

Genesis 9:8–17

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Let's just pause and pray as we enter into the Bible together. Father, we thank you for your word, that it is your divine disclosure to us, humanity, that if it were not for your word, we would be those who grow up in the dark, a walk as if though blind and trip on uneven gravel.

That it is because of your word we know who you are and how you want to be known. And so, Father, as we come to your word, would you disclose yourself to us and would you loosen my stammering tongue to tell of thy love immense, immeasurable.

Father, we ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Abandoned. Upon the mention of that word, there may be various ideas or images that come up in your mind.

Maybe you recall Pastor Helms' Abandoned Baby Rabbit from last week's sermon. You may think of various structures in our neighborhood that have been boarded up, emptied, and left in disrepair without the resources to rebuild, restore, or repair.

This structure is simply left to decay and face possible demolition. Perhaps it was victim to a fire. The damage was so extensive that it was irreparable.

[1 : 38] It's an abandoned building. Abandoned. You might think of an art project that you started and the first few strokes were incorrect and the mistakes were insurmountable.

So you scrapped everything and started anew. It was an abandoned project. Abandoned. Maybe you recall the orphanage that you visited on your missions trip where neglected children were left without mother or father.

They were amongst a sea of children with just a few caretakers. Certainly not enough for them all. And due to various circumstances, infants, young children, the most vulnerable, are often set aside. They are abandoned children. Abandoned. It's one of the often heard objections to Christianity. God has left this world as it unwinds. The pain. Don't you see it all? The hurt. Don't you feel it all? The suffering.

[2 : 50] Can't you attest to it? The sorrow. God certainly is not here. He's abandoned us. Perhaps this is your experience in life.

Neglected by absent parents, you're left to fend for yourself. You've had to fight through life with no one in your corner to bandage your wounds as each round of life proceeds.

Abandoned. And as we come to the second half of Genesis chapter 9, and in reflecting on all that has unfolded, one may ask this question, why hasn't God abandoned this divine project?

Those whom he created proved disobedient and destructive. Human life prior to the flood was extended to a millennium.

And one can't help but ask the question, shouldn't after nearly a thousand years humanity have figured out how to be good, how to be just, how to be fair?

[4 : 00] How might they become repentant? But instead, the Bible tells us, as people lived longer, their wickedness grew.

The final verdict was pronounced. The Lord saw the wickedness of man, that it was great in the earth, and every intention, every intention of their heart was only evil continually.

This is the decline of the human heart. And you may think, well, that was way back then. Way, way back then. And somehow, we're less susceptible to evil and wickedness.

When in reality, as you grow older, as you age, you will find that you can conceive of deeper, darker, even more destructive and depraved ideas of evil.

Our humanistic ideas of advancement and morality have only proven to reveal our wickedness and our wretchedness. we bury school children every week.

[5 : 14] We try individuals for the most heinous of crimes, only if they are somehow caught. We battle inequity and injustice every single day.

Our track record continues. We are not as good as we think we are. And the Bible tells us that as a result, at least in this account, God responds.

And He doesn't respond out of anger, which is striking. The result is actually the remorse of God, His grieving heart. The flood was certainly a form of judgment, but it emerges out of divine grief. This is what was so surprising about this text to me. It doesn't tell us in Genesis that the flood was the source of righteous indignation towards sin or justified anger, but it emerges out of God's grief. Sin, wickedness, and evil grieve the heart of God. It's in grief that He acted. The flood is an outworking of His grief, His intolerance of evil.

[6 : 28] And if I could paint it artistically, it's as if God wept over what He made and His tears flooded the world. He uncreated what He had created.

Sin unwound God's creative intention. And the world as we experience it is not what God had intended from the beginning. And I recapitulate all that really to get to this, this morning. That abandonment is certainly justifiable and even reasonable. But our text this morning will shout to us something else. It will shout this, God has not abandoned what He has created.

In God's scheme of things, there are no boarded up buildings. In God's, as if He run out of resources to repair them. It's not as if God's canvas of creation was so distorted or He started with these incorrect strokes that He's unable to repaint it.

The fatherless are not left and cast off. You, you, feeling neglected, marginalized, and ignored, are not forgotten because our text this morning reminds us that God will not abandon what He has created.

[7 : 50] In other words, God is not done. God is not done with His project. And as everything unwound, God starts over in Genesis chapter 9.

We see the repeated language of creation. We're made of the ongoing presence of evil. And the world was corrupted, but God was committed.

