

Genesis 9:1–7

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[0 : 0 0] is Genesis 9, 1 through 7. Please stand for the reading of God's word. And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And for your lifeblood, I will require a reckoning. From every beast, I will require it. And from man, from his fellow man, I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image. And you, be fruitful and multiply.

Increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. I think I must have been about 17 years old when I learned that my parents' approval of me held even if greater accountability from me would be required. Their approval held, my accountability elevated. The rule in our house was home by midnight. As my dad used to tell me, nothing good happens after midnight. So it was a little less than predictable on the early morning when I had let that hour slip by. I entered the home and found him in the living room in a chair, quite comfortable and relaxed, and telling me to meet him in the garage by 7:30 in the morning, just a few hours from that very time. And when I arrived, he gave me a sermon. He basically told me that he approved of me, but that my eight-hour workday in the yard was now beginning. Indeed, it would be followed by a couple of weekends where I wouldn't be heading out anywhere at all. It was a hot day and back-breaking work of weeding and hole digging and all by myself, for he went off to enjoy whatever it is he was doing on that Saturday. At the end of the day, though, he came back and told me again. He circled around and said, I love you. I approve of you. But greater accountability is now going to be required of you. Our relationship had been altered because of my disobedient action. Something similar is at work in our text today. God is preaching a sermon to Noah, who is now re-emerging from the ark.

So you're going to hear a sermon on God's sermon. This lesson that Noah was to learn came not when he was 17, but evidently when he was 601.

And the lesson was to hold not only for him, but all the way down for you and me as well. And so listen this morning to the Word of God as he makes a contract with fallen humanity in ways that express his ongoing love and approval, but yet require accountability.

[4 : 1 0] We just admitted eight members this morning, one of whom I now know is an aspiring paleontologist.

And if you're unfamiliar with that work, it is the careful taking back of soil to you exposing fossil record-like bones, enough of which that you could recognize what the shape and emphasis of an animal was.

Let me give you a lesson in paleontology just by looking at chapter 9, verses 1 to 7. There are three bone fragments. The first and the third are very similar.

Verse 1, God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And that mirrors itself down in verse 7.

And you be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it. And so this word of approval opens in verse 1.

[5 : 1 5] And this circling back around to give a word of approval closes down in verse 7. But in between are a fragment of skeletal-like bones that indicate while approval is given, accountability is required.

How is it that God's blessing remains on Noah and the human race, even when a reckoning will be required?

Did you catch the reckoning required in the text as it came to us this morning? Three times over in that middle moment of God's message.

Verse 5, And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning. From every beast I will require it. And from man, from his fellow man, I will require a reckoning.

How is it that God's blessing can remain when God's reckoning is required? How is it that God's approval can be given when a day of accounting is coming?

[6:31] How is it that he can circle back by verse 7, given the particulars of verse 1 and the detail of verses 2 to 6? Let me just walk us through that this morning.

The approval of verse 1. The approval of verse 1. As the flood story receded, where we were last week, and Noah had built that altar at the end of the ark to offer his praises, as that recedes and his sacrifice of praise goes up, at that moment our text would say God begins to preach.

And it's interesting. Our text would tell us that as Noah's praises go up, his voice comes down and he blessed him. God blessed Noah and his sons, and the blessing was related by way of echo to all that Adam had previously heard in the garden.

Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. How are we to understand that blessing? It's not simply starting over.

It's beginning again in light of our sinful condition. The word blessing, I mean, you can imagine it.

[8:03] I remember watching a TV show where somebody was asking his future father-in-law for their blessing, his blessing, when he would get married. And it was obvious that no blessing was coming. In fact, on a continuum of what we meant by blessing, all you could really get from the father initially was this, begrudging consent.

There's almost at times an unstated acceptance. There's, could be hopefully an actual, I support you, I'm behind you.

And then on the fullness of blessing, there's this idea of without hesitation, without reservation, I approve. That's what blessing means. It's a stamp of one's approval.

Where on the continuum is this? Well, it must be somewhere in the middle. It's not begrudgingly spoken. He circles back to it at the end.

