

Daily Devotions
from the United Reformed Church

Stories from Genesis
part 1



Saturday 9th – Saturday 23rd May

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Introduction

We often skip through Genesis in our weekly selection of readings in church and it's not often we take time to read it through in our own private devotions. For the next couple of months we're going to read most of the Genesis stories. We're skipping Joseph as we looked at him last year. Here we have stories of sex, power, murder, sin and grace. Written long after the events they portray they teach us about Israel's understanding of both themselves and God.

Prayer

O God,
the One who brings blessing and Covenant,
through your grace
we are transformed and forgiven,
changed into the people you want us to be.
Through your grace,
we are healed and loved,
made whole by the touch of your calling.

Through your grace,
we are blessed and restored,
never to excluded, but included in Your family of humanity.
Amen

circumcised on that very day. And every male in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

Reflection

After thirteen years of silence, Abram must have been greatly encouraged by this encounter with the Lord. This narrative is a tête-à-tête between Abram and the Lord; a conversation full of surprises, instruction, change of names, consequences of covenant and blessing. During the questions and answer session about covenant, God blesses Sarai, the woman who is not directly involved in this discussion yet is central to it. It is through the blessing of Sarai, that she becomes the mother of nations; and what does Abram do? Only bend his head low and chuckle! He is laughing at the absurdity of it all or exasperation of an image of the elderly pregnant Sarai?

Personally, I do not view this as the laugh of delight, but of disbelief. The impossibility of such a thing taking place was the cause of Abraham's outburst. But let not be too pious about this matter, I suspect Abraham's response is just about what we would have done. The promise was an incredible one—too much to take in one dose, however laughter is often the response to things which catch us off guard.

How often have laughed at the absurd, only to find that over time, our laughter was tuned into amazement?

In Genesis 17 we learn, that from something impossible, through God's covenant, becomes a possibility, something that seems hopeless becomes hopeful and a blessing, not just for Abraham and Sarah, but for all generations, and that includes us.

This story is about growth, and we cannot have a static relationship with God, through Jesus, God will break into our lethargic lives and draw us closer to Godself. Surely that is what the Christian life is all about.

Saturday 9th May The Creation Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

Lawrence Moore, Mission & Discipleship Consultant, Worsley Road URC, Salford

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day. And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it,

according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.” Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.” When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him. On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, and his son Ishmael was thirteen; Abraham and his son Ishmael were both

Hagar's conversations with the angel (here and Gen. 21) are unique experiences for a woman in the Hebrew Scriptures.

One thing I treasure about Genesis in the accounts of Abraham-Sarah, Jacob and Joseph is that God had long-term plans for them which spanned decades. These Biblical characters had to endure and be patient.

Even though aged 48, I am still called "young man" at URC gatherings, I recognise the decades God has been forming my call to the ministry. We live in a very fast-paced world, where a week can seem a long time. Indeed, in Galatians 5:22, we are reminded that "patience" is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart.

(Source: Jacques Berthier, Taizé Community)

[Saturday 23rd May The Covenant with Abraham](#)

The Rev'd Ruth Dillon Minister serving Fleet URC and Beacon Hill Hindhead URC , Wessex Synod

Genesis 17

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you

Reflection



No, this isn't a contemporary debate about the origins of our universe: it's an underground, anti-Babylonian poem, encouraging the exiles to keep trusting that the good purposes of God who created the world as a place of Life and flourishing will ultimately prevail – and include them!

The ancient world was clear about two things: firstly, the god who created the world got to say how the world ought to be and life ought to be lived. Secondly, who this god is was decided in battle – the people of the strongest god won. The Exile therefore threatened the heart of faith in The Lord – the God of the exiles.

The Babylonian creation story (the Enuma Elish) is an epic poem, describing the creation of the world by Marduk in eight days. They had an eight-day week. The exiles adapt it into a poem of their own (our text). Read it aloud and you'll hear the poetic formula clearly: "God said, 'Let there be ...'/and there was/ And God saw that it was good/ There was evening and morning, the nth day/Then God said ..".

Now look at days three and six. They're different: God creates two things on each day instead of one! It interrupts the poetic formula. The eight-day Babylonian creation poem has become a six-day Jewish poem, followed by a Sabbath. This is God's order for human living and flourishing, and a dangerous denial of Babylon's god! God, not Empire, with all its power, will prevail. Life, not suffering and death, will have the Last Word!

