

**Sunday Update**  
**21<sup>st</sup> February 2021**

**Genesis 9:8-17**

*8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 9 'I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you 10 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.*

*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.'*

*12 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: 13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, 15 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. 16 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.'*

*17 So God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.'*

Last year, I spent a couple of evenings looking through a big box of photographs. We were looking for photos that captured different years as we tried to put together a timeline of family and married life. It took longer than it might have done because each photo has a story attached to it and I was remembering the stories as well as looking at the pictures. I remembered a day out at Tantallon Castle with my wife and my mother, the one and only time that I have been there, and we had a good day out. I remembered our children playing in the garden wearing Robin Hood outfits that someone had sent them, with pretend bows and arrows and wearing large green wellies, falling about in gales of laughter. I remembered lots of good days and some not-so-good days, as my memories were jogged by the pictures I was seeing. Photographs, for me, are so often the way of remembering: they help me remember people that I've met, or important occasions that I've attended; I see the picture and I'm taken back there, and I can then tell you a whole host of details. Photos help me remember people: again, I see the picture and I can tell you who this is, where we met and all sorts of other things.

Not remembering creates a struggle for us. The simple task of trying to remember where we put our glasses can be a bit of a joke; how many people have "lost" their glasses only to find them on the top of their heads! Some people used to tie a knot in the corner of their hankie to remind them to do something; then post-it notes came along to help us remember; now my computer has a virtual post-it note on the screen so that I can write down the tasks that I need to do this week. One of the saddest parts of living with dementia is that people forget so many of their precious memories; even people they know and love can become strangers and lots of adult children become distressed when a parent seems not to recognise them anymore.

The story of Noah has at its heart the notion of God remembering! Noah was commissioned by God to build the ark because God promised that there would be a flood. People were not listening to God; they were wicked, and God promised to judge the world by the flood. Noah was told to build an ark as a rescue-ship so that he and his family and the animals would have a means to escape the flood and rebuild the world thereafter. Once the ark was finished, it began to rain until the earth was flooded and the ark was sent sailing away. For at least 150 days, Noah and his family were in the ark and eventually the water began to go down and the ark came to rest on the top of Mount Ararat; 5 months is a long time to be stuck in a confined space with nowhere to go! (That sounds familiar!) Noah maybe began to think that God had forgotten about him.

But then, at the start of chapter 8, the story says, *“God remembered Noah”*. For God to remember Noah means more than just calling him to mind again; it means expressing concern and acting with compassion to help someone in need. That is what God did in allowing the water to go down and in rescuing Noah from the ark at the end of chapter 8. Noah and his family came out of the ark and began the process of settling down again in the world. It is hard to imagine that God had forgotten all about Noah, but God *“remembering”* Noah is the turning point of the story, when the story changes to allow the world to recover from the flood and for God to provide for Noah all over again.

That process is taken a step further in our reading for today. Remembering is at the heart of what comes next. Our reading is something of a speech that God makes to Noah; this is what God will do. He will make a covenant with Noah, a commitment to him, that God will never again destroy the earth in that way, and that God will continue to love the world. He will love the world with His never-ending steadfast love. The world will continue to be a disordered and fallen world, but in that kind of world, the commitment God makes is a steadfast, never-ending love. The sign of that commitment is the rainbow: *“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”* (Genesis 9:16) The rainbow became the sign of this commitment God was making to a never-ending steadfast love.

Lots of experiences in our world may suggest to us that God has forgotten about us. The Covid lockdown has suggested to many people that their friends have forgotten all about them because we have not been able to see or meet each other. By extension, we have sometimes put the same failing onto God, that He has forgotten all about us; He doesn't answer our prayers and there is no sign of Him working to help us. *“But the God of the covenant... is the God who does not forget His friends.”* (David Atkinson) He remembers us; He remembers who we are; He knows us by name; He continues to show us His never-ending steadfast love, and cares for us with compassion, providing for us everything that we need.

There is another side to the *“remembering”* coin. Paul has some advice for his young friend Timothy: *“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel...”* (2 Timothy 2:8) There are lots of times in its history, when the Church seems to have forgotten Jesus; either we have forgotten our faith, or we have forgotten to be like Jesus in the way that we live. To remember Jesus is about more than memory; it is about faith and continuing to live our lives by faith; it is about being people who live in Jesus' ways every day; it is about loving Jesus and being devoted to Him for all of our lives, and loving one another.

I like the notion of God being the kind of *“God who does not forget His friends”*. That is the commitment He makes to Noah and to us. Noah's world was disordered and fallen; our world is the same. Yet, God commits Himself to a never-ending steadfast love to Noah in his time and to us in our time. The rainbow is the sign of that commitment; see it in the sky and remember that God loves you endlessly!