But it's not what Adam knew. Because all of this middle moment of accountability now comes.

[9:11] It's not without qualification. So here we find Noah emerges from the ark, and his first morning on church, God preaches a sermon that says, Noah, fill the earth with divine image bearers.

Multiply. Even though the problem that precipitated the flood in chapter 6 hasn't been dealt with. Do you remember chapter 6, verse 1 and verse 5, where we learn that as men multiplied, so their sin multiplied with them?

That dilemma is still there, but you nevertheless are to go forward and multiply and fill the earth. Evidently, God's purposes for humanity, as given to Adam and Eve, have not been completely derailed by their fall.

And the echoes of Adam in our text are now attended by God's divine grace, and he is going to begin again. Not in Eden, and not with a return to Eden.

We are now east of Eden, and we are going somewhere else. And our sin will need to be reckoned with. This is a blessing in light of our sin.

[10:29] Verse 1, approval. Verses 2-6. Accountability. Accountability is needed because our sin has forever altered the world in which we live.

How has our sin altered the world in which we live? We could say many things about it, but this text will bring forth two primary ideas. Accountability is needed because our sin has altered the world.

One, in our relationship to the animal kingdom, and two, our relationship with one another. Both are now filled with violence and destructive and ruinous forces.

Let me just say now at the outset that as the relationship of humanity to the animals gets more text, in this sermon, our relationship to one another is going to get more time.

And the reason is because sin affects our relationship with one another in ways that far surpass in importance.

[11:42] In this text, the grounding of what would hold us accountable. Let's just take a look at it. Our relationship to the animal kingdom is altered. How?

Four ways. Well, a couple of ways with some implications. First of all now, all animals live in fear of us. I know if you're like me and you're still afraid of dogs, this doesn't quite reconcile itself in your own mind.

Perhaps it's due to when I was a little child trying to walk to school and a German shepherd would not let me pass. But believe me, the fear of animals still remains in me. But the text is clear.

The fear of animals, they are afraid of us. Verse 2, The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens and upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea into your hand.

They are delivered and it is as though they know they have been delivered unto us with ruinous implications for them. We've altered the world in our relationship to other parts of the created order through our sin.

[12:55] They are, in a sense, caught up with us in this. Not only do they live in fear of us, they are all now food for us.

Isn't that what verse 3 is trying to communicate? Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Which is why, of course, when Paul writes in the epistle to 1 Timothy chapter 4 that these things are presentable to you, provided that you give thanks for them, all these things are open to you.

Yet, yet, the fear of us within the animals, verse 2, the food for us from the animals, verse 3, is linked to a restriction put upon us, the opening part of verse 4.

But, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And for your lifeblood, I will require a reckoning.

From every beast, I will require it, and from man. This required reckoning. And notice, it's required of the animals as well as us.

[14:10] Exodus will actually provide an example in chapter 21 of an ox who gores an individual to death, and the oxen is to be executed.

Its life is required because it took the life of a man. Indeed, here, man needs to think very attentively on the taking of animal life because while it's open for food, there is a requiring aspect that is in play.

I think of this both personally and politically for us as a church family. You know, when I was in seminary, I painted a house for a man. He was a professor, and I remember one morning sitting at his breakfast table and a ladybug had found its way into the windowsill.

And I just thought he would kill it and move on with his day. And he very carefully made sure that the screen could get up.

He had to work with some care to coax the ladybug onto his finger and to release it into the air.

Such was the personal care he had over created order.

[15:32] It's always stuck with me. Just even this past week, I had the most unfortunate of occurrences in springtime to come across in my own backyard the tiniest of infant rabbits having been abandoned by her mother, having gone to care for the rest of her litter, and to hear of upon arriving home that this life blood beating creature was suffering interminably under the heat.

And I remember actually praying to the Lord knowing that I was accountable in some sense for the order in which he had given us and what I would do with this animal as I most mercifully tried to let this tiny one die.

This is something that's so important though. You shall not eat its flesh, it goes on. In other words, you're not killing animal life and eating it with the blood still pulsating as though you are a wild beast yourself because the life is in the blood.