That is vital Good News for our world. Jesus promised that this world will become the Kingdom of God – all God intended at creation. We need to

commit ourselves as partners in God’s mission to make this a reality. It may be in mustard-sized pieces, but it gives truth to the Good News of Jesus we proclaim.

Prayer

Let us live in our homes, churches, communities and world

What we proclaim with our lips:

“Light is stronger than darkness;

Good is stronger than evil;

Love is stronger than hate;

Hope is stronger than despair;

God’s Kingdom is stronger than Empire;

Life is stronger than death!” Amen.

Sunday 10th May Psalm 146

The Rev’d Carole Elphick, Retired Minister, Muswell Hill URC

1 Praise the LORD, my soul!

O praise him!

2 I’ll extol him all my days.

While I live, to God my Saviour

from my heart I will sing praise.

3 Do not put your trust in princes,
mortal men who cannot save.

4 All their plans
will come to nothing

when they perish in the grave.

5 Blessèd is the one who truly
looks for help to Jacob’s God;
Blessèd is the one who places
all his hope upon the LORD—

6 He who made the earth
and heaven

and the seas, with all their store;

He who keeps his every promise,
who is faithful evermore.

7 He delivers from oppression
and relieves the hungry’s plight.

He releases those in prison;

8 to the blind the LORD gives sight.

Those who are bowed down
he raises.

God delights in righteousness.

9 He protects

and cares for strangers,

6widows and the fatherless.

of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.”

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.” That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered. So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Reflection

Today’s reading is a rare passage in the Bible where the focus of the narration is women. It’s not found in the three-year Lectionary cycle, so we may be unfamiliar with it.

Sarai’s infertility is the one piece of additional information we learn at the start of Abram’s story (Gen. 11:30). Ten years have passed since God’s promise to create a great nation (Gen. 12:2, 15:4). Even their great wealth (Gen. 13:2) has not brought them fulfilment.

How did Sarai feel? Infertility was then considered a divine curse. Did God’s promise feel like a cruel joke? She grew impatient and contrived a human solution.

This passage does not paint Sarai in a good light. Despite the good intention, feelings turn sour, Sarai blames Abram for the mess, the women’s relationship becomes abusive and Hagar flees. The angel’s words to Hagar are a very poor example of pastoral care: we would never advise the return to an abusive relationship!

The angel repeats to Hagar God’s covenant promise to Abraham: Ishmael would have numerous descendants. In Islam, Ishmael is considered be a prophet and an ancestor of Muhammad.

Prayer

In God's name,
pray for increased awareness;
pray for the protection of the most vulnerable;
pray for the restoration of victims;
pray for justice to be done.

[Friday 22nd May - Hagar and Ishmael](#)

Walt Johnson, NSM Ordinand at Northern College and Member at Wilbraham St Ninian's URC (Chorlton, Manchester)

Reading - Genesis 16

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; so she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me." "Your slave is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her. The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered. Then the angel of the Lord told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count." The angel of the Lord also said to her: "You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey

He frustrates the wicked's purpose.
10 So the LORD through endless days
Reigns to every generation.
Praise your God, O Zion, praise!

Reflection

Sometimes an abundance of praising gets a bit wearing in the Psalms. Coming from a cold start, all that exuberance can get you down. But what we have here in the first of five final songs in the Psalter is an encouragement to acknowledge what God has done and realistically that can only lead to praise. By contrast, princes' and mortals' actions and plans are fundamentally flawed whether they be good or bad leaders, for their time will pass. In a nifty bit of wordplay I read somewhere, echoing the Hebrew, humans will return to the humus. God's time endures forever - a thought worth clinging onto as we pass through our own turbulent 2020 events.

Jacob raises his head again in verse 5 reminding us that this giant of the faith was as damaged as we are and yet God worked in and through him to reveal God's love and faithfulness to all generations. The God of Jacob and Israel keeps promises and frustrates the wicked's purpose.

We praise God because God is the source of all that is good, enduring and hopeful and heaven knows we need those eternal values in our lives. But words alone - even the most beautifully crafted poetry, music and art are empty praise unless they go on to reflect the character and action of God in practical ways. Thoughts and prayers alone do not cut it.. God does not sit on a throne receiving adulation and praise but God gets down and dirty with humanity and sets about feeding the hungry, releasing the prisoner and raising the fallen. We still have much to learn about protecting and caring for strangers and widows and the fatherless as agents of God's love and faithfulness but this is the deepest praise we can offer.

