

God is a God of Renewal and Second Chances

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: 10 May 2026

Preacher: Craig Dowling

[0 : 00] Genesis 8, beginning at verse 1. The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains became visible.

After forty days, Noah opened a window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground.

But the dove could find nowhere to perch, because there was water all over the surface of the earth, so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark.

He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf.

Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him. By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth.

[1 : 49] Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was completely dry.

Then God said to Noah, Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you, the birds, the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground, so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it.

So Noah came out together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. Amen. May God bless this reading of his word. Thank you for your prayers, Dill.

Let's just pray a little prayer as we gather. Lord, we thank you for the cornerstone that you are, the safety, the salvation, the love.

And so please meet with us now continuously around your word as we approach your table soon. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. You may remember some weeks back.

[3 : 12] I told you about Kyrbrook Village in London and how it was once the notorious furrier estate.

The furrier was my first full-time ministry post. When I first moved in, it was still the furrier.

And it was rife with gangs, drugs, guns, race hate, murders and everything else.

Things had got so bad during the 80s and 90s that by the year 2000, the then government had no other choice but to decant the entire area.

Move everyone to better areas and fully bulldoze down the 20,000 plus homes and start again.

[4 : 28] rebuild the entire area as the new Kyrbrook Village. It worked.

20 years later, I hear life has vastly improved. And more importantly, it gives many people a second chance.

a chance to move away and make a fresh start. It was a good model. So good.

Some politicians have mentioned we need to do this to all of London. Our ones from other cities have said they would like to bring it to Birmingham, Manchester.

and if they had the resources, the money, the energy, the time, they would indeed do that. But that's not realistic.

[5 : 29] Not anymore. Not in this day and age. But renewal and refreshment, replenishment and second chances, they are still very real, very possible and very much still on the agenda.

They are good, helpful and certainly needed. And as people, we only understand this because we have an all-loving, all-awesome and amazing God.

And God, our God, is certainly a God of renewal, refreshment and the second chances.

And here in our reading, we meet Noah. And Christian or not, chances are you have heard the old Noah and the ark story, yeah?

Yeah? the story comes up early on in the Bible and it really, if you ask me, begins at verse 5 of chapter 6.

[6 : 53] At verse 5 of chapter 6. where we read, where we read, the Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth and his heart was deeply troubled. So, the Lord said, I will wipe from the face of the earth humanity.

I will wipe away all created and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground. For I regret that I have made them but Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.

So, perhaps, maybe, maybe, maybe, a bit like the government looking out and over the farrier estate.

Here, God looks out over and across the earth. Now, to fully understand this, one must remember that, scripturally speaking, that really only a patch of the Middle East was populated.

[8 : 50] humanity was, compared to today, rather small in number. There was no Abraham yet, no Jewish nation yet.

This is even before the first known recordings of Egypt, which is the world's oldest and first city. So, it's even before all that.

So, it's only really a small number. and these folk, small in number, they may be, but their vileness, vulgarness, evil, is so corrupt, so harmful, that it is everything and anything else but love.

It's simply not love. humanity had become completely and fully loveless.

And God, the designer of love, is absolutely heartbroken. Heartbroken. Because back there in Eden, he designed and started a beautiful thing of love.

[10 : 12] Love between man and woman. love between friends and love with God. Love, love, love, love. And now the love was gone, all gone, apart from one.

Apart from one. Noah. For whatever reason, Noah still had the love of God in him.

God had a decision to make. A decision to cleanse the earth, to replenish, to revive, to give a second chance to.

And so God indeed brings that about. Reaching out to Noah, God declares, God declares, mankind have indeed broken his heart, and that the earth is to be cleansed.

And Noah's job, his role, in all of this, is to build a massive ark for the cleansing that would come through a massive flood.

[11 : 32] waters would cover the earth to the point that whatever and whomever was in its way would be taken back.

But the ones on the ark who trusted God, who loved God, who got on the ark, will escape the flood. And afterwards, those people will be used to start again. And they will restart things with the love of God in their hearts.

