

Recently I began a mentoring relationship with a young Rector. I discovered he was in the same year at Moore College as my daughter. His wife studied youth ministry with another of my daughters. This young man previously served where my grandfather once worked on the railway and later lived in retirement. Connections. Connections fascinate me. Especially Christian connections. Revealing the way God weaves the lives of believers together. As he works for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Another set of connections moves me to praise. Grows my understanding of the centrality of the Lord Jesus Christ. The connection between Jesus and people in the Old Testament. Connections that illuminate the identity and mission of Jesus Christ. Highlighting the movement in the Old and New Testament from promise to fulfilment. An understanding of these connections enhanced by Paul's teaching. In **2 Corinthians 1:20** *'For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.'* In Jesus all the promises of God are fulfilled. The events and people of the Old Testament prepare us for the arrival and works of Jesus Christ. The greatest person this world will ever see. The greatest events in the history of the world: the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus Christ and the salvation God offers through him the supreme subject of the whole Bible. This why Paul declares in **Romans 15:4**, *'For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.'* Today we step back from the unfolding story of Jonah. To examine Jesus connection with Jonah. We leave Jonah drying out on land. After a vomit propelled expulsion from the belly of a big fish. Whoever says the Bible is boring and unattractive to young males has never read Jonah. Or seen the movie version in full colour. *'And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.'* **2:10**. Any connection between Jesus and Jonah seems unlikely at first. Polar opposites. Jonah the runaway prophet with a messy prayer life. Avoiding God's commission at all costs. Jesus perfectly faithful to the will of God. Obedient at every point. Fulfilling God's commission at the very cost of his life. Easier to imagine a Jesus connection with Abraham, Moses, David despite their flaws. But Jonah. Doubts overturned by Jesus himself. He speaks of and interprets his connection with Jonah. In Matthew's Gospel we read about religious leaders confronting Jesus. Demanding a sign from heaven. To back up Jesus claims about himself. In response to the demands, Jesus answers, *A wicked*

*and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Matthew 12:39* The Jesus connection: something in Jonah's life will speak to Jesus' generation. About the identity of Jesus. The only sign Jesus will give. *'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.'* **v40** The sign that will speak. Jonah and Jesus shared death and resurrection experience over a three-day period. Jonah figuratively. He didn't die in the sea or inside the big fish. Figuratively raised from the dead on the third day. Jesus dies by crucifixion, buried in a tomb. Raised to life by God on the third day. Jonah's figurative resurrection leads to his preaching tour of pagan Nineveh. The city repents. In the presence of one greater than Jonah. The promised Messiah who will give his life for the world Jewish hearts remain hardened. Judgement day will reveal the eternal consequences. *'The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here'* **v41**. Jesus making a stark point. One sign and one only given from heaven to authenticate the identity and mission of Jesus. His death and resurrection. The sign that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Pointing to the one and only means by which sinful humanity is reconciled to God. The cross of Christ. To that same cohort of religious leaders demanding a sign Peter says, *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."* **Acts 4:12** Brothers and sisters, Jesus connection with Jonah speaks to us in at least three ways. **Firstly**, Jesus' sign for a COVID 19 world. This generation no different from any other. In Jesus words: wicked and adulterous. Rejection of the rule of God. Tone deaf and blind to the implications of COVID 19 for the sand castles we build. Under the illusion they disaster proof refuges. As the sand castles crumble and our nakedness exposed. The one sign of lasting refuge, living hope, true freedom. The death and resurrection of Jesus. Troubled times increase the desperate search for signs. Amongst Christians and non-Christians alike. God's word for us personally and for us to share with others. Look no further. All you need now and forever found in the sign of Jonah. The sign of Jesus. Are you living in a sand castle? Are you looking for signs apart from the Cross? **Secondly**, the sign that demands a response. Jesus' death and resurrection changes everything. The pivotal point and turning point of human history. As Jonah says, while still in the belly of the big fish, *'Salvation comes from the Lord.'* The means of that salvation lies

in the events highlighted by the connection between Jonah and Jesus. There is nowhere to hide in terms of response. Ignoring it doesn't change the course of history. Or make the sign of Jesus disappear. Rejection carries the consequence of facing the judge of all the earth with nothing more than flimsy excuse. Acceptance opens the door to eternity. Tasted in this life. Lived forever in the next.

Sisters and brothers, what is your response to the death and resurrection of Jesus? **Thirdly**, the importance of signposts. Like Jonah. We are signposts. Pointing to Jesus. Don't ignore this important truth brothers and sisters. By very definition a Christian is a signpost. Today is a fresh opportunity to consider two things to help us to be effective signposts. Living as a signpost and the type of signpost we are. Christians live out their role as signposts in varying ways. Converted alcoholic Arthur Stace writing the word Eternity on Sydney streets. Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione, NSW Premier Mike Baird testifying to their faith in the Lord Jesus during their times of leadership. Countless examples throughout history and all around us. As ambassadors of Christ preparing the world for eternity. How are you living out your role as a signpost? At this point in time, what sort of signpost are you? A fragile signpost? Easily blown over under the pressure of opposition and ridicule. A misleading signpost? Pointing people in the wrong direction. Having lost your own way. Uncertain about the foundations of your faith. Lacking confidence in the promises of God. A fading signpost? Dulled by the loss of vibrant love for the Lord Jesus. Covered by the dirt and grime of moral compromise, consistent disobedience. A shiny, as new signpost? Daily refreshed and maintained by healthy spiritual disciplines of reading your bible, praying, meeting together, sharing your faith. Connections between people may fascinate me. No big deal really. However, the connection between Jonah and Jesus revealed in the Scriptures is a big deal. Revealed to us to teach us, energise us, focus us. To heed the sign of the cross. To renew our ministry of being signposts that point people to Jesus and prepare them for eternity. May this revelation grip us and transform our signpost lives.