We put our trust in God who delights, protect, cares, releases, raises, and delivers us. In God we trust. Praise the Lord!

Prayer

Praise to the holiest in the height
And in the depth be praise
In all his words most wonderful
Most sure in all his ways.

John Henry Newman (1801-90)

[Monday 11th May Another Account of Creation](#)

The Rev'd Ron Reid is a retired minister in the Mersey Synod serving as Link Minister at Rock Chapel, Farndon. He is a member at Upton-by-Chester URC

Genesis 2: 4 - 25

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is

Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

Reflection

No two ways about it, this is a repellent story.

Having learned that he, and Sarai of course (we mustn't forget her role), will found a nation, Abram displays lack of faith in God's protection by taking his family to Egypt to escape famine. He persuades his wife to pose as his sister - a half-truth, since she is his half-sister, but a lie for all that. She ends up as a cherished companion, mistress, or wife of Pharaoh himself. Meanwhile Abram, as Sarai's 'brother', willingly accepts substantial gifts from the grateful ruler. The truth, however, catches up with Abram. God afflicts Pharaoh and his household with ailments which somehow brings the matter to light.

We have the strange situation that Abram the patriarch is portrayed as a liar, willing to sell the services of his wife, while the duped Pharaoh is the one who cares about Sarai's plight. When he sends the family away, Pharaoh allows them to take all the acquired wealth with them, perhaps as a mark of respect for Sarai.

What she thought of it all is never articulated.

It would be comforting to believe that the exploitation of those in weaker positions remains buried in this ancient story, but nothing could be further from the truth. Think of the pimps who prostitute powerless adults and even children for profit or self-gratification. Think of the traffickers who bring adults from poorer countries to work for no reward, often in illegal trades. Think of those in positions of power, including in our churches, who use and abuse children and vulnerable adults. We can close our eyes, but none of this will go away unless we as a society, and as Christians, make the protection of our most defenceless brothers and sisters a priority.

God promises that this new life will be blessed and that he will be a blessing to others. God promises a land, descendants, a name that will be remembered and a purpose. These promises would not be fully realised in his lifetime. However God is calling and Abram responds.

Prayer

Father God we are amazed at the way Abram trusted you as you called him to leave all that he knew. Help us to hear what you are asking of us and give us the courage to respond. May we be a blessing to others too. Amen

Thursday 21st May Abram the Pimp
Pat Stannard, Elder, Muswell Hill URC

Genesis 12: 10-20

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you." When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels. But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" Then Pharaoh gave orders about

the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Reflection

A second account of the creation of humanity? Or is it the first? Scholarship seems to concur that this creation story in Genesis 2 derives from source material in currency half a millennium before the more familiar version. Those with a wider horizon (temporal and geographical) may well describe both as but pebbles in a mosaic of Ancient Near Eastern creation myths best viewed from above to obtain a true perspective on their significance.

Such an overview suggests that it is not too surprising if the accounts are somewhat contradictory – simply that no rigorous editorial process was applied (or presumably felt necessary) by the collectors/compiler of the material into Jewish Scripture. It was their desire neither to compile a scientific treatise on creation nor to imply that every word was set by direct divine composition.

Therefore neither scientific literalists nor young earth creationists need worry overmuch about (or minimise) the discrepancies.

As Saturday's writer comments, the first story is a poem. It's a description of how God ordained and ordered the cosmos and the world, envisioning a God acting by speaking in and to a chaotic situation through an ordered series of commands.

The prosaic narrative in Chapter 2 is in a sense much more down to earth. From the dirt of the garden God made man and plants and animals, but it was from the man that the woman was created to be a companion. Creation as relationship.

The sweep of the entire piece moves from a cosmocentric commanding God to an anthropocentric partnership in full relationship with a God who wanted what was good for humanity.

Thus is mirrored an understanding of two sides of our God – one who expects us to obey the commands of worship, doing justice and seeking peace who in return will fulfil the covenant with us by leading us to eternal life.

Prayer

God who made the earth the air, the sky, the sea,
who gave the light its birth – God cares for me.