And perhaps the most striking aspect of this text is that God tethers Himself to what He has created. God binds Himself to creation in such a way that humanity's well-being, creation's continual preservation, and the sustenance of the natural world would be conjoined to God Himself. Instead of what I would naturally think of God as distancing Himself or disowning what was evil, He has compassion and pity, so much so that He would care for their fates.

And He's unlike us in this way. We do our best to disassociate with what appears to be failure with brokenness and blame. But God actually moves toward it.

[9 : 07] When we expect distance, God draws near. Now the term that I'm sure you caught it as Amy read it, the term that the text uses is covenant.

Covenant. Occurring no less than seven times in our passage, it surfaces to the top with great importance and value. The concept is so vital to our text, but also to the entirety of the biblical, the whole biblical story.

Some have argued that covenant is the most essential idea in the Bible for it holds it all together. Therefore, this morning we should spend some time figuring out what is a covenant or what does it mean.

Now it has certain etymological origins. One thought is this, it refers to binding or fettering as if like a shackling or chaining to.

Other roots have suggested that it has its meaning in eating implying a togetherness. As I watch my children assemble their crafts and cards to present to mom last night, I watch one of them just douse a piece of paper with glue with the hope of adhering two things together.

[10 : 34] It kind of resembles that. It's a conjoining, a sticking together of two things that normally wouldn't be together.

It's so important that it's used 285 times in the Old Testament, often times as an oath of allegiance between two parties. It's a commitment made with promises and obligations.

The theme of covenant is so substantial in our Bibles that nearly every significant Old Testament figure relates to God via covenant.

Noah, Abraham, Moses, Aaron and the priesthood, David the king. Needless to say, it's a study worth undertaking if we are able to get a hand, if we desire to handle our Bibles well.

Those who participate in the class on Saturday morning have come to understand that covenant is arguably the primary way God relates to humanity. In other words, if you want to know how heaven relates to earth, it's primarily through covenant.

[11 : 52] And as we get to this, as we are in this passage, you have this seven time repetition that God has covenanted with himself all that he has created. God has bound himself to creation relationally.

The continuation and preservation of the created world would be God's responsibility. God doubles down, doubles down on his ability to accomplish what he originally intended.

You see, the text goes to great lengths to show us the depths and the extent of this commitment.

The conditions of the covenant promise are reiterated repeatedly.

But what is at the heart of the covenant is a divine promise. And I'll simply summarize it in one word. Preservation. Preservation.

The covenant is one of preservation. It is for the preservation of life on all the earth. The covenant is fashioned in such a way that when the clouds appear and the rain begins to fall, God would restrain nature from completely destroying the earth by water again.

[13 : 03] In other words, God would preserve what he had made. He would sustain and uphold life, bringing all things to their final purpose. This is the Christian doctrine of providence.

God provides for all that he has made through his preservation by sustaining and purposing it for his intended goal. God reminds us of this very reality.

As the disciples, you may recall, are anxious over what they'll eat or what they'll possibly wear.

Jesus says, look at the birds of the air.

They neither sow or reap. They don't plant or harvest, nor they gather into barns, yet God, your heavenly Father, feeds them. are you not of more value than they?

Illustrating that God, God's providential care. There are volumes written on this idea of providence and I don't want to belabor it, but it is foundational to our faith.

[14 : 05] God will preserve all things and he's done so by creating a covenant that would express his care over creation. God, instead of moving away, actually takes ownership of this mess, the mess that has unfolded in these early chapters of Genesis.

And I want to be careful to say that God did not create the mess, rather he expresses his commitment to clean it up. God's love is on radical display here and rather than abandon or depose, God demonstrates mercy and pity, unwilling to leave the world in its condition.

There is nothing that exists apart from God's providence. What this simply means, whether you believe it or not, is that there is nothing that is autonomous from God's existence.

The Bible knows of no such thing. There is no independent aspect of creation that is off doing their own thing as if they've gone rogue, hidden from God's sight.

No. In Him, the Bible says all things hold together. In Him, the Bible tells us we live and move and have our being.

[15 : 30] Now, that's a lot to take in. Covenant, Providence. But with this text, I want to highlight four things quickly about this covenant, about the uniqueness of this covenant.

The first is this. The covenant is very personal. Personal. This is a pledge that God makes and takes upon Himself.

It is very clear that God establishes this covenant. That creation is simply a recipient and beneficiary. In verse 9, Behold, I establish my covenant.

