

The Covenant with Noah

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- [0 : 00] And the book of Genesis, it's not just a book about beginnings. It's also a book about second beginnings because God is a God of grace.
- It's this story of promise, right? Where the world has been made and it's been made good and something's gone wrong and you're wondering what is God going to do about it? Well, it's the story of the promise of the seed of the woman, right?
- From the woman is going to come a family. And from that family is going to come a nation and from that nation is going to come a king and from that king is going to come the savior of the world.
- And the main character in our passage is Noah. He's famous for building an ark, bringing the animals in, and he's saved from the flood along with his family in the ark.
- God shows him grace. He responds by faith to God's word. And rather than going through the whole flood narrative, as I said, we're picking up after the flood. I want to note one thing before we look more closely at the passage.
- [1 : 05] And it's that there's this thing called a covenant in our passage. It's what we refer to as the Noahic covenant. Noahic covenant means covenant with Noah.
- That word covenant actually shows up for the first time in the Bible in our passage. It's there, it's present in Genesis 2 and 3, but it's not, the word isn't used. But the word shows up for the first time right here.
- It's actually seven times in our passage. Verses 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 17, we see the word covenant. And we could spend a lot of time trying to define what a covenant is, but to be pithy, a covenant is a solemn promise between two parties.
- It binds them together. And there's blessing and joy when those promises are kept. And there is sorrow and curse when those promises are broken. And it's an interesting thing because, you see, one of the ways that we can understand the whole story of scripture is through God's covenants.
- And it shows the uniqueness of the Christian God that we serve, too, that he's a God who enters into covenant. In Buddhism, there is no personal God. Can't enter into a covenant, right?
- [2 : 19] God in the Bible, he desires relationship, right? In Islam, Allah would never condescend into a covenant to place himself in a promise under an obligation with, you know, a person.
- If you're an atheist, you know, you just don't believe in God at all and that your life is bound up with him. But the claim of Christianity is not just that there's a God, but that he wants relationship.
- A relationship with everything is what we see in our passage. And he does that through a covenant. And we're specifically looking at the covenant with Noah this evening.
- You and I, we still live in a world under the Noahic covenant. Anybody thought about that this week as you're driving around?

Man, Genesis 9. God's promises, they're still true. It hasn't ended. It hasn't ended, right? You and I, we live in a world, and actually, I think this passage helps us to make sense of the world that we live in because of God's covenant with Noah.

[3 : 26] And there's usually a sign when God enters in covenant, there's a sign that goes along with the covenant, right? So in his covenant with Abraham, it's the sign of circumcision, right?

In the Mosaic covenant, he gives the Sabbath as a sign. In the new covenant, we just talked about it in our questions and answers from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. We get these signs, these sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

And so what's the sign that goes with the Noahic covenant? The rainbow, right? The rainbow does. And I don't think this is saying that this necessarily had to be the first rainbow that was ever in the world, but rather that God is setting it apart and signifying what he is doing.

That every time that you and I see a rainbow, you should think of the Noahic covenant. Maybe understand a little bit more of what that means by the end of this.

Let me pray, though, for the preaching of God's word. God, you spoke as your word was read aloud. And so we humbly ask that you would continue to speak to us as your word is preached.

[4 : 38] May every distracting or errant word spoken fall on deaf ears. And may every true thing said take root in our hearts and blossom to the praise of your glorious name.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Have you ever asked, God, why don't you do something about all this evil and suffering in the world?

Maybe it's in your own life. Maybe it's something on the news. Maybe it's because of something else going on with someone in the congregation. Have you ever cried out like the psalmist? How long, O Lord?

Why are you letting all this bad stuff happen? You know, we need many things to navigate and live well in the world in which God has placed us to make sense of, you know, pandemics and suffering and death and broken relationships and hurt and trauma and all of these things.

You need things like fellowship. But one of the things you need, chief amongst those, is theology. You need really good theology to make it in life.

[5 : 51] And with that question that I asked at the beginning in mind, God, why don't you do something about all the evil and suffering in the world? I want to look at our passage with that question in mind.

God, why don't I ask it at every point? God, why don't you do something about all this evil and suffering in the world? And what I said is you need theology to make it through life. And we're actually going to look at different theological categories.