(Sarah B Rhodes (Rejoice and Sing 62))

Creator God, in your mercy, care for me

Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Reflection

We are used to stories of people going travelling these days. Taking a gap year and travelling around the world before going to university or taking a year out before settling down. It is also more common to hear of people taking career breaks or making the once in a lifetime trips in early retirement. However Abram and his family are doing this at a time when their lives were closer to the end than the beginning.

At such times when we might be downsizing and moving closer to our families, Abram is doing the opposite. His journey involved him and his household in leaving everyone and everything they had ever known, except each other. Even his father's household is left behind. This seems an irresponsible act given the expectation that a family would care for the elderly.

Abram is also exchanging the settled existence of town life for that of a nomad, dependent on wells and grazing to support the herds, trading goods to feed the household in areas he has never visited before.

The distance he travels is huge - it's worth looking at an atlas to see this first stage of his journey and then comparing it with the distance you have moved in your lifetime. Then consider that this would be travelled on foot or camel. The blessing offered to the childless elderly couple, their nephew and their households is worth the step of faith they are making.

Prayer:

Loving God

We thank You for diversity, both in the Church and in our world.
We thank You for the gifts and talents that different people can bring.
May we not become inward looking, concerned only for those who talk
or act or look like us; but instead delight in the diversity that You have
created.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Wednesday 20th May Abram

The Rev'd Viv Henderson, Minister of Minehead URC

Genesis 12: 1 - 9

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and
your father's household to the land I will show you.

"I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram
was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife
Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the
people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of
Canaan, and they arrived there.

Tuesday 12th May Paradise Lost

Jonnie Hill, Ordinand at Northern College, Member of Chorlton Central
Church in Manchester

Genesis 3

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord
God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not
eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We
may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must
not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you
must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the
serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it
your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and
evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food
and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took
some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her,
and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they
realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made
coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of
the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and
they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord
God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in
the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said,
"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I
commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put
here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then
the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The
woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the Lord God said
to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.
And I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

To the woman he said,

“I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labour you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.”

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’

“Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.”

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Reflection

It’s a story that’s often overlooked; when we do read it, the idea of a tower climbing up to heaven does sound a little odd. But at the heart of today’s passage, we see humanity trying to comprehend their relationship with God.

Only four chapters earlier, we can read the story of Captain Noah and his floating zoo - we read how humanity had turned away from God’s commands, so God felt He had to start humankind off anew, almost being a computer scientist and ‘turning it off and on again’. No doubt memories or stories of the flood continued to worry the people who came after. Although we’ve no idea of the timescales, it would be natural to worry about being scattered, particularly in an age and culture where living together in society was so valued.

Yet, if this was the case, the people in Shinar had missed the point. They wanted to remain all in one place - to stay in the newly discovered lands to which they had migrated. Yet God, we read in Genesis 1 and Genesis 9, specifically wanted humans to spread all over the earth. In building this tower, they were going against God’s will.

It feels to me as though the tower was built out of fear, and indeed, reading the passage in this way can leave one to wonder why the tower was such a sinful thing to build in the first place. But we must read this passage of Scripture in the context of the whole of Genesis. God’s punishment, after all, was not entirely negative. Although going against humanity’s desires, God’s actions enabled humans to spread through the world, and gave us the variety that we know and love today.

One of the delights of the URC is the wide variety contained within. In terms of theology, practice, opinion and architecture, we are a real amalgam. I think that the story of Babel serves to highlight how God doesn’t want us all to be identical, or mirror images one of another, but instead rejoices in our diversity.

Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, as a sexual predator makes us realise we can all be capable of heroic sanctity and dreadful sin.

Prayer

Lord, help us to understand the Scriptures,
to see how they've been used,
and to commit ourselves to always taking the side of the oppressed,
using your words to liberate,
Amen.

Tuesday 19th May Babel's Tower

Michael Topple is a Synod Accredited Lay Preacher in the Eastern Synod,
and a member of Chappel URC

Genesis 11: 1 - 9

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward,[a] they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel — because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Reflection

Developmental psychology is concerned with the study of how we become the people we are. In many ways, Genesis 3 has served as an account of the origins of our 'flawed' human nature. We have many understandings of this 'flaw', but at the heart of Genesis 3 is the rupture in relationship that takes place between God and Adam and Eve.

At the beginning of the chapter Adam and Eve seem quite child-like. As any parent would, God has set the boundaries and expectations for the children and forbids them to eat of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil".