There are personal things that will be required of us if we act ruinously toward the animal kingdom simply to feed our own selves as though we were wild beasts.

They're not only personal decisions that you and I need to think about, but political decisions. I mean, think of the necessity to cull certain animals because they are overpopulating and endangering themselves, but the environment in which they live.

[17:25] Not just that they're in the way of humanity, but there's this need, our exercise of dominion rightfully displayed as we work out the created order.

Think of the legislation that is needing to be in play. Think of why you have to have a hunting license or a fishing license and a limit on what is taken given the world in which we live.

All of these things are to be legislated and rightly so. Protection is there. Taking the life of an animal, though, is not the only thing we will have to give an answer for, and this is where while the text provides more verses on the animal, I intend to provide more time on the individual, because the text moves at the end of verse 5 from the animal kingdom to one another.

He says, from his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of the man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.

A reckoning is required on the taking of human life. In fact, while the taking of animal life is permitted, the taking of human life is principally denied us in this text.

[18 : 56] The shedding the blood of another human being is permitted. I mean, prohibited. And so the statistics then say that we have a lot to answer for.

You want to know how much we have to answer for? Think of Jesus' later words, where if you actually just express hatred in the heart of someone, it's as good as murdering them. Humanity is complicit on this.

Entirely. I have been showing you statistics over the last weeks, and I will do so again today. the taking of human life. Chicago homicides.

Seven Sundays ago, I mentioned that there were 51 lives taken in January alone. Two Sundays ago, that the number had risen to 176. Today, it stands at 200 already.

Seven weeks ago, I mentioned that year to date, there had been eight homicides in Englewood with 39 people wounded. Two weeks ago, the number was 14 killed with 69 wounded.

[20 : 08] Today, 15 killed with 78 wounded. It's like a barometer that's only rising. Seven weeks ago, I mistakenly indicated to you that a person is wounded in the city every three minutes and 12 seconds.

What I meant to say was every three hours and 12 minutes. two weeks ago, the frequency was every two hours and 47 minutes.

Today, it's down to two hours and every 43 minutes. Seven weeks ago, a person was murdered in our city every 15 hours and 51 minutes.

It is now every 14 hours and 28 minutes. This week alone, 10 homicides, nine of them by shooting, another 60 wounded.

Our streets, our accountability, our need to answer. Think of the statistics that we talk about with taking life, though.

[21 : 12] Think of abortion. The statistics on abortion are undeniably atrocious. We have lost nearly 600,000 people to COVID.

Since 1973, in this country alone, there have been 60 million and more abortions. The Civil War took 500,000 combatants.

Abortion has taken 60 million. with life blood flowing, unlike animal life, made in the likeness of God. World War II saw 400,000 soldiers, men and women killed in battle. Abortion has taken 60 million and more.

Vietnam, we commemorate and consider 60,000 American lives lost. With abortion, we are now in excess of 60 million.

[22 : 23] 60 million. Million. And my Bible reads, a reckoning is required.

Why? Unlike the animal kingdom where it's simply that their life blood is there and life is in the blood, here, the reason is clear, for God made man in his own image.

You exchange in the text life blood for an elevated understanding of likeness, life. Of imago dei, of the uniqueness.

Evidently, the taking of life is perhaps the most consequential action we can take.

it's the accountability that is now required given the actions of our life.

[23 : 40] I want to say that it is our disregard for God's likeness that has led to our disrespect of human life.

Our heart heartedness, hardness, is what leads to homicide. And the text indicates that God will require it of us.

The word require there is fascinating. In other places in the scripture, it's actually translated avenge. He will avenge life.

It actually carries the stem of the root, carries the idea of God seeking us out. Now let me make a word of concession.

This is the principle. The Torah and our own body politic is working out the complexities of that in our practice.

[24 : 57] But this is the principle. Whether or not just war is permissible is an application in practice, but it should never be exercised outside of wrestling with this principle.