Don't let that scare you. You're like, theology's not my thing, Nate. We all need some sort. We're all theologians of some sort. And I will try best as I can because sometimes ministers have this tendency to make simple things very complicated.

We'll try to keep it simple. But the two theological categories that I want to talk about are common grace and saving grace. Common grace and saving grace.

But our outline, we're going to split common grace in two. I want to talk about God's maintaining grace, his restraining grace. That's common grace. And then his saving grace.

[6 : 52] So if you're a note taker, the outline is God's maintaining grace, God's restraining grace, and then God's saving grace. You can distinguish them, but they all flow from the heart of God.

So first off, God's maintaining grace. Why doesn't God do something? Why doesn't he just stop all the evil in this world?

That's a question about God. Do you actually care? Right? Are you actually involved in the world? And the first answer to that is yes, he does.

He does care. He does. It's not a complete answer, but we want to look at his maintaining grace. And you might even wonder how it relates, but please bear with me.

What I mean by God's maintaining grace is God's care for all of his creation. People, animals, all of the earth. God cares for all of it with his maintaining grace.

[7 : 51] In verses 9 to 10 of chapter 9, God, he enters into a covenant relationship with Noah and with his posterity, as well with what? What does God exist in covenant relationship with?

Everything. Every living thing, right? That's what it lists. The word every shows up a lot in our passage to make the point. Verse 2, 3, 5, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17.

In the same way that you see God pronouncing his blessing over creation in Genesis 1, what you're seeing here is a recreation account.

Noah actually stands as a sort of second Adam figure. In other words, the Noahic covenant, what it shows us is after sin comes, it's not like God only cares about saving souls.

He does care about that, but he cares for more than that. It's not like the rest of creation in life is meaningless. In fact, there's this correlation between Genesis 9 and Genesis 1.

[9 : 02] So, what happens in the flood? The waters separate and the dry land appears, just like in Genesis 1. And God blesses Noah and his sons.

What's he doing in Genesis 1 at the beginning of his creation? He's blessing each time. It's good. It's good. It's good. And then verse 1 and 7, what is mankind told to do?

Be fruitful and multiply. Any bells going off? That sounds exactly like Genesis 1, right? The command that he gives to Adam and to Eve.

God still has a purpose for humanity. Nothing of God's instructions to Adam and Eve are actually annulled, but rather, the difference is that the covenant has to make room for now mankind as sinners.

Another parallel. Verse 6, what does it reaffirm? That man and woman are created in God's image, right? Again, Genesis 1, right?

[10 : 03] Fallen human beings, they don't cease being creatures created for the purpose of imaging and glorifying God within the world. So, what does that mean?

It means human life, no matter how big or small, bad smelling or good smelling, rich or poor, tall or short, overperforming or underperforming, God's put honor and dignity into every single person.

And then the application is anybody who raises a hand to degrade, violate, abuse, or to take life, God takes that as an assault on himself and his own glory.

Because he's created people in his image. God cares for every living being, especially those created in his image. He cares for everything. That's what we see in Genesis 9. And set apart, on top of all of those things, are people.

So, he cares about people, whether they're in utero, in part, in milgai, in Uganda, in Hollywood, in Hollywood, in prison, in China, in posh homes, in schemes, in skyscrapers, in farmhouses, in care homes, in foster homes, in cubicles, in mosques.

[11 : 20] God cares for his image bearers. And we ought to seek ways, then, the quick application. How are we seeking to honor and dignify other people who are created in God's image?

So, we see this recreation, despite sin, God maintains, through his grace, his creational intent for the world. Right? God maintains through his grace.

As image bearers, then, of people who are not Christians, you know, the message that we say, even though we believe we have this truth that the whole world needs to know, and it can open up so much of the world to them, we're not saying that non-Christians can't contribute to the flourishing of society.

Right? Because of God's common grace, his maintaining grace. All of truth is God's truth. And he can give it in whatever way that he wants. I will point out, though, it's interesting.

Do you know, scientific revolutions, to make our modern world, do you know how they came about? Because of good theology. Good theology. Good theology.

[12 : 24] Believing that the Bible says that God made a world that he cares about. And God desires to be known. He's a God who enters into covenant relationship. He desires to be known.

