

TEXT: Genesis 8

TITLE: The Restoration of Creation

THEME: The Lord keeps His promises and delivers Noah from the flood: creation restored, life on creation restored, and creation preserved.

INTRODUCTION

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, when I have first arrived in Philadelphia, an elder who was a member of the OPC disaster respond committee shared with me his experience in Texas following Hurricane Harvey in 2017. Their work was to help the people in their needs and also help them in the process of restoration. I especially remember that the elder told me that the major difficulty for the people after the disaster was to deal with flooding. It is because the floodwaters not only destroy everything in the house, but it also damages the foundation of the houses. It means that the people not only lost everything in the houses, but they have also need to find a place to stay as they rebuild their houses.

Here in Genesis 8, the world at this time has been flooded with water after the rain has been fallen for 40 days and 40 nights. Everything on earth has been destroyed, not only the animals, but all the plants and trees. But Moses here tells us the Lord has intended to recreate the world after the flood. What happened? What role will Noah, his family, and the animals play in God's plan of recreation? What does it mean to us? This is what we will be looking at today.

Today, we are going to look at the text in three sections:

- I. Creation Restored**
- II. Life on Creation Restored**
- III. Creation Preserved**

I. Creation restored (vv.1-12)

Moses begins chapter 8 by telling us that the Lord remembered Noah and all the animals which were in the ark. The word, "remember" here does not mean that the Lord has forgotten and suddenly remembered. It was not like, "O right, Noah and the animals were still in the ark! I almost forgot about them!" When the Bible speaks of "the Lord remembers", it usually implies that God is about to act in mercy. It is usually in connection to His covenant love and faithfulness. For example, when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, He "remembered Abraham" and brought Lot out of the disaster that overthrew the two cities (Genesis 19:29). Or when the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt, they groaned and cried out for help; God heard their groaning and He "remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob" (Exodus 2:24). In this case, Moses is telling us that the Lord was faithful to the covenant promise, and was about show mercy to His elect people and animals in the ark.

And what did the Lord do? Right away Moses tells us that the Lord made a wind to pass over the earth. This is significant! It is because the word "wind" here can actually be translated as "Spirit." So, it can be translated as the Spirit of the Lord passed over the water. And this echoes the original creation account in Genesis 1. Genesis 1:2, "*the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*" Here, Moses was purposely using the same language as Genesis 1 in order to remind us of the original creation. Just as the world at that time was chaotic and filled with water, the floodwaters here have also brought the world back into its original form. But as the Spirit of God passed over the water, the waters began to subside and the top of the mountains to appear. We see here that God has begun His work of recreation! He was going to prepare a new place for His covenant people!

And Moses tells us as the water receded, the ark landed on the mountains of Ararat, which is now part of modern-day Turkey and Armenia. But even though the ark has landed, Noah and the animals were still in the ark! And they have already been there for more than 7 months! Can you imagine being on a boat for that long? Maybe some of you have been on a cruise trip before and already got bored after a few days. Can you imagine how Noah and his family felt? They were on the boat waiting and waiting for God to speak to them, to bring them out of the ark. Then Moses also tells us that after the tops of the mountains have appeared, Noah sent out a raven, which is a scavenger bird. He did that in order to find out the water level through the raven's behavior. Keep in mind that Noah could not see how far the water had receded from

the top of the mountains – all he saw was the very mountain tops as his ark was grounded at Ararat – so as the raven was feasting upon the carcasses, it would give Noah an idea of how low the water had gone down.

Then Noah also sent out a dove. He sent out a dove because doves are different than ravens, they are the type of birds that won't rest until they found a tree with branches appropriate for resting. Noah was doing so in order to see if the water level has gone down to the tree lines. But since it came back, it means that the water level had not decreased to the level of the tree-lines. But then seven days later, when he sent out the dove again, it came back with a freshly plucked olive leaf! It means two things. First, it means that the water has almost receded to the level of the tree lines and forests, but not yet enough for the doves to rest yet. Second, it means that the Lord has caused the plants and vegetation to grow again after the great flood! This is an unusual natural phenomenon, because the waters prevailed on earth for 150 days, how could the olive trees survive? It tells us that the Lord has recreated them! The new recreation has almost been completed! And for the third time when Noah sent out the dove, and this time, it did not come back! It means that the waters have receded to the level on which the birds may rest and have habitation. This also indicates that the people and the animals would soon go out of the ark! What a joy to the elect people of God! While they were waiting in the ark, the Lord in His grace and faithfulness was preparing a new place for them!

Beloved in the Lord, this is a reminder to you and I as well. Maybe you are feeling slow and down in your spiritual journey, because it seems that you pray and pray, but God doesn't answer. You read the Bible, but God keeps quiet. You attend church, but you get nothing out of it. You try to walk with God, but you don't feel His presence. Problem after problem shows up in your life and God doesn't seem to care. We may want to give up hope that the Lord will remember His promises. Yet, we must hold fast, for though it may seem to us that He is slow to fulfill His Word, He always acts at just the right time. Remember that He is faithful, and He is with you even if you feel that He is not. John Calvin says, "God, "who has promised his help to the miserable, will, in due time, be present with us, that we may indeed perceive the care he takes of us."

II. Life on the creation renewed (vv.13-