What you hold or don't hold on capital punishment in practice should never be divorced from your needed mental anguish and work on principle.

from the lengths that we will go as a society moving forward on medical care or end of life, it should never be entertained void of this principle.

to the love we show to the unborn fetus in the womb or what may or may not constitute necessary life-giving health of the mother is something you work out in practice, but in principle, this holds. the exceptions on the perimeter of both abortion and euthanasia are exceptions which prove the rule of the principle.

[26 : 39] Therefore, if one is a Christian, one is not capable of entertaining the complexities in practice by the laying down of the principle.

Life, human life, is not to be taken because we are made in the likeness of God.

To run the world based on a practice devoid of the principle is to walk in a world much like the one we are working out.

Human life is sacred. God will seek us out. God will settle the score. And for that, this isn't a me, you thing.

This isn't a us, they thing. This is a we thing. This is a me thing. This is a you thing. We all need God's grace.

[28 : 10] all universally captive to the principle, universally captive to my action, universally in need of grace, need of compassion, need of kindness, need of weeping, need of wrestling, need of rebuilding, need of restoring, need of wanting to say that God may yet circle around at the end of the day and demonstrate to you his ongoing approval.

We have to give that to one another. Frail, fallen. The bigger question is how can God give it to us?

Let me just give you now the home stretch of God's sermon to Noah and what it means for us.

The bigger question is how can God circle around by verse seven and indicate approval holds although accountability is required.

what we really need from the Bible going forward from this text would be a more complete sense of how God can be both righteous and merciful. This is the beginning chapter of the Bible not the complete outworking of the Bible.

What we really need from the Bible then is to show us how he intends to circle around a second time and convince us that he loves us or convince us that his stamp of approval rests upon us.

[30 : 07] How is it that he can give us that which we know we need and that which we truly desire? Put it differently if verse one is the approval of God as the world would have him.

Come off the ark do what you want get after it again. It's hard to square God as the world would have him verse one with the accountability that the Bible gives to us in verses two to six.

But that final approval that indication that God can be righteous and yet require a reckoning and yet still be welcoming? Where do we find this?

How do you move from approval to accountability to approval? Through atonement. Through atonement.

I mean we see that in its rudimentary form in the Old Testament. The life for the life. the eye for the eye the tooth for the tooth these were mitigating laws that protected people from overly executing and inflicting punishment in an unjust world.

[31 : 29] But as the Bible progresses here is what we get. Our accountability will be assumed by Christ's righteous and atoning death.

God's approval given God's need for our accountability comes through atonement.

Here's the irony. Our accountability is assumed by Christ's atoning death. I hope you get the fullness of it. Our shedding of blood is paid by his blood shed for us.

The reckoning that God will require of me is a reckoning that was remitted by him. And it goes beyond my actions to my heart.

God's avenging justice is meted out on his beloved son. The just for the unjust that the unjust might be made right.

[32 : 45] This is why Jesus breathes on them the breath after the resurrection and then tells them to go out and begin preaching sermons. Sermons where acts begins to unfold actually were fruitful and multiplied.

that as men and women receive the word of the atonement of Christ upon which their approval would rest. As we looked at his blood shed and knew that my accountability was bestowed and taken by him as I proclaim that people can be forgiven and restored and blessed that it actually all comes back to him.

He breathes on them. He speaks this word and the church goes forward being fruitful and multiplying. In fact, you're looking at a text where God is preaching a sermon to Noah where I am preaching a sermon to you on that sermon and where you need to go preach this sermon to yourself and to those you love who need God's circling back approval.

That's the good news. It's the only news that will make us right.

But what if we should reject Jesus? What then? A reckoning is required.

[34 : 22] So take care. Take care how you live for a day of accounting awaits. Our Heavenly Father, for those of us who have taken life, may our love for Jesus be fixed and sure.

For those of us who have unwittingly and untentatively not taken care of life, may the gospel give hope.

may our souls which lament find solace in his love.

May our sins be forgiven. Lord, have mercy. mercy. When he comes with trumpet sound, oh, may we then in him be found.

May we be dressed in his righteousness alone. For without him, never could we sing faultless to stand before the throne.

[36 : 01] throne. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for a word that ministers to us and a word that will minister to those we love.

In whose name we pray, Amen.