But 'adolescence' sets in and Adam and Eve seem ready to think for themselves. With the prompting of the serpent (perhaps an older peer in everyday life), Adam and Eve seek to test the limits of their autonomy, they break out from their parent's boundaries and make their own decisions.

The consequence of this? Well they too, like God, come to know of good and evil. Their child-like innocence is lost and they are exposed to the harsh reality of adulthood – actions result in consequences.

My work as a counsellor has shown me that as we mature, thinking and deciding for oneself almost inevitably brings us into conflict with those who brought us up, those who would 'keep us safe' from the knowledge of evil.

But God created human beings to grow, to develop and mature, to think for ourselves. Were Adam and Eve's actions not inevitable sooner or later?

Many parents can bear witness to hellish years with their children as teenagers, wondering where they went wrong, only years later to have reconciled, mutual and respectful relationships with their children.

A short reflection is hardly the place to reimagine such a foundational passage of scripture. But maybe we can give some weight to our own experience of human development as we read this passage afresh.

Loving God, parent to all,
You have created us
to grow, develop and mature.
Though we may assert our independence
and make our own decisions,
continue to draw us to you,
that our will may be reconciled to yours,
and your kingdom come
on earth as in heaven. Amen.

[Wednesday 13th May The First Murder](#)

The Rev'd Julian Macro, Retired Minister, Member Verwood United Reformed Church

Genesis 4: 1-16

Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man." Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field,

Reflection

The recent production of Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* has been an international success. Atwood posits a fascist regime only valuing women for their fertility. LGBT people are referred to as "gender traitors" and black people referred to as "Children of Ham". That reference comes from this confusing passage.

The story is an attempt to explain Canaanites origins and was written to justify their subjugation by Israel.

We're not sure what is meant by Ham seeing his father naked especially as when Noah comes round he is appalled at what Ham has done to him. It might be as simple as the shame in seeing one's father naked but it might also be Biblical code for some form of sexual assault (see Leviticus 20:17).

Then we have the horror of how the story has been used over time. Noah condemns Canaan, not Ham, to slavery. Ancient commentators began to depict Ham as black. Linking the curse on Canaan to slavery became a Biblical proof text to justify slavery.

Sadly there are many Biblical texts that support slavery - that shouldn't surprise us given the prevalence of slavery in the ancient world. As late as the 19th Century, however, Christians were using this text to justify the enslavement of black people. Other Christians, including many Congregationalists, were involved in the abolition movement. At same time as the Congregational Union of Scotland was opposing slavery one of its ministers founded the Congregational Church in Stewarton; he was a man made wealthy from the slave trade.

We have to be careful when using the Bible in our ethical decision making and be aware of how texts have been used to oppress and condemn as well liberate and enliven. We need to confront our own mixed history around slavery and racism; the recent exposure of Jean

Prayer

When I look at the starry heavens, Lord, help me to feel small but secure.
When I see the green earth, keep me aware of your presence and provision.

In trouble teach me to trust.

Out of healing may I learn hope.

That I may praise you, gladly and gratefully.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday 18th May The Curse on Canaan

The Rev'd Andy Braunston is minister of Stewarton URC in East Ayrshire.

Genesis 9: 18 - 28

The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth. Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked. When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers." He also said, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend Japheth's territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth." After the flood Noah lived 350 years. Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died.

Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." But the Lord said to him, "Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Reflection

"Am I my brother's keeper?" –
The muttered cry was drowned
By Abel's life-blood shouting
In silence from the ground
For no man is an island
Divided from the main,
The bell which tolled for Abel
Tolled equally for Cain.

John Ferguson (R&S 609)

I have often said that the Old Testament legends are not to be treated as history but to tell us about God, our relationship with God and with each other. However the story of Cain and Abel, in the form we have it, does not fit in with this interpretation as we are not told why God had no regard for Cain's offering but seems to be capricious in a way that does not complement other records of God's actions. Perhaps Cain's offering was not from the best of his crops but what our local supermarket labels as "wonky" – we do not know.

But it is clear that Cain was incensed and picked a fight with his brother; Abel's death may not have been intended but was the unintended consequence of impetuous and ill-considered sibling rivalry. This story certainly tells us about our relationships with others, and not just those in our immediate family. Helpfully and pertinently John Ferguson melds John Donne's verse with his own.