And he's a rational God. You can know him. You can communicate to him. You can trust in him. And so, therefore, he's made a world that we should also be able to know and explore.

And is rational. Okay? See? Good theology. It'll help you on your tests, kids. Westminster Shorter Catechism 23. It asks, what are God's works of providence?

And this is the answer. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions.

That saying is God graciously maintains his creation. We ask, why doesn't God do something? And we miss the point that he actually is doing something in the world.

[13 : 19] It's not a whole answer. It's a partial answer. So, you're asking, does God care? You're wondering, is God too busy? No. Matthew 10. A sparrow doesn't fall to the ground without God knowing.

Does God only care for certain people? No. Matthew 5. He makes the sun rise on the evil and the good. He makes the rain fall on the just and the unjust.

Luke chapter 6. God is kind even to the ungrateful. James chapter 1. Every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of heavenly lights. Right? And we call it here, what we're talking about, when we say God's common grace, you know, that makes it sound like you're saying it's his cheap grace.

But that's not what the word means. You see, the reason it's referring to his common grace, meaning it's common to all. Right? God bestows it on all people. We sang about this at the beginning of the service from Psalm 145.

The Lord is good to... Nate? No. He's just good to Israel? No. Psalm 145. The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

[14 : 23] The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand. You satisfy the desire of every living thing. So God commits himself to caring for this world despite the presence of sin.

And did you see in chapter 8, verse 22, it says, While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease. God has built these rhythms into this world so that you can live and take delight in it.

Even despite the presence of sin, there's still joy and blessing, even the most cynical of us. If you're holding your child and they smile at you for the first time, it's probably gas.

But even then, it warms your heart. See, that's the world that God has created. He maintains it by his grace.

And Genesis 9, it explains the world that we live in. Right? Despite hardship and suffering and evil, this life can still bring joy. Even for people who do not know God of some sort.

[15 : 35] It's an actual, true blessing. It falls short of God's saving grace, but it is still a grace nonetheless. And, you know, when we live in this world and we feel that joy and people see it, you know, it should be like all the leaves of the trees are rustling with this rumor that there's more to life.

That this is the way it's supposed to be. To be enjoyed and to find. Laughter. And love. And, you know, you can't talk about evil and suffering and say, God, why do you allow evil in this world unless you have a concept of goodness and justice?

Right? Things can't be wrong unless there's a right, and that right is a desirable and good thing. Quoted Friedrich Nietzsche last week.

I'm going to do it again. Two sermons in a row. This is a great quote here. It'll warm your heart. It says this, we came from nothing, are headed to nothing, trapped between two nothings, contemplating our nothingness.

Anybody going to put that on a Valentine's card? Give it to your loved ones? Thanks, Friedrich. It's such a heartwarming thing. But what's he saying? He's saying, listen, listen.

[16 : 50] If we're going to say your origin was an accident, and eternity is just a nothingness, have the guts to say that none of this matters in between. That's a world without God.

I'm asking God, why allow all this evil and suffering? Well, if there isn't a God, what are we doing? Why get to shake your fist? What gives you the right to do that?

If you create the meaning and the value of things, why ask questions of God? Why even talk about evil and suffering? But Genesis 8 and 9 said that creation belongs to God, and he's compassionate towards his creation.

So he gives it meaning and value. So basically, the first point in his maintaining grace, it's saying, yeah, it's okay to ask that question. It doesn't answer the question, but you're seeing that God creates a world that he maintains and should be leading us to ask that sort of a question.

God, why are you allowing sin in this world? The natural world, it doesn't belong to us. It belongs to God. It belongs in covenant relationship with him. So verse 13, God says, this is a covenant between me and the earth.

[18 : 02] We maintain creation as reflections of the ultimate one who maintains creation. You know the hymn, this is my father's world. He shines in all that's fair.

It's supposed to reflect back to him. Excuse me. So, God cares for all things, especially those who bear his image.

He cares for all living things in a myriad of ways through his providential common grace that sustains life, and it brings goodness into the world. That's his maintaining grace. Second thing, though, is his restraining grace.

Why doesn't God do something? Why does he allow evil in this world? Why doesn't he just put a stop to it? Again, this isn't a full answer. It's a partial answer.