*Prayer: Father, we thank you that you remembered Noah in the ark and that You loved and cared for him, his family and the animals, treating them with love and compassion. We thank you for your covenant commitment to love the world with a never-ending steadfast love; even in these pandemic days Your love for us and for our world is never-ending and steadfast. Help us to know that we are not forgotten, but that You remember us with love and compassion, listening to our prayers, providing for us everything that we need. Help us to remember Jesus, to live by faith, and to love and follow Him every day.*

*Day by day, dear Lord of you  
Three things I pray:*

*To see you more clearly,  
To love you more dearly,  
To follow you more nearly,  
Day by day.*

Please take time during the week to pray for the people referred to in these topics:

- For people who feel forgotten, by their family, by their friends, by their church, by society because of a lack of contact during lockdown; who consider that there is no-one who cares for them. Forgive us if we have forgotten to care for someone in need.
- For those who feel forgotten by God, who struggle with faith and who wonder where God is during the pandemic. Walk with them along the dark road that they walk.
- For people who have contracted Covid and are in hospital, that they make a good recovery; those NHS staff who are caring for them, under pressure by the numbers of people in hospital and trying to manage the care they provide.
- For people who mourn because a loved one has died; help them to find comfort and peace.
- For the roll-out of the vaccine to be efficient and effective, reaching the people who need it most; for those waiting for the letter; for the vaccine to make people safe, as promised.
- For people who are isolated again by lockdown, spending time on their own again and feeling lonely; for people in care homes, again cut off from family and friends, and the staff who care for them.
- For schools: pupils at home and some in schools; for families trying to manage their children and helping them to take part in learning however it is delivered; for teachers working in new ways and finding that very demanding.
- For businesses that are shut: the pubs and hotels, hairdressers, and others; for those who own these businesses and it is their livelihood; for those who work and are again on furlough; for the gaps left in the social interaction of many people, adding to their sense of isolation.
- For Churches, with buildings again closed; help them to care for all of their people; may the technology be a lifeline for lots of people; help churches across Scotland to be a light in their community and share the light of Jesus with others.
- For people we know...
- This week, take time to think about these words and pray them into your own heart: *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)*

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love.

Bless the Lord (10,000 reasons)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSxocnlaN0A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSxocnlaN0A</a>
All people that on earth do dwell	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NC5FfEavPM4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NC5FfEavPM4</a>
Here is love vast as the ocean	<a href="#">Here is love, vast as the ocean - Robin Mark - YouTube</a>
Just as I am	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxA0TFe3-Uo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxA0TFe3-Uo</a>
My hope is built	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ty8tw7ydxB4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ty8tw7ydxB4</a>

Remember the prayer e-mail line at [prayerjgpc@gmail.com](mailto:prayerjgpc@gmail.com)

#### **Some other resources:**

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the “sermons” tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – [www.jgpc.org.uk](http://www.jgpc.org.uk)
- If you have a smartphone, a tablet or an i-pad, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)

- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#

**DAILY BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS** - New issues of **"Word For Today"** and **"Word For You Today"** Booklets for February, March and April are now available. Please contact Michael Merriman who will be delighted to arrange copies. Other Bible Study materials are also available with Ian Aitken. **Let the Bible feed you.**

**Giving:** Here's a note about giving: last year we proved the benefit of giving to Church by a standing order; it meant a reliable source of income for the church despite Covid. If you would like to add to that for 2021 and to continue to build that solid foundation by giving through a Standing Order, then speak to Douglas Buchanan on 453 4029 or by e-mail at [rdbuchanan@aol.com](mailto:rdbuchanan@aol.com) and he will help you.



# Noah and the rainbow

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

## Prepare yourself...

Come together to be God's people.  
Come together and be yourselves.  
Bring to God your joys and your struggles.  
Bring to God your hopes and your fears.  
Come together to be God's people,  
and let us worship the living God.  
**Amen.**



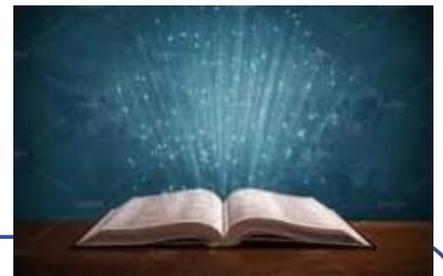
## Question...



Have you ever made a promise?  
Did you keep it? If not, why not?

## Challenge...

Write a 3-word description of yourself.  
Read it out to the rest of your family and  
see if they agree.



## Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in Genesis 9:8-17. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage.

## Talk together...



- Can you remember what happened to Noah and the world before this part in the story? Try to retell it either using words, props, pictures or drama. You might also want to watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yzN0fUxjkQ>
- What does the word covenant mean in the Bible? (you might need to look it up, that's OK!)
- Why do you think God made this promise?
- Does God keep his promises?
- Can you think of any other promises in the Bible?
- Do you think the world was perfect after the flood? Why/why not?
- God promised that he would never destroy the whole earth again. He knew that people would still sin but His plan was to save them instead of destroy them. What was God's plan to rescue His people?
- What would your 3-word description of God be?

## Play together...

**Colours of the rainbow:** This is an elimination game. Dance around to music and when it stops either say one of the colours in the rainbow or hold up a piece of paper or object that is a colour in the rainbow. Anyone wearing that colour should sit down. After all the colours are used is there anyone still in? If so, can you work out why?

## Pray together...

Speak this prayer over each other:  
**Go in the knowledge that you are cherished by the God who made you and rejoice, in Jesus' name. Amen.**

## Do something...

Don't be put off by rainy days! This week embrace any showers and take the opportunity to go rainbow hunting. What else is a sign of hope for you?

## Make something...

**Make a rainbow!** Be creative and make a rainbow somewhere. Here's some ideas to get you started:

- Paper chain rainbow
- Rainbow decorated biscuits or cakes
- Painted rocks rainbow
- Celery stick and paint printed rainbows
- A rainbow made from household objects/toys
- Fingerpaint rainbow
- Hama bead rainbow
- Skittle and water rainbow experiment
- [Grow a rainbow experiment](#)

There are many ideas online if you're really stuck!



## Praise together...



[Our God is a great big God](#)

[God, you're good to me](#)