

There are momentous events in history where we remember the moment as if it is frozen in time.

Where were you, and what did you feel when you heard that WWII had ended or JFK was assassinated?

The first one of these momentous moments I recall was hearing Princess Diana had died in Paris, the most significant were the 9/11 attacks. Closer to home, March 15, and White Island elicit similar feelings, moments frozen in time.

The Great flood should bring us to the same kind of place, it's a horrific moment in time, where something momentous, something terrible, a once in history event, takes place, and we see it brought alive in vivid detail in Genesis 7.

As we've walked up to this point we've been brought face to face with the depth of God's feeling at human sin, and the price that has to be paid for rebellion against the Creator, God Almighty.

Last week Jean reminded us that God is committed to creation, and that despite the depths of our broken hearts God's faithfulness shines through. Our rebellion against our Just God causes him great pain, but because he is just he will not allow evil to go unpunished, or run unchecked.

Week after week on this journey in Genesis we have seen the consistency of God's character; and this morning we see truths we've encountered before revealed, again.

In the misery and horror of the flood in chapter 7 God's character is even more sharply brought into focus, this morning we'll see that: **(slide 2)** God still speaks, God still blesses and God still acts justly.

Why don't we pray?

i) *God is still speaking*

(slide 3) It is striking that the very first verse of this chapter, the chapter of horror, is God drawing near to Noah speaking to him. God isn't distant, he

isn't unfeeling and uninvolved in what is about to take place, he is close at hand; and he gives a command. "Go into the Ark."

In faith Noah has built the Ark trusting that what God says will come to pass, and now it is time for him to go in with his whole family.

v.2 God tells Noah what to take, seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, male and female, and one pair of every kind of other animal, and seven pairs of every kind of bird.

The whole way through the past chapter, and now into this chapter, God is clear about what needs to take place. There is no ambiguity.

God spells out what is about to happen, what Noah needs to do, and God outlines again the judgement he is about to bring on the world.

He had told Noah in 6:7 that he would 'blot out' the evil raging across the face of the earth, and he warns Noah again in v.4 'I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.'

There is no double-speak, or hidden trick, God speaks truthfully and plainly.

That's still true of the Word of God. Its message is clear today. It's not comfortable, it outlines the ongoing brokenness of humanity, and individuals, and calls us to live differently. Writing around 200 years ago **(slide 4)** J.C Ryle said

"Be very sure of this,-people never reject the Bible because they cannot understand it. They understand it only too well; they understand that it condemns their own behaviour; they understand that it witnesses against their own sins, and summons them to judgment."

God is speaking plainly, clearly, and directly to Noah. He speaks and what he says will happen comes to pass.

God still speaks to us clearly today. Hebrews 1 **(slide 5)** outlines how God speaks; 1:1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us

by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

Where do we hear the voice of the Son, the one who was there present at creation? In the Bible, preserved for us, and brought alive by the Holy Spirit. **(slide 6)**

Christians talk about a range of different ways God might be speaking today, but the primary way that we can be absolutely certain and sure of what he says to us is revealed in His Word, the Bible. It is where God is warning, correcting, nurturing, encouraging and making his will for us known.

We serve a God who draws near and speaks to us. Who gives us certainty in an anxious, and uncertain world. Who speaks of an easy yoke, and his great love, and a relationship that is sweeter than anything else we could ever know.

That is a God who dispels loneliness, and despair, even in an evil world, because he speaks and calms, and reassures, and is close at hand. In our fears and troubles, in our dark moments and our joys, even as we march towards a day of judgement and horror, we can speak with him, and hear him speak to us as we live out our lives like Noah, who v.5 'did all that the Lord commanded him.'

ii) God is still blessing

(slide 7) God doesn't just speak to us, as wonderful as that is God still provides, he still blesses. There are two very similar accounts, with the repetition emphasising the events; almost like the images of this events we remembered in the past being played over and over again for emphasis. Different angles are given to give a wider scope and understanding. The same happens here.

In v.6-10 and v.11-12 the heavens open above, and water gushes from the depth's below.

We are hit with creation imagery as God remakes his world. God has spoken, and his word comes to pass.

The animals made their way to the ark vv. 8-9, vv.14-15, God has provided for them, God has provided for Noah and his family, for the righteous, the ones who walk near to him. Even in the deluge, the moments of horror that are about to come, God blesses and provides.

In the clean animals, God is providing a way for the unrighteous of the future to make atonement. We are getting a long view into the future; sacrifice is not required here but will be. God is providing what will be needed.