And also, I'm going to preface this by saying, if somebody is going through suffering, and they ask that question, this is not the answer that you're supposed to give them in that moment. Right?

[18 : 59] So it's Proverbs 25, he who sings songs to a heavy heart. It's like one who takes off a garment on a cold day. Right? Somebody's like, my dog died. Ah, you could have had two dogs, and they both could have died.

That's not a good answer. Right? But the answer here for this, in his restraining grace, why does God allow evil? It could be worse. It could be worse.

Partial answer. Remember? Here's what our passage tells us. Despite the presence of sin, and things are not as they should be, God restrains his judgment.

So, chapter 8, verse 21, God says that he sees, even though the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth, if you remember Genesis 6, 5, that's where that comes from, it's still there, that even though that's true, God will never again curse the ground because of man.

The original curse in Genesis 3, because of sin, remains. And in fact, the word in Genesis 8 and the Genesis 3 for curse are two different Hebrew words.

[20 : 08] So it's saying, there's a curse that remains because of sin in this world, but God is saying, after the flood, I am not going to add to that curse. I'm not going to add to it. And in fact, to keep things from being worse than they are, God actually restrains sin in this world.

He circles back in chapter 9, verse 10, and he emphasizes, I'm never going to send again a flood that's going to destroy the earth. I'm never going to let it get that bad again. And he promises, and he gives the sign of the rainbow as a sign of his promise.

But did you notice, if you're reading along in the ESV, what did it call a rainbow? A bow. Same word for a bow and arrow that a warrior would use.

I think if you have the NIV, it translates as rainbow. That's the intention. That's what it means. But it's the same word as a bow, like a bow and arrow. And newer commentaries, they kind of shy away from this, but not everything that's new means it's good.

I tend to go with the older commentaries. What's the sign that's going? Why call it a bow? It's as if God is hanging up his weapon of judgment against the earth.

[21 : 19] He's hanging it up in the sky. And which direction is it pointed? Oh, no. It's pointed up towards him, saying, I am entering into covenant relationship.

I am making this promise. And if I break this promise, may that bow be let go and the arrow go into my heart. That's the curse if I break my promise.

Because you see, the sign is for whom? Who's the sign for? You and me? No, verse 16. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature that is on the face of the earth.

It's not for us. It's for God. That's what the sign's for. It reminds him of his promise. Maybe you're like, well, God is perfect. Does he need to be reminded? Does he have alarms on his iPhone that go off to remember?

Oh, right, today I'm not supposed to destroy the world. No, no, no. To remind is to call to mind. It's for him to act upon the promises that he's made.

[22 : 24] He affirms his promises and he acts in covenant faithfulness. So God, he's restraining evil and he's also restraining his judgment. The Dutch theologian Herman Bovenk calls the covenant with Noah a covenant of long suffering.

God says, I am a long suffering God. Therefore, I'm going to enter into this relationship with all of the created order.

Sinful humanity hasn't changed. God's promised to be long suffering. His name is going to be mocked in the world. And his creation is going to be marred again and again.

And it doesn't mean that God doesn't judge. Or that certain people or nations reach a point, if you read through the Bible, there's points where they reach where God intervenes in his judgment.

If you know, there's instances of gross sin in the Bible, like the Canaanites. Genesis 15. Long before Israel goes into the promised land, God makes promises in covenant with Abraham.

[23 : 29] And he says, not yet though. It's going to come because the sin of the Amorites is not yet complete. He's basically, what's he saying? I am a God who judges wickedness and evil.

I am a holy God who can't stand evil and sin being in my presence. Yet, I am also a gracious God. And not just a gracious God, not a one-time thing. I am a long suffering God.

And so he waits and he delays. And it's this evil grows and grows. And so when Israel goes into the land, I don't know if you ever read through the first five books of the Bible and Joshua as they're going in, you're thinking like, man, that's kind of harsh.

Well, it's not just God's promises to provide his people a land to live in. It's also a judgment on the Amorites. And again, we think of that stuff like, oh, again, like poor people.

Their sin, they would sacrifice children to their gods. Okay? That's the type of sin that keeps growing and growing. God restrains his judgment against even that. This is what one theologian writes about the covenant in Genesis 9.