Therefore, giving all of humanity a second chance. So, question, question, who will be saved from the flood?

The answer, whoever is on the ark. Simple. So, second question, who exactly gets on the ark?

[12 : 50] Answer, again, very simple, anyone who simply believes. Anyone who believes just enough to get on the ark. That's who.

Anyone. Anyone. Anyone who has even just a tiny mustard sized seed bit of love faith. faith, and if they use that little bit of faith just to be enough to take a step onto the ark, then God will take that person, no matter how vile or evil they have been, God will take them from the ark to a brand new life.

Replenished, refreshed, and given the greatest and biggest second chance ever. Brilliant. So, Noah gets building, and Noah gets spreading, spreading the word.

Noah calls out everyone, absolutely everyone. He calls out the world as we know it will end via flood, but the good news is our loving God has created a way of salvation.

All you have to do is get on the ark with me. Very, very simple. And so the preaching and the ark building are in full swing.

[14 : 29] Ten years, thirty years, fifty years, seventy years, seventy five years, one hundred years, for up to one hundred and twenty years.

For up to one hundred and twenty years, mankind has a massive amount of time to see that ark and believe and get on it.

Finally, the ark was complete. It was massive. It took one hundred and twenty years to build. God sent the animals. And given the size of the small population of humanity, there was ample room for many to get on that ark.

And the warning sign couldn't have been bigger for nothing spells out caution more than a huge boat in the middle of a desert. The warnings were given.

The preaching was done. The message was out for over a century. But on the day God closed the ark, only eight, eight people had chosen to believe and get on the ark.

[16 : 01] A hundred years of preaching and only eight had believed and accepted a second chance. And the rains came, the flood rose, and the earth was cleansed and God was faithful to his word.

For the rains stopped, the waters dried, and the ark rested on the mount. And dear knows what Noah and the family were thinking by this point.

We get a lovely account in today's reading, in verse six there. after forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven and had kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up.

Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground, ground. But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water all over the surface of the earth.

So it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself. He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark.

[17 : 29] When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf. Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth.

Let's ponder here. Ponder with God. By this point, after all the building, all the preaching, and the endless days on a boat in a flood, Noah certainly had learned the true meaning of patience.

And now, now, after all that, he and his family were stationary, but still unable to get off because the earth, the mount they had landed on is saturated, it's sinking ground.

So they are eating the same food, smelling the same smells, the same wonders, the same questions. Conversations between eight had long dried up.

Enthusiasm was low, hope was low. you can almost capture Noah wondering, can God really recreate this world?

[19 : 02] Is he really able to start over again? Sorry, we've got a bit of blood coming down. So he's looking at the eight of them, really wondering, is God really able to start again with us, with us yet?

But hey, when the boat had finally stopped rocking, Noah sends these birds out on scouting missions.

They go back and forth, back and forth, nowhere to land. Hope gets lower, and on his final attempt, there is Noah waiting all day.

you can almost imagine him, every five minutes or so looking out the window, where's the dove? In between chores, having a look out the window, where's the dove? Not fully focused on anything else, because he needs to know, he needs to know if, if the dove landed, or find anything, because until he knows, he just feels hopeless.

us. We all know the feeling. We have all stood where Noah stood. We have all known our fair share of blood, flood, types, and areas.

[20 : 54] Blood types. This is supposed to be a really serious part now. We have all known our fair share of flood type scenarios.

Bereaved, addiction, redundancy, illness, death, depression, hoax and plans, dashed, when the unexpected happens.

And to add, what about today? The uncertainty of the times of today, wars and violence, pandemics and recessions.

And so yet we've all seen the flood waters rise, rising around our lives. We've all been where Noah was, and we all will be one day again.

hope. And when we are, we all need what Noah needed. Hope. Hope.

[22 : 06] hope doesn't promise an instant solution, but rather the possibility of an eventual one.

Yes, sometimes all we need is that little bit of hope. And yes, that's all Noah needed. And even more, that's what Noah received.

Verse 11 there. When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf.

