

Genesis 8:1–22

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 April 2021

Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 00] moment, I will be reading from Genesis chapter 8, 1 through 22, the entirety of the chapter. I'd invite you to turn there. Genesis 8, 1 to 22. Please stand for the reading of God's word.

But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark, and God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed. The rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days, the waters had abated, and in the seventh month, on the 17th day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. And the waters continued to abate until the 10th month. In the 10th month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen. At the end of 40 days, Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent forth a dove from him to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.

He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore. In the 601st year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. In the second month, on the 27th day of the month, the earth had dried out. Then God said to Noah, Go out from the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you, bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh, birds and animals, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may swarm on the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth. So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark. Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took some of every clean animal, and some of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of man.

For the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Oh, good morning. Let me begin by telling you that I'm old school. By that I mean I have seen Bob Dillon live in concert some 12 to 15 times. I've heard him sing, therefore, many versions of I'll remember you. He put it out in 1985 on his album Empire Burlesque. The last verse goes like this. It's going to be hard for me to say it without singing it, but here it is. I'll remember you when the wind blows through the piney wood. It was you who came right through. It was you who understood.

[4 : 08] Though I'd never say that I've done it the way that you'd have liked me to. In the end, my dear sweet friend, I'll remember you. The idea that somebody remembers you as my dear sweet friend really reveals our most intimate desire as a human being. To be remembered is certainly one way of communicating our heart's most interior need to know that we're loved. And therefore, the question, are we remembered?

Will you, will I, in the end, be on somebody's mind when I'm all alone in the great unknown when someone seems to have forgotten all the rest? Let me elevate the stakes of that heart pull. Does God remember us? Does God remember you? Isn't that the question that afflicts many of us in our isolation?

Even after we've given him reasons to be angry with us, would he still, at that time, love us? After allowing the waters of life and the unprecedented waves of woe to overwhelm us, does God remember us when both the rule of law and relationships of love are adrift? Let me ask it another way. Do you think God can still be trusted? What about your outgoing worship, even after the fixed furniture of your life is floating free? Does God remember us while the world is without anchor? Are you even remembered, feeling as though you are without a lifeline, that there is no land yet in sight? When races rage, when identity implodes, when family members die, when the social fabric fails, does God remember? The answer that I am longing to assert today, and one that I'm guessing you would hardly dare to believe, is yes. Yes, God remembers.

I want to preach, yes, God has not forgotten you. I want to say yes to the notion that he has not abandoned us. But because you're thoughtful, the question really is, can that affirmation be trusted, or on what grounds would I be able to say, God remembered me? I think we've come to a text that proves it. And so if you have your Bible, I hope you keep an open to it. Let me put it simply this way. [7:39] I'm going to put forward from this text that you can both trust God and give thanks to God because God is thinking of you. Let me state it differently. You can go on waiting on God and go out worshiping God because God remembers you. I want to take it. I want to set sail on the strong tide of chapter 8, verse 1, those first four words, but God remembered Noah. In the flood narrative, the author aims to put God's remembrance of Noah right at the very center of things. If you haven't read Genesis before, and I know many of you haven't, scan with your eyes the flood narrative of chapters 7 and 8. Any fair reading of the text puts those four words as a truth claim by way of emphasis. How do I say this?

The words God remembered Noah sit not only in the middle of these two chapters given to the flood, but every temporal marker on either side of those words in these two chapters are expressly put forward by the author to lead the reader to that conclusion or to read back to that assumption. I mentioned the phrase temporal markers. Maybe you don't know what those are. If you're not familiar with temporal markers in literature, let me just say three sentences. Authors often organize their material by making use of temporal markers. This would be, in a sense, some expression, a sequence of words that clue the reader into when something happened or for how long something happened. And in the case of the flood narrative, it's done by indicating time in accordance with days. Let me show it to you.

It's beautiful in all of its literary genius. Take a look at how days mark the waters as they rise in chapter 7 and then recede in chapter 8. Notice. Notice the way numbers are used. In chapter 7, verse 7, the number is 7 days. I'm sorry, in 7 verse 4, chapter 7, verse 4, you have 7 days. And then in chapter 7, verse 10, 7 days. And then it rises. By the time you reach verse 17, 40 days. Until you come to verse 24, and you're at 150 days. The author is watching the rising of the waters by 7 and 40 and 150.

And that's what happens in chapter 8. As the waters recede, those numbers reverse their way out. 150 is there in chapter 8, verse 3. 40 is found in chapter 8 and verse 6. And then the twofold use of 7 again in verses 10 and 12. And then as a piece of literature, those temporal expressions are anchored on either end with Noah being told, go into the ark, and Noah being told, go out of the ark. In fact, even beyond that, the twofold use, he's going to blot it all out. He's going to blot it all out. [11:37] In the very final reading that we heard today, I will never again. I will never again. The whole narrative structure just moves from this rising water to this receding wake. And there, in the middle, riding the crest of its chiasmic center. But God remembered Noah. I find the balance of the biblical text beautiful. The flood, with all of its devastation, is mirroring itself.