[24 : 29] He says, Although the consciences of individual men and women may become so seared to evil that it loses its horror and becomes a friend, and even through the efforts of such people, whole societies may become particularly perverse and destructive, man's historical existence as a whole is not allowed to denigrate into absolute depravity.

God restrains the effects of sin upon man, his society, and his creational order in the Noahic covenant. Because even though they deserve judgment, God has bound himself to redemption rather than wrath by his promise in the Garden of Eden.

So sure, people can devolve into more and more evil actions. But the point is that left unchecked and unrestrained by God, we would live in an unlivable hell of a world.

It's quite a different take than, I think Colin mentioned John Lennon in the Imagine song, right? Imagine there's no heaven, no hell. Imagine we're all just getting along. And God in Genesis 9 is saying, Imagine if I wasn't restraining evil.

Imagine that. His common grace, though, makes this world livable. One of the ways we can talk about God's common grace restraining sin, an image that you could have in your mind.

[25 : 45] Imagine, is it Gardner Street? That's right down there on Dumbarton Road? Super steep one. If you go park there, you're not just going to put it into park. You're going to need to put the handbrake on, right?

Because if your parking brake goes out, you're going to start to roll. The weight of the car, the force of gravity, the steepness of that hill, it is going to whoom! And it's going to do all sorts of destruction.

So God's common grace is like a handbrake that you put on, right? To keep the car from moving. The point is not that we're actually not that bad. We are. But God curbs sinfulness.

He restrains evil, even by writing his law on people's hearts, as Romans 2 talks about. You know, it's a good thing that you live in a world where there is a common understanding that taking another human life is evil and needs to be punished, right?

And we don't have time to get into it, but in Genesis 9, verse 6, it talks about that human life is so valuable that it actually costs the person's life who takes it. God cares about human life so much, Exodus 21, 28, if an ox accidentally gores a person, that ox has to be put to death.

[26 : 57] You can talk about how do you apply that in a society that's not villages. You need two or three witnesses, things like that. That's another thing, but that's how much God cares about life. He doesn't hold life cheaply, so we should stand against things that make human life cheap.

So, first two things is God's common grace. Rather than being aloof, God maintains his creation through his providential care. Also, rather than having to intervene and start over, God works to restrain evil and sin.

He is a long-suffering God. Last thing, though, it's the best one. Saving grace. Why doesn't God do something? Why doesn't God just put a stop to all this evil and suffering in the world?

Okay, so we said, he really does care, and he maintains his creation. He really does act, and he keeps things from getting worse than they are. But why not just stop it all?

Why not just hit the reset button? Start over, God. Stop all this stuff. What's the answer of Genesis 9? Been there, done that.

[28 : 08] Right? And God says, now I will not do that again. I am never again going to destroy the world by a flood. So he waits, maintaining and restraining sin.

But that's not all that he desires to do. He also desires a covenant relationship, not just with humanity and creation in general, but redeemed worshipers in particular.

What's the very first verse that we read? Genesis 8.20, what does Noah do after he gets off of the ark? He builds an altar. Makes a sacrifice to the Lord and worships.

The first instance in the Bible of somebody doing that. It's foreshadowing the sacrifices to come. And there's that part in there too where, again, there's always things you don't have time to talk fully about.

We're wondering, why aren't you allowed to eat the lifeblood of an animal? Right? Well, one is because I think it's differentiating man from the rest of creatures. You're not just like a lion that pounces on a gazelle and tears it up, right?

[29 : 16] It's not what you do. But then also, later, it's the blood that's set aside for the atoning sacrifice in Leviticus. Why doesn't God do something?

Because if God destroyed all evil, you and I would get wiped out. So his maintaining the world and his restraining evil, it doesn't just make the world more livable.

It serves the purpose of his greater grace, namely his saving grace. There's, in Matthew 13, I think it is, Jesus tells a parable of the wheat and the tares, right?

The wheat and the weeds that are there. Master, he goes and he sows the seed in a field. And the wheat grows, but what else comes up with the wheat? The weeds, right?

And so someone asks the master, you know, what do you do? How did the weeds get there? And the master replies, an enemy put it there. In other words, God, he's the one who has made all that's good.