And scripture adds the exclamation mark for us to tell us what this meant to Noah. An olive leaf. Noah would have been happy just to have received the bird back, but to have the leaf, the leaf, the leaf was more than foliage. This was promise. The bird brought more than a piece of a tree.

[23 : 14] It brought hope. For upon seeing the olive leaf, Noah knew dry ground was approaching, which meant revival, renewal, and a new life was on the agenda.

And yes, God was doing it. So, are you in need of some hope in your life, in your walk with Jesus? Could you use a fresh start, a second chance? At some point in life, we all could. The wonderful welcome news that the story of Noah gives us is, God is a God of fresh starts.

He is the author of the new chapter in your life. And so, no matter what kind of disappointment or grief or trouble or heartache you've encountered or you've done, God offers an opportunity to begin again.

God offers revival. And he offers that second, third, fourth, and beyond chance that we all at times need.

[24 : 35] and he offers it at any and all points in life. In God's plan, scoundrels get a new robe, the weary find new strength, and the lonely find a friend.

The great Isaiah, verse we opened with, declares that. But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.

They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint. Listen, your current circumstances, however powerful they may look, will not get the final say in your life.

Max O'Cattle says, to all the knowers of the world, i.e. to all who search the horizon for a glimpse of hope, God proclaims yes, and he comes.

He comes as a dove, he comes bearing fruit from a distant land, from our future home of heaven, he comes with a leaf of promise that he can and will make all things new for you.

[25 : 55] Amen. So, pressing Christian, hang in there, persevere in all your flood type scenarios because as God did for Noah, when he waited and when he persevered, God will also do for you and he will send his aid to give you hope, give you revival, give you refreshment.

But just before I close this, there is one more thing. As a church, we're going to take communion, remembering Christ's death, death, and we invite all who believe in Jesus to join in.

And if, for whatever reason, you don't as yet believe, feel free to rest, reflect, try praying. But going back to the first half of our teaching, for as in the days of Noah, God has once again given ample warning that our time on earth is short, that we will die, and that beyond earth is heaven or hell.

And many easily think that dependent on how good or how bad they are will determine whether they enter heaven or hell. But truth is no one, no one, not Mother Teresa, not the Queen, or anyone else, has ever been able to be good enough for heaven.

Because in heaven, even a little white lie is a no-go. And so just as with Noah's day, again, the only way you can get into God's safety is by believing what he says.

[28 : 10] And what he says is only by believing in Jesus can you enter heaven. Because when you believe in Jesus, Jesus will then cover you in his goodness.

And with his goodness covering you, you can then enter heaven. Jesus is God's ark for today.

God's love and just like Noah, his church is building his kingdom and preaching the message. And again, just like Noah's days, many are choosing to not believe.

But be assured of this, if you choose to believe, then Jesus will save you, refresh you, renew you, and give you your second, third, fourth, and fifth, and beyond chance.

And fellow Christians here at Westerhills Baptist Church, like Noah's day, we are to be actively busy telling everyone, just like Noah did.

[29 : 20] So round up, all of us, if you're feeling the spirit, or when you next do, because it will come again, rest on God's olive leaf promise of hope, remembering that Isaiah verse.

And church, build the ark, tell people how to get saved, and to everyone, again I say it, Jesus is God's ark today.

If you haven't yet, then you need believe and get in. And so for us, in the ark, already in the ark, let's remember him, let's do as he told us to do, around the table, let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we take so much relief and comfort that in the knowledge that you will return and end the world, sit along, right alongside the same knowledge, but there's a way of safety, there's a way

of salvation.

Just believe in me. And as we've echoed here, Lord, in our words, if anyone is yet to do that, may they do today. And for those of us who have, Lord, may we be more serious about it.

[30 : 48] May we go more deeply with you, and may we build the ark, tell the word, spread the message. Thank you for renewal, for second chances, for revivment.

And now, Lord, bring our hearts to you as we meet around your table. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. So if you're able to stand, please do, while sing Jesus Christ, I think, upon your sacrifice.

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence, without fault, with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ, before all ages, now and forevermore, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. God Thank you.

Thank you.