And the author is longing for you to see the statement in the middle, but God remembered Noah. That's the truth. That's the truth. God remembers Noah that rises above the water. That's the truth. But like a surfer in the distance that captures all of your attention in the vastness of a horizon and landscape of water. Don't miss that. Remembering here means more than simply Noah came back into God's consciousness. The way you and I remember something that we had forgotten about. That's not what remembering means here in the scripture when it's in reference to what God is doing. It doesn't merely refer to the mind of God, but void of his movement. In the Bible, when God remembers someone, he means he is in motion towards someone. He's not merely thinking about us. He's not merely thinking about you.

He is taking up action for you. When he remembered Rachel, she conceived. When he remembered Israel, they were saved. When he remembered Noah, the waters receded. When he

remembers you, if you keep reading the Bible, he puts his only son in motion toward you. He brings Jesus to shutter you in from his anger. Jesus to shield you from his wrath. Jesus to protect you as you go in and Jesus to lead you as you go out. That is the truth.

[14 : 40] The truth of the scriptures. When God remembers as it's penned here in elevated prose, it almost should stir your heart the way poetry does.

And it should sense, if the truths that I've been communicating to you here are falling on your heart, then actually the pulse, the pathos, the beauty of the reality that God could remember you begins to fall.

Let me just have your eyes again on chapter 1, verse 3, just for a moment longer. I want you to listen to 1-3 as though it was poetry, not prose.

Just listen to this. But God remembered Noah. Let me move on.

He made a wind blow and waters subside. The windows of heaven close and the rains restrained and the waters recede until they finally at last abate.

[15 : 56] I mean, we're all in too much of a hurry when we read the Bible. It is as though through the use of language itself in this text that the raging waters come to rest, that the tumultuous seas of God's wrath finally settle.

If I was to kind of analogically get the text into you, it's like a late afternoon sunshine appearing after the cessation of a spring rain.

The truth that God remembered you is like the gray skies of Chicago giving way to blue. It is like rollicking winds, waves, finally redirectionally face from the northeast to the southwest.

And the warmth overwhelms you. It is in every sense like the rolling and rudderless arc finally coming to a resting place on Ararat.

I want to tell you that this morning. I want you to know that. I want you to sense that. I want you to understand that. I want you to feel that.

[17 : 24] God remembering Noah. And the way the Bible works its way out, that God remembers you, is the most hopeful thing I might be able to say to you today.

It is meant to move us from feeling as though you have been forgotten to an actual awareness that you have been remembered. Let me put it to you in the words of the psalmist.

His anger is but for a moment, but his favor lasts for a lifetime. Weeping may stay the night, but joy comes in the morning.

We have had a rough year. So had Noah. One year. Sequestered in the ark.

But God remembered Noah. The favor of the Lord that Noah had at the end of chapter 6, as the New Testament translates grace.

[18 : 26] The grace that Noah had was the propelling mercy of God that would remember even when his anger had been thrown upon the face of the earth.

For added proof, God's remembrance in the midst of righteous wrath, I just want you to think about Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. I want you to think about the thief on the cross.

What does he say? When you come into your kingdom, remember me. And Jesus says to him, today you shall be with me in paradise.

Or if you're not ready yet to become a Christian or to embrace the truth of that, consider this. You are still here.

Which is an indication of God's merciful remembrance. He is evidently not done with us yet.

[19 : 44] Let me give the whole sermon in two sentences again. You can trust God and give thanks to God precisely because he is thinking of you.

You can wait on God and worship God because he has remembered you. You and me under the mercy of God.

God remembered Noah. But the text moves on, doesn't it? In a sense, that's the truth of the text.

What are the applications of the reading?

I want to sit on two of them. While God remembered Noah, here it is. We go on waiting. Verses 5 through 14.

It is important for you to realize that Noah had to continue to wait after being remembered.

[20 : 44] Being remembered doesn't do away with waiting. And this is where our society today in our country is completely off kilter. For to be remembered means to be instantaneously onto something else.

But that's not what this text does. God's thinking of us doesn't mean we don't need to keep on trusting in him.

That's the point driven home in verses 5 through 14. Take a look at that. 5 through 14. Almost as if it is one unit. Although the ark came to rest, there was some two and a half months passing before Noah could actually reemerge.

He may have traded the rising and falling motion of water for the fixed terra firma of the mountain, but an ongoing faith was yet mandatory of him.

