

Have you ever heard from a child, or someone you were looking after say 'You don't care'?

You've been doing your best, and something has been misinterpreted, or maybe you've laid down the law for the good of the person you're looking after and they let you have it. It feels awful doesn't it when the person you're trying to care for, sees the exact opposite.

After the terrible flood it would be easy to think that God doesn't care about people. That he's hard of heart, that he's dispassionately wiped out every human and every creature because he was unfeeling.

Today we will see that nothing could be further from the truth.

God cares for his creation. Life matters to God. As we trace God's blessing and God's covenant through this passage we will see that all life matters to God, humanity matters to God, the animals matter to God, and you matter to God.

Before we launch in why don't we pray?

Heavenly father we give you thanks and praise for your timeless word.

We thank you that through the book of Genesis so far we've been able to trace your love for your creation and your blessing for all mankind.

Encourage us today as we consider the blessing and the covenant made with Noah and your promises to us that are true for all time.

Lift our eyes to you, and lift our hearts as we consider what really matters to you. We ask it in Jesus' name and for his glory.

Amen.

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God's first action after the flood is remarkable.

Verse 1 'God blessed Noah and his sons' God blesses them and he gives them a mandate. It's a mandate we've seen before, it's repeated in verse 7. "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." It's God's original intent for humanity, to fill the earth, to live within God's good creation, and to enjoy his blessing.

After the judgment of the terrible flood, God is once again establishing a new order just as we saw him do after Adam and Eve rebelled against him and God passed judgment on them and the serpent in Genesis chapter 3. Then God established a new order for humanity.

He does that again. His intent for humankind, to fill the earth, to multiply, and to increase remains the same as it was in Genesis chapter 1.

He wants us to flourish, but not everything after the flood remains the same. In this post-flood new order we see in verse 3 that everything that lives and moves will be for food. The relationship between people and animals is altered.

God's good design for a harmonious existence between all parts of his creation is impacted forever.

Animals will now know the fear of people; a protection mechanism.

In Eden, Adam's authority over the animals didn't include exploitation or eating them. The standard of Genesis 1:29 has been altered by human wickedness and it will never be the same again.

Although, God sets a boundary. Animals will be for food but the meat must not be eaten with the lifeblood in it. There is a limiting to what we may take and eat.

It's repeated in Leviticus 3, 7 and 17 and Deuteronomy 12 and Acts 15.

Blood matters to God. Verses 5 and 6 make that abundantly clear. If an animal gores a human and spills their blood to the point of death, then the fate of the animal is sealed, it will be put to death.

God will demand an account even from animals.

If we murder it is a violation with a grave consequence.

God will demand an account. God has just acted in judgement because of the violence that was sweeping the globe before the flood. That heart of violence, which we saw in Lamech the boaster, wasn't wiped out with the flood, it doesn't stop. God knows that violence and murder will rise again within his rebellious people.

We see it all around us don't we? We see murder and violence and warfare and oppression. We see this ongoing legacy of rebellion against God.

So what is going on here?

God places sanctity on life, on people and the creatures that live in his good creation, because life matters to him. God is reaffirming his Lordship over all living beings.

Next month the end of life choice act becomes law, allowing euthanasia for the first time in our country.

During the debate I heard the argument "I want the right to choose how and when I will die." but God says no to that choosing.

God reserves power over life and death. That is deeply confronting isn't it?

It goes to the very core of our nature where we wrestle against God, and want to take control. We want to define what is good. Why should we endure difficulty and pain when we're ending the nearing the end of our days when we could just choose to slip away in a medical induced end?

Because God defines what is good.

God defines what it means to have dignity. People have intrinsic value. We are special, we are sacred because we are made in the image of God.

In verse 6 it's reiterated again. God's definition; his proclamation is that people are made in his image and that deeply challenges the thinking in our world about where the value of human life comes from.

Sometimes the value of life is boiled down to productivity, or convenience. So our older folks hear that they worth much anymore because they don't go out and work. They can't be productive, they're not well enough or fit enough or strong enough to.

It's an appalling way to think about people who have lived their lives well, who have so much wisdom, who have so much to share in the Church building up, and drawing alongside, encouraging others to grow in faith.  
{Blessings}

God's way is very different. We are called to respect those who are older than us. God gives value to the elderly, infirm, disabled.

In New Zealand one in four pregnancies end in abortion. Our value of life is so low that a mother can have a child's life ended because it would be a hassle to raise the child. This is justified on mental health grounds because raising a child would have an impact on the life of the parents.

Friends that should horrify us shouldn't it? That life is seen as disposable.

Thankfully abortion is not an unforgivable sin and i'm sure that some of us have been impacted by abortion  
it's not my right or my role to pass any judgment on a brother or sister who's been there.

If you are in the Lord Jesus you are a forgiven friend. What has happened in your past is between you and God; there is now no condemnation for those found in christ Jesus.