[30 : 17] When you ask, why do you allow evil and suffering? One of the answers is, God didn't put it there. Sin is an intruder. It's an enemy that has brought this. And then the servant asks the master in the parable in Matthew 13, should I just go get rid of the weeds?

Get some weed killer, spray it on it, just go pull them out. And the master replies, he says this, no, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat among them.

Let them both grow until the harvest and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.

What's the point? Is that God allows the evil and the good to grow? Why? So that he can redeem. But it's not always going to be that way.

What we see is that the covenant with Noah, why does God make a covenant with Noah? Not only does he care about his creation, not only does he want people to find joy, he wants them to find saving grace.

[31 : 24] He's giving time for redemption to take place. You know, there's a curse that's common to all and there's a mercy and there's a grace that's common to all, but there's a grace that can only be received if you too, like Noah, heed the warning of God.

Because see, what happens, even in God's long suffering, it's a long time, has anybody ever built an ark before? You think you could do it in a day? It takes a long time. And it's like as Noah gathers the gopher wood and with every single hammer, putting the nail in.

It's God saying, listen, my grace, it's restraining judgment. What are you supposed to do? You need to respond in faith to God's word and to do what? Get in the ark.

Get in the ark. I'm giving you time. Judgment is coming, but now in my grace, which waits, it's asking for you to take hold of his saving grace.

You can't save yourself. You have to get in the boat. In 1 Peter 3, it says, God patiently waited before the flood while the ark was being prepared.

[32 : 41] You ask, does God care about this world? What's he going to do? Is he going to do something about the evil and the sin? He doesn't just maintain his creation, he enters into it. Don't you trust somebody who's walked a mile in your shoes who say phrases like that?

That person knows what it's like. Well, that's what God does. He enters into creation. He walks in your shoes. And in a similar way to Noah, where every hammer is saying, God judges evil.

Listen, God is gracious. God is long-suffering, but don't wait. Heed this warning. It's like every single blow of that hammer in the nails in the cross is saying the same thing.

Listen, God is long-suffering. God does not desire to punish. God desires his grace to come to you. God will maintain this creation.

He will restrain his sin in this world, but he longs for you to not just get into the ark, but to get into the cross and to find his saving grace, to find shelter from the storm.

[33 : 55] He's made a way. He's made a way of escape. He's saying, flee the judgment to come. He's maintained. He's restrained. He's been long-suffering. Why? Why?

He's answered some parts of these questions, right? He maintains this. Does God care? Yeah, yeah, listen. Look, everything would fall apart if God took his hand away. Why does God not do something?

Hey, listen, it could be worse. What's the chief reason? Why does God allow evil and suffering? So that you and I can be saved. Because that's his heart.

That's why he's long-suffering, so that you and I could taste of his saving grace. And the beauty of the cross is the judgment to come, you can experience, you can have your judgment day right now.

You're wondering, you know, if everything was exposed, would you be okay? The message of the gospel is not just you get in the ark, but if you're in Christ, you can have that judgment day now.

[34 : 59] You can know his grace. He's hung his bow in the clouds. The beauty of the cross is that bow has gone off right into the heart of God.

And he gives his son so that you and I can taste of his grace. And this rainbow, every time you see it, every time you drive by, I want you to see that rainbow and I want you to thank God for the Noahic covenant.

How he maintains the world and he restrains evil and how he also saves. And the way that he saves is by taking the judgment on himself.

And that rainbow reminds you every single time that judgment gives way to peace. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks for your covenant with Noah, for this world that we live in, that we can understand of what it is to enjoy life and beauty and to see the goodness of you in this creation.

Even though sin has entered into your good creation, we can still enjoy it, we still have a purpose. All of humanity has a purpose. And we thank you also then that you've created a way, a time, that if you just answered that question, why don't you do something about evil, then the new heavens and the new earth would come, but you have waited and you've delayed.

[36 : 22] It's your kindness that has led us to repent. You've waited so that people like us in Partic could be saved.

could know you. Could know you that one day, someday, you will set all things right. And we long for this for our neighbors, Lord, not because we think that we're so great, but because we know that you are so great.

Help us to make this the theme of our song, the heartbeat of our life, to see the world, to have truth that helps us to wade into it, Lord, but have a peace knowing that you've hung your bow in the clouds and that we can be safe and secure in the cross.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.