It is all too easy to react rashly when we feel aggrieved or provoked and say or do something which makes a difficult situation worse, sometimes with dreadful consequences.

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

Oscar Wilde (The Ballad of Reading Gaol)

Prayer

Gracious God: we pray for protection and strength so that when we are upset, angry or provoked we may be able to think clearly, speak wisely and act in ways that build up and repair rather than break down and shatter our relationships with others.

Seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit we pray in the name of Jesus:
Amen

11 The LORD takes pleasure in his saints
who worship him in fear,
And those who trust his steadfast love
will always find him near.

Nature and nurture

'God of Stars and Broken Hearts'. That's the title one commentator gives to this Psalm (Leslie Allen, Word Biblical Commentary). This is a hymn about creation and compassion, about nature that shows God's power and the nurture that embraces God's people. In this Psalm greatness and goodness go together, the splendour of God's world and the secure relationship God offers to those who trust.

There are three movements in the whole Psalm (vv.1-6, 7-11 and 12-20): two of them are in our reading. The three together issue a lively and repeated call to praise, and together they paint a picture of grace at work. Each of the three explores and connects the Psalm's two big themes – creative power and covenant love. In creation, the first tells of the starry skies, the second of rainfall, watering the earth and feeding animals and plants, and the third of winter storms and summer crops. Then in covenant we hear first of a broken and scattered people restored, second of a call to trust and hope rather than rely on worldly might, and finally of a people shaped by God's purposeful word. A wrap-around creation, of skies, seasons and sustenance matches the loving care that gathers, guards and guides.

A psalm like this is always both a comfort and a challenge. The power that made the earth is a personal power, a power that notices people and calls us into relationship, a power we can turn to and trust. That's the comfort. The challenge is never to take God for granted. God's grace is no reason for our complacency. When God builds us up and binds us up, this is an invitation to live faithfully, to reflect grace and pass it on, that others too may trust in this God of creation and care.

In the beauty of a rainbow we see a spectrum as sunlight passes through raindrops, and we can feel the presence of you within it. Let that inspire us to play our part in minimising our impact on our planet home, our fellow creatures, and to truly act as stewards of Creation. Amen

Sunday 17th May Psalm 147 1 -11

The Rev'd John Proctor, General Secretary of the URC, member at Downing Place URC, Cambridge

1 O praise the LORD!
How good it is
to sing him songs of praise!
How pleasant to give
thanks to him
for all his gracious ways!

2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
and he it is alone
Who reaches out to Israël
to bring the exiles home.

3 He heals his people's
broken hearts,
restores the bruised and lame.

4 He sets the number of the stars
and calls them each by name.

5 Great is our Lord
and great in power;
his wisdom is profound.

6 The LORD sustains
the meek, but casts
the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the LORD
with thankfulness;
with joy his praise proclaim;
And with the music of the harp
give glory to his name.

8 He clothes the vast
expanse of heaven—
the sky with clouds he fills;
He makes the rain
refresh the earth
and grass grow on the hills.

9 He sees the beasts
that roam the fields
and feeds them when they call;
The ravens' young cry out to him,
and he supplies them all.

10 In horses strong,
equipped for war,
the LORD takes no delight;
Nor does he care
for proud displays
of human power and might.

Thursday 14th May Noah and the Flood

Elizabeth Gray-King, Education & Learning Programme Officer, member St Columba's URC Oxford

Genesis 6: 9 - 7:6

This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."

Noah did everything just as God commanded him. The Lord then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the

earth. Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”

And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.

Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

Reflection

Here is a grand myth, shared between tribes and peoples of faith in Mesopotamia. Woven together from two threads, there are inconsistencies for the fact conscious amongst us. How many animals? Were they clean, unclean, or a mixture of both? Does it matter? Not really, especially as the story has fuelled so many plays, books, songs and toys, dear to the hearts of many.

Some see this myth is a reversal of the creation myths. Instead of bringing life from the waters of the earth, the earth is to be returned to those very waters, drowned in its own birth fluids. Yet, this myth doesn’t end with complete creation reversal. Noah, his family and some animals are set aside to be saved. The murderer Cain has built a violent society which God declares corrupt. Noah, descended from Seth, is seen to be righteous. This isn’t a flood story. It’s an ancient tale of humanity’s usual battle: Good v Evil. What shocks me is that the tale is woven to suggest that our God is a God of vengeance, willing to kill a significant majority of those God created and loved - to prove a point. God prefers good to evil. Well yes, so do we. Yet, God shown to us in Jesus is not that God of vengeance. God who Jesus called Father didn’t destroy all those who sent Jesus to his death. God shown to us in Holy Spirit, giving people a

assumptions about the hierarchy of species, but the re-teller of this story in Genesis has humanity firmly at the top.