Despite what our societies teach we are not given free rein over human life. God will demand an accounting. Neither are we given free rein over the animals. We are to exercise discretion, and self-control. Our authority and our rights are limited. We are to obey an ordinance from God about what we can reach out and eat. We are to submit to his authority and rule.

We are to sit within the bounds of what God defines as good rather than rebelling and crowning ourselves kings and queens when we define what is good.  
Does it sound familiar?

Even in this post-flood, new order, God sets these bounds for us. He is still the creator, He is still the judge. He is still the one who will define for humanity what is good and what is not.

There's also an emphasis on the value of blood. Even before the establishment of the covenant with Noah to preserve life God's is to exact about the value of blood.

First the value the blood of animals, which will form the backbone of atonement within the life of Israel. Ultimately it points to the sacrifice of the blood that will be shed by the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

These are not mere rituals they are costly exchanges. In the Mosaic covenant under the law, the blood sacrifice is demanded on the day of atonement. They cover sin for a time but they point to an atonement which will make us right with God forever. An atonement through the Lord Jesus Christ.

As God gives new bounds for the protection of life he makes an enduring promise to protect it; even knowing that the pattern of the human heart is set on rebellion and the rejection of God's ways.

As God speaks with Noah and his sons in verse 8 he enacts the covenant he intended to in chapter 6 verse 18. This covenant isn't just between Noah his family and God.

God makes this covenant with every living creature, verse 11.

'I establish my covenant with you never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood.'

Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth. God sets the bounds for humanity in the new order. Now he sets the bounds for how he will relate to his creation.

God makes a covenant, he is setting in motion his earlier declaration in chapter 8 verse 21 never again would he curse the ground or destroy all living creatures.

The scope of this covenant is extensive. God's creation is guaranteed safety from judgment by a flood again. God reassures Noah and his family that they will never have to see the kind of destruction they've just survived.

God had made peace with his people after pronouncing the judgment and carrying it out. He has preserved the recipients of his grace, he has provided a way for them to escape the judgment by their obedience to his word and now he guarantees their future survival.

As a reminder of that covenant God gives a sign. there are two other passages in the first five books of the bible that refer to something as a sign of a covenant. In genesis chapter 17 it's circumcision which is the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham which establishes the Hebrew nation.

In exodus chapter 31 it is the Sabbath day and keeping the Sabbath. This is reemphasised as the law is handed to Moses and people are set apart.

Once again God is setting a pattern which points to the significance of what he's doing. He has hung up his bow. He will no longer strike at humanity in the way he just has.

The symbol of war, a bow, becomes a symbol of peace with his creation. When it rains and we see a rainbow it is a sign of reassurance.

In verse 16 God says he will remember the covenant to the earth when he sees the rainbow it's not like God is going to forget a promise. his word endures and so the point is made as clearly for us as possible that God's promises are entirely believable, his words are totally trustworthy and he backs up his words with an act; the sign of the rainbow to eliminate even the possibility of forgetfulness on God's part.

This whole narrative points to the coming judgment on the last day where we can be protected by another covenant. A covenant sealed in blood, the blood of the Lord Jesus.

In the book of Hebrews it's described as better than any other covenant that God had made before it It's in hebrews chapter 9 verses 13 to 15.

If the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean can sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean how much more then will the blood of christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from the acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God? For this reason christ is the mediator of a new covenant that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

This covenant in Jesus isn't just a covenant which promises protection from a flood. It declares that there will be eternal safety, salvation for those who God has made his people.

This covenant is made in christ because you matter to God.

The blood of Jesus was shed so that you could be free from the wickedness which has taken root in all of our hearts.

You have not been forgotten by God.

During this pandemic, during this time of uncertainty, you have not been abandoned. some of us have lost so much. The cost for some has been so high and you feel like you've been forgotten by God, you feel like he doesn't see you any longer.

Hold fast to the Lord Jesus. He has died for you. Look to the cross and see it as a sign of his covenant like the rainbow.

Cling to him! you matter to God you matter so much, he loves you so dearly, that he died for you to bring you back to himself, just like he has for me.

The Father has established a never-ending covenant in the blood of his son. If your faith is in the Lord Jesus then you are safe and you will dwell with your God forever and ever enjoying an inheritance that will never spoil or fade.

Life matters to God, humanity matters to God, animals matter to God, and you matter to God.

Why don't we pray and thank him for that new covenant established in the blood of his son, let's pray.

Father God we thank you that you have loved us so much that you hung up your bow. Thank you that you delivered Noah and his family.

That you have shown us so clearly that life matters to you. Help us to see the sanctity of life through your eyes.

We ask today in the power of your Holy Spirit that you would help us, help us ordinary people to take the good news of Jesus out to others that many might recognise that he is the mediator of a new covenant come to set us free from our sins.

We ask it in his name and for his glory.

Amen