Again, in verse 11, I establish my covenant with you. Verse 12, This is the sign of the covenant that I make. The text enunciates this by the use of the first person.

I, me, my. This is about me, God is saying. In other words, God is establishing the way how He Himself would like to be known to all that He has created.

[16 : 39] This covenant is not a contract. It's not a transaction. It's not an exchange. It is not you do this and I will do this.

It is you do whatever you want and I will still do this. There is no mutuality between two parties. God knowing, this is the crazy thing, God knowing full well according to chapter 8 verse 21 that even though man's heart is wicked and evil from his youth, He will uphold this covenant.

Regardless of how deep into evil humanity declines, God will uphold this covenant. There are no stipulations on the beneficiaries, nothing about the animals, the trees, about humanity.

God himself would take up every obligation. This is not a collective effort. It would be solely up to God to keep this covenant.

God would hold himself accountable. This covenant is personal. Secondly, notice this. This covenant is perpetual.

[17:58] Perpetual. It doesn't have a term limit. It doesn't have an expiration date. It doesn't have a duration. It would not only be for Noah's generation and his offspring afterwards, but every subsequent generation, even to us this morning.

Verse 16 states what type of commitment this will be. this would be an everlasting covenant. It goes from one generation to the next, unceasing, unending, timeless.

It carries forth perpetually. It reinforces that this covenant is permanent. Nothing would deserve it. Nothing would alter it. Nothing would change it. It is fixed and fastened.

in contrast to other gods of the day. You might have to appease a god to send rain. You might have to appease a god to bring forth crops.

But the god of the bible promises right there in chapter 8 verse 22 while the earth remains seed time and harvest cold and heat summer and winter day and night it will go on and on and on.

[19:12] He would keep the sun. He would hold the moon and the stars suspended. He would provide for the earth and all that is in her. He would do so perpetually.

This would be God's provision. It's similar to that. I can't help but think of that song. The songwriter got so correct.

This is as much as we think this is our world. It is The songwriter got it correct. This is my father's world. This is my father's world. And to my listening ears all nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres.

This is my father's world. I rest in thought of rocks and trees and skies and seas his hand the wonders wrought.

This is my father's world. Oh never let me forget that though the wrong seems often so strong God is the ruler yet.

[20:13] This is my father's world and this is the world he will preserve perpetually. thirdly so we see the covenant is personal it is perpetual and thirdly this covenant is universal universal the covenant would be applied to all that had life it would not only subsume Noah but his offspring the robin and the blue jay the giraffe and the zebra the elephant and the cat every living creature everything that had life all flesh repeatedly in the text would fall under this covenant nothing would be excluded God would never remove his concern from that which he created if it had life it had God's attention and commitment personal perpetual universal and fourthly and finally this covenant this covenant had a visible sign this covenant had a visible sign it's not only that

God had said this the text sandwiches in between verse 8 then God said and closes in verse 17 God said God had not only said it said it said it said it but now according to the center of the passage God will sign off on it and the divine signature doesn't happen with a sharpie it happens with a rainbow God is saying allow me if you don't believe my word then look at what I will place in nature this is my sign it's a bow interestingly the bow has there's two understandings how we may understand this bow the first the Bible often uses it as a military weapon as in bow and arrow you'll see it in psalm 7 in psalm 18 habakkuk 3 even that allude to God wielding a bow during the flood the sign of the bow some have said is indicative here of

God resting it in the clouds laying it aside as if he is saying I will no longer wield it another understanding is the one that we commonly see in children's storybook bibles you know rarely I've never seen a bow and arrow during the Noah story but it's the rainbow the one that we often see understanding the bow is the magnificence and the splendor of its color it's attested to in Ezekiel chapter 1 and Revelation chapter 4 that when God shows up it is so marvelous it is there is such a display of glorious beauty that it is rainbow like it possibly possesses elements of both regardless in the text it would be visible to humanity but more than visible to humanity it would be memorable to God certainly when subsequent generations saw the bow emerge in the clouds their fears would subside it's a strange thought a rainy day like today we presume the rain will stop it must stop it is impossible for it to go on and on and on interestingly in Noah's day there was no such presumption the first time they saw rainfall it was endless it never ceased the singular time they experienced rainfall it led to the demise of their entire world certainly clouds would instill fear to the original audience but instead of thinking of unending rainfall they were now to think of God's unending pledge of preservation never again would he do it never again was to be their thought and though

the sign would have been seen by many people the sign was interestingly not for the people if you read the text carefully the sign is actually for