In the animals not designated as sacrificially clean God is providing for food and sustenance, again a reminder of his work in creation, and his commitment to sustaining it.

Perhaps most strikingly God provides a rescue. Noah has had to trust the word of God and carry out His commands, but now there is a blessing - rescue, but at this point v.16 the rescue is totally dependant on God.

Noah has laboured obediently, building what Jean reminded us last week was a huge box or chest, a chest which is less capable of rescue than the Titanic. It has a huge ramp hanging down the side, and a doorway that is just asking to be filled with water.

Until v.16 the ark is about as seaworthy as a bathtub.

It might float for a while, but eventually it would fill with water, heel over and sink.

And then God acts. He closes the door. He shows his fatherly care for Noah and his family by drawing near and doing something they couldn't do themselves. He has made himself responsible for their salvation.

The same is true of the Lord Jesus. Where we are powerless to save ourselves, because of the sin we carry, the Lord Jesus does what we can not do.

Noah and his family had no way to close that door, and we have no way to atone for our sin. God provides what is needed, in his loving

fatherly care for us. He draws near, he enters our world, he walks to the open chasm called death that would swallow us whole and sink us, and he bridges that gap with his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead.

That releases us friends.

It releases us from striving and flogging ourselves to be perfect, that we might earn salvation. God's grace is all we need. He provides what we can't, we aren't saved by our own righteousness, but by the righteousness of Jesus. Perfection isn't the goal, change by degrees as we obey God and accept the free gift offered to us is.

iii) God is still just

(slide 8) God has blessed by preserving life, and providing what we can't provide ourselves.

In the second part of verse one, as God was speaking with Noah we see the reason God was calling him into the ark 'because I have found you righteous in this generation.' God is absolutely, flawlessly just. He judges, but he doesn't judge in spite - his heart has ached at the depth of human sin, but even in the midst of that pain we've seen that he blesses, and preserves Noah and his family. The righteous aren't punished with the unrighteous, God is impartial and totally fair.

Do we see ourselves contrasted any more starkly? When I am hurt I want to wound. I want to harm.

When I'm yelled at I want to yell. In the depth of his hurt God doesn't lash out like we do, like the ANE or roman or greek gods, he doesn't shout and cry out for banishment like the cancel culture of today, he judges and as he judges justly he turns punishment away from the righteous and shows grace.

Isn't it marvellous to know that God is not like us? He's not a tantrum throwing deity, but acts justly to prevent evil.

Judgement came to pass, the waters rose and thundered down, God wiped the evil from the face of the earth just as he said he would.

But there was still a period of grace given.

Did you notice in v.4 that God gave a gift of time for the work of preservation? Seven days, a week, as he once again mirrors his earlier work in creation reforming the world to something closer to his creation intent. In that time of grace he will bring forth animals, all the creatures, and they will come to man, this time not to be named, but to be spared. He will have to steward them and care for them.

In the depths and the heavens opening, and the relentless 40 days and nights of rain God's judgement came. Through the Old Testament we see God judge, not in totality like this, but he Judges his people and yet he always preserves a remnant.

In Egypt God hears the cry of his people, he brings them out from under Pharaoh's hand. When they rebel he preserves them in the Exodus, giving them all they need as they wander in the desert.

Later the Israelites and Judah are exiled, but graciously, God brings back a faithful few. He protects the disciples of Jesus, as they hide and fear for their lives in the days after his crucifixion, giving them his Spirit as a comforter and friend.

He preserved his followers in the wider Roman Empire, though some paid for their faith with their lives, like in Afghanistan, and Iran, and North Korea today, even in the turmoil of our world, God preserves his Church.

150 days afloat, after the cataclysmic flood which wiped out the breath of life from everything not on that ark, was a very long time. We felt like living at Alert level 4 was bad! But God was at work, protecting, preserving, justly, caring for those who he credited with righteousness.

Just like he does in the Lord Jesus today. When we slip and fall, take heart. *Sins?* are not the end. God is just. He preserves the Righteous. We have been made new creations, alive in Christ, in the Lord Jesus we are made a royal priesthood, a holy nation, we are justified by grace, and credited with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, to enjoy relationship with this God, who is still remaking the world, and preserving his people. **(Slide 9)**

And so take heart today, if your trust is in the Lord Jesus, that moment, when you said you would live his way, was the biggest, most momentous moment in your life. Bigger than JFK's assassination, bigger than 9/11, bigger than any other moment seared on your mind - good or bad. Because in that moment like Noah and his family, you were rescued from the judgement of God, the God who still speaks, still blesses, and still acts justly.

Pray.