So, in Noah’s flood, were the dolphins and fish unduly affected? We could travel down that rabbit-hole and ponder the effect of 40 days of rainwater on ocean and sea salinity, but it’s in the same category as why dinosaurs aren’t listed on the Ark manifest!

Taking this literally is ‘mostly harmless’ apart from when the rainbow covenant is rolled out as an excuse to not engage with the reality of Climate Change. Rising sea levels is an effect of Climate Change, and unfortunately that has given a section of humanity (who have reaped short-term benefits by causing long-term damage) a religious justification for denying or ignoring it.

Human hands wrote the words in the Bible and their worldviews would have affected how they interpreted divine inspiration. If you had complete certainty that humanity was the reason for ‘life, the universe and everything’ then the thought that the dolphins were right all along just wouldn’t occur to you.

But Climate Change is also a matter of self-interest. The evolution of life on this planet shows us that life will continue. The question is whether human life will make it to ‘the restaurant at the end of the universe’? We are seeking to mitigate the effects of Climate Change to minimise the effect it has on humanity, and for that we all need to contribute to an Ark full of solutions and not just leave it to a few Noah’s. ‘And another thing...’

Prayer

Living God, broaden our perceptions to our neighbour, peoples across the world, and all life that calls this planet home.

creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind. As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it." Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. 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."

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

Reflection

'So long, and thanks for all the fish' is the message left by the dolphins when they departed Earth just before it was demolished for a hyperspace bypass. In 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy', Douglas Adams flips

passion for justice, is not a God who would, with great detailed plans and forethought, destroy one set of people in favour of another.

We are often tempted to imagine (and use) God as the angry One. Jesus shows us that no matter how much we want that God to be true, we have made an idol. God is love, utterly, for the evil and the good.

Prayer

Oh God, forgive us. We often make you into what we hope or want you to be. Then we confuse one another with difficult images and stories. The hardest news for us to bear is that you love without stop. Give us deep grace to accept your love for us. Give us even deeper grace and immense courage to love those who we think (surely) you would never love. Amen

Friday 15th May After the Deluge

John Collings, Lay Preacher, member of Rutherglen URC.

Genesis 8 1 - 17

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded. Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky. The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. 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 over all 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. 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."

Reflection

One of the strange things about writing these reflections is the timing. I'm writing this on 1st March just after Britain has been hammered by successive storms which caused a lot of flooding. You will be reading this on my wedding anniversary, and I'll be on holiday in our caravan hoping that the weather is as good as it was 16 years ago. How very British to talk about the weather.

Imagine how Noah felt. He had not suffered one month of heavy rainfall but month after month of rain with the whole world flooded. People are describing on the news how hard it is to spend 14 days in self-isolation, if they have been to areas with Corvid-19 virus. Noah and his family spent about a year in the Ark.

We might expect Noah to complain, to rail against God, but he doesn't. God remembers him and after the flood had receded the earth was once more dry so God told Noah and his sons and daughters-in-law to leave the ark so they could inhabit the earth again. Many churches remember the eight people who were in the ark by having a font with eight sides. Do we shout at God when the place we live is flooded or do we decide to make changes so the climate chaos is not fuelled by our actions? We all need to remember God, just as God remembered Noah in the Ark. No matter what seems to be going wrong in the world we can hang on the constant that is the love of God, as shown in his remembering Noah and all that followed including sending His son to die for us. We can rejoice in the resurrected Jesus.

Prayer

Loving God thank you for looking after Noah and his family.
Thank you that you look after me.
As you protected Noah,
protect me by showing me how to survive all the things that worry me.

Move the hearts and minds of our leaders
that they see the damage done to your creation
and reduce pollution, flooding and damage.

Show me what I can do to help your fragile world. Amen

[Saturday 16th May The Rainbow Covenant](#)

The Rev'd David Coaker, serving Grays URC and a chaplain to the Moderators of General Assembly

Genesis 9: 1-17

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every