he is not here, behold, the place, where they laid him. But go your way, said the angel, and tell his disciples, and Peter, and Peter, tell his disciples, and Peter, but Peter, was one of the disciples, but Peter, is specifically, mentioned, because, Peter, was the disciple, who was most, like, us.

Peter, was the one, who denied him, three times, Peter, was the precipitate one, who opened his mouth, and, not being sure, what was going to come out.

Don't forget Peter, tell the disciples, don't forget Peter, that he goes before you, into Galilee, and there, shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

You will see him there, he will meet with you there, just as he has promised. He goes before you, into Galilee, there shall ye see him. And, here we have the continuum, of the resurrection.

[ 19 : 19 ] Already, the fulfillment, of the, observation, he was to make, so pointedly, to his disciples, later, when he said, lo, I am with you always.

Now, let's pause there again, because, we so often, read that, as if it was a promise. Lo, I am with you always.

We read it, as if it was a promise. It is not. It's not a promise. He didn't say, I will be with you always. He said, lo, and, even that very word, lo, just like behold.

It really means, look, with open eyes, and, take in, what you are actually seeing. Look with expectation, and, look and observe, intently, and, and, and, and, take note of what you are seeing. Lo, look, and see, I am with you always. It's not a promise. It's a statement of fact. A statement of current fact.

[ 20 : 36 ] It doesn't speak about tomorrow, or next week. It speaks about the now. Wherever we are standing, lo, I am, with you always. And we see that, I am.

It's almost a title. Right through our scripture. When, em, Moses was confronted by God, when God told him to go and take the people out of Egypt.

Em, confront Pharaoh. And Moses was overawed. Oh dear, who will I say sent me? God said, the ever present God.

tell him, tell him, that the, I am, sent you. I am, with you always. So, there's several ways of looking at that, but, the, I am, em, is the, in any way, in which you care to look at it.

Any context. It is not a promise. Jesus and the Holy Spirit is with us always, if we only care to look and take note and see.

[ 21 : 49 ] he goes before you into Galilee he goes before you into where you come from he goes before you into where you live he goes before you into the place where you work he goes before you into the situations that you know best he goes before you even into the places into which you would not wish to go but which cannot be abided remember God remember God meeting us in the hollow in the valley remember God meeting us in the mountain he will meet with us even in these places into which we would not wish to go but which cannot be avoided he goes before you into the towering mountain and the threatening mountain over which we must travel and he is there waiting to carry you through when your own strength would fail you he goes before you into the depths of every dark and dreary valley and even through that final valley through which we must all pass and he fills its darkness with his light yea though I walk in death's dark veil the psalmist said yet will I fear none ill for thou art with me that's why and thy rod and staff me comfort still and when the dust of this turmoil in which you are now when that settles these tummulds they blind us but when that settles there and then shall you see him and having seen him there you will know that he has always been there that he has always been with us and not only that but we will know that he was there before us waiting for us within that situation whatever it was he goes before you into Galilee as he said unto you he is risen he is not here he goes before you he has conquered death itself for us and for on our behalf and just as death has no dominion over him his resurrection is his seal of authority by which his own can truly believe his words when he said because I live because I live you will live also who shall roll away the stone let these words in conclusion stay in our minds a sermon has a beginning it doesn't have an end we take it as I'm just a few notes that we are given to take with us in our mind and in our heart and these three may be keys for us to take with us into our own into our own

Galilee to think about and to pray about and to reflect on who shall roll us away the stone whatever that stone is and the encouragement he is risen he is not here behold the place where they laid him and the third one he goes before you into Galilee into your Galilee whatever that is there shall we see him as he said unto you Amen and may God and his blessing to these few thoughts we see he may have Peter he may have to celebrate he may have oh