Can you imagine being Noah? Now there are three observations about this I want you to see. Look at verses 5 and 16 together. I'm sorry, 5 and 14.

[21 : 53] In verse 5, because they cordoned off this whole unit. And the waters continued to abate until the 10th month. In the 10th month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

This very time temporal expression marker. But now look at verse 13 and 14. In the 601st year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, they were dried.

And then look at 14. In the second month, on the 27th day of the month, the earth had dried out.

The writer is cordoning off verses 5 through 14 to say he's almost enclosing them in the time of two and a half months.

Not only that, look at the detail that falls in between. You read the stuff on the raven. We read the stuff on the dove. He sends out a raven. It doesn't come back.

He sends out a dove. It comes back. It sends out the dove. It comes back. It sends out the dove. It comes back. All of the detail. It's not just the time that holds the unit. It's the detail that tells you, in Noah's mind, God may have remembered him, but time is standing still.

[23 : 05] I don't know if we can really appreciate what it would have been like for him and his family to be two and a half months. But that part of this text cordons it in.

The detail tells you it's standing still. And look, he even got the word waited there twice. Verse 10. He waited another seven days. Verse 12. He waited another seven days.

We need to just sit on that for a bit. For 10 verses in the text, Noah is going nowhere after God remembered. And for a few minutes, we shouldn't either.

After all, as Tom Petty put it, the waiting is the hardest part. 150 days being on the water has a certain rhythm. But you follow it up then with all those days of receding and then two and a half months.

Imagine two and a half months, you are in a floating condo that is impaled on the side of a mountain. Motionless. No store to go out to.

[24 : 19] No lakefront to look at. I mean, could it be any worse? And not only that, a number of you will get this. You got your whole family in there. Eight people in number.

Noah might at this point, or his wife, or his sons, or certainly his sons' wives, might have been glad that when God said build this thing, it was three levels.

My guess is for two and a half months, being absolutely motionless, they're grateful that they have multi-level living. Something I've always longed for. Because in my house, five children, we raised them all.

You could hear them breathe when they slept at night. We were so close to one another. There were no degrees of separation at all. At least the ark had three levels.

Waiting is tough. Let me say a few things on this. On the grandest scale, this relationship between God remembering and Noah's need to continue waiting should help you make sense of the time in which we live.

[25 : 27] That's how the apostle Peter makes use of the flood story. In his second epistle, when he decides he's going to preach on the flood, it's fascinating to see what he does.

He picks up the waiting. He says in verse 4, people will say, where's the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were.

And then Peter says, but they forget that long ago the earth was formed out of water and through water. But by the word of the Lord and the means that means at that time it existed, it was deluged and perished.

But by the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment. Do not overlook this fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, a thousand years is as a day.

He's not slow to fulfill his promise. As some count slowness, he's patient toward you, not wishing that any would perish, but that all would come to everlasting life.

[26 : 36] Imagine, imagine, imagine if the anger of the Lord unleashed upon the world in the last year was meant solely for you to understand that he wants your attention and he wants your life more than anything.

And the reason he hasn't made a complete catastrophe of it all is that he is yet bringing people to himself who come to understand his patient love.

All of these things are going to be burned with fire. Peter writes, since then, all these things are be dissolved. What sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?

Here it is, 2 Peter 3, 12, waiting for and hastening the coming day of God. Verse 13, but according to his promise, we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. What should you be doing now that God's wrath has receded and yet you're still impaled in your place?

[27 : 43] You should be hard at work on godliness before we reemerge. This notion of waiting can be applied on smaller scopes as well, though.

I have found, for me, that to continue waiting is what much of my life is actually about. Let me get it to you, since there are so many people listening to me today in their teens and 20s, early 30s even. Much of life is spent waiting. We need to understand that.

You and I need to learn that waiting on God doesn't mean that God hasn't remembered us. Some of you need to, this might be exactly what some of you need to hear this morning.

Noah waited two and a half months after the ark came to rest before he could walk away. Abraham waited 25 years before he received a son that had been promised long ago. Israel waited 40 years in the wilderness before they were able to enter the land that had been promised to them.

[29 : 01] Joseph waited over two years in prison, yet the Bible says God was with him. David waited out a desperate decade, even after having been anointed to receive the kingship.

Let me get it to you. The cessation of God's anger doesn't result in your immediate achievement. As the psalmist cries, trust in him at all times, O people, pour out your hearts before him.

As the prophet says, they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. As the apostle writes, we ourselves, who are the firstfruits of the Spirit, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we were saved. You were saved into a hope that required a wait. Now, hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes for what he sees.

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. In fact, let me give you another thing I've learned in life. Not only is most of my life spent in waiting, but you can create trouble for yourself.

[30 : 13] I have created trouble for myself by not waiting. Abraham learns that lesson in Genesis on three occasions when he gets out ahead of God and took matters into his own hands.