God himself now when I see the bow verse 14 when I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds I will remember it verse 16 when the bow is in the clouds and I see it now it's kind of humorous to think about oh there's a rainbow and in heaven there an angel scrambles up to God and says hey remember don't you remember that promise you made as if somehow God receives! [25 : 30] that's certainly not the case he would remember as not merely warm sentimentality rather as mentioned last week it is the resources of God set into motion to act on behalf of another God's act of remembering is not so much cognitive recollection!

that we often think about but when God remembers he always acts and it usually is to pardon to save and to deliver from dismal circumstances God remembered Noah and therefore the Bible tells us God made a wind blow over God remembered Rachel in her misery and agony of being barren and so he opened up her womb then you may remember the Exodus the opening chapters of Exodus the old Pharaoh had died a new Pharaoh has come up and has harshly enslaved Israel and they cried out to the Lord for help and as they cried and as God heard their groaning the Bible tells us and

God remembered and as he remembered he commenced the plan to bring his people out of slavery and as God's people go into the promised land and they face foes enemies Bible tells us that when they go out to war and they are being oppressed and they sound an alarm with their trumpets they do so that they may be remembered by God and the Bible reads numbers 10 verse 9 that you may be remembered before the Lord your God and you shall be saved from your enemies you see whenever God remembers it is his action of deliverance of pardon of saving it's interesting that one of the first

Gentile converts in the New Testament Acts chapter 10 Cornelius has these grand visions and he's supposed to send a messenger to Peter so he sends a messenger to Peter and Peter comes and says what do you want and Cornelius says hey I had this dream and what not what not and the Bible records this Peter says to Cornelius your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God and as a result he and his household are saved see all these images of being remembered before God contribute to the great significance of what happened to that crucified criminal next to Jesus his statement was Jesus remember me Jesus remember me what the thief is asking is not hey

Jesus can you just think about me as I die he's not asking that what the thief is asking is Jesus as I die remember or save me save me Jesus save me act on my behalf do not abandon me so when God remembers when God sees a rainbow when God hears the cries of his people and he remembers he is acting for their not only their preservation but for their deliverance well this covenant with Noah records for us really the expectations for the rest of the Bible it's a bold assertion but this is the template according to Genesis chapter 9 of what we can expect as we read the Bible as it unfolds how will

[30 : 05] God relate to humanity personally how will God relate to humanity perpetually how will God demonstrate universal concern how will God manifest himself visibly his concerns are personal perpetual and universal and we know that as this covenant with Noah foreshadows much in the Bible it will foreshadow a great covenant that God makes later it likewise is initiated and accomplished by God alone it likewise has everlasting and perpetual implications guaranteeing life it likewise has a universal scope in that it gives a universal invitation the visible sign is not some instrument of destruction like a bow the visible sign is actually a human instrument of death as in a cross the death and resurrection of

Jesus serves as a sign of the lasting everlasting covenant we celebrate it when we take communion but you know what is staggering about this new covenant covenant what's staggering about this new covenant is that God says that with this covenant for I will forgive their iniquity and here's that word remember and I will remember their sin no more on the one hand the Bible tells us when God remembers he acts to save and in the conclusion of it all when God's people stand before him he has remembered their sins no more that means he has done something so astronomical that in his action he has accomplished their pardon evil will persist in

Genesis chapter 9 by the end of the Bible evil has ceased in Noah God demonstrates his providential care for all of life in Jesus God offers his provision of eternal life through forgiveness!

God remembers in Genesis 9 to preserve the created world God remembers on a cross to provide salvation for the sinner this is why Christians make so much of the cross the cross is the visible sign to all the world that God has not abandoned us rather he has approached us to provide life to all who embrace his son well God has not abandoned no matter how much of a wreck your life is your very preservation attest to the fact that God has purposes for you do not be disheartened God has covenanted through his son to preserve you this day till the end well let us pray together father we thank you for this word we thank you that when we should have been cast out when we should have been deposed when we should have been abandoned you moved close and you bound yourself to us in ways that we do not even conceive how great how marvelous how merciful how loving how compassionate that you would reach out and seize wicked people like us oh father give us hearts of gratitude and as we sing we pray lord that you would continue to forge us into the image of christ your son we ask these things in jesus name amen!
Thank you.