Saul learned it catastrophically when he couldn't even wait a full seven days for Samuel to show, and he pushed himself forward into sin. And for some here, the point is just as simple as that.

If you don't have a clear word from God supporting you, don't do anything just yet. Don't go running off in all directions.

Send out a raven, for goodness sake. Send out a dove. Test the waters, as it were. But wait.

Abigail Adams one time had Thomas Jefferson for dinner, and she told him this story. She said, I've heard of a clergyman who took as his text the words, and they knew not what they did.

[31 : 20] Words that were effectuated in Luke 23 when Jesus was on the cross. They were killing him, and they knew not what they did. And from this, the preacher drew the inference that when a people were in such a situation, when they knew not what they did, they should take great care that they do not do what they know not what.

Yeah. Think about it for a while. I love what Calvin says on this part with Noah. Quote, he, how great must have been the fortitude of the man who, after an incredible weariness of a whole year, when the deluge had ceased and new life shone forth, does not yet move a foot out of his sepulcher without the command of God.

Learn it early. It'll keep you from a lifetime of backtracking through mistakes, which leads us to the final movement of the message, verses 15 through 22.

Not only can we go on trusting God because he's thinking of us, not only can you keep waiting on God as a consequence of him remembering us, but we must go out worshipping God and thanking God because of his remembrance of us.

I hope you see all of chapter 8 as clear as crystal. 1 to 4. God remembered Noah. 5 to 14.

[33 : 04] But Noah went on waiting. 15 to the close. And he goes out worshipping.

I mean, take a look at what happens there. Look at the opening line in verse 15. You finally have the direct word from God that releases him from his sheltered, life-giving coffin.

Then it says, God said to Noah, go out from the ark. And then I'm just going to skip down to verse 20. Then God, then Noah built an altar to the Lord.

The one who built an ark now builds an altar. The one who was saved now offers a sacrifice of praise.

The one who got into the ark of rescue goes out in the act of worship. It was Spurgeon who captured the essence of it this way.

[34 : 17] This was in our little morning devotional that my wife and I read just even two days ago. This is what he says. Sweet is the season of spring. The long and dreary winter helps us to appreciate the genial warmth.

After periods of depression of spirit, it is delightful to behold again the light of the sun of righteousness. Then our slumbering graces rise from their lethargy, like the crocus and the daffodil from their beds of earth.

Then is our heart made merry. Listen to him. Oh, Lord, if it be not springtime in my chilly heart, I pray thee, make it so.

I am heartily weary of living at a distance from thee. And you, this morning, where's your heart? Are you capable of saying morning by morning, new mercies I see? Are you capable of singing seasons of summer and winter, springtime and harvest?

[35 : 39] If God this morning has impressed upon your heart that he remembers you, even in the midst of his wrath, then your first obligation is worship.

If he has thought of you, you are to honor him by giving thanks. If he has rescued you, you are to worship him. This is priority number one before anything else is done.

Truth be told, for many here, this year has stretched them, I think, some of you, beyond your capacity to worship. There can be no doubt that in the past year, in my opinion, God, either actively or permissively, has deconstructed the created order before our very eyes.

And yet, sadly, I'm not sure we've learned the lesson. We seem to be leaving the ark as what I would call the very discontented age.

More than ever, we appear to be on our feet and in one another's face. We're not anywhere close, in my mind, across the globe, to going out on our knees, and especially in gratitude before God's face.

[37 : 12] Our exit, I'm watching it, is marked by agitation. And in the church, sadly, especially so even in the church, the need of the hour seems to be to get away from anyone who is not like us, to disembark and to find my own way without those that I traveled with before.

COVID has killed us in more ways than one. There is too little heart preparedness in our midst yet for the giving of thanks.

There is too little soul crestedness for a life of worship. And yet that is why I am preaching in this hour to you, to hope that the lessons from the flood may help you, help us find safe harbor, that the waters of this text might be used by God to saturate your soul to the depths that God's spirit actually intended for them to plummet.

Dear friend, hear me. You can trust God and give thanks to God because he is, has, will be thinking of you.

You can wait on God. You can worship God because he remembers you. Dear Christchurch family, we are called to go on trusting and to go out thanking because he's thinking of you.

[39 : 14] We are called to go on waiting and go out worshipping precisely because he remembers you.

Never forget it. Never forget it. In Christ, God says, in the end, my dear sweet friend, I'll remember you.

Our Heavenly Father, grab our hearts in readiness to go out and worship. Grab our hearts in readiness to go out and worship.

Grab our hearts in readiness to go out and worship. Grab our hearts in readiness to go out and worship. Grab our minds to walk with one another while we wait.
We ask in Jesus' name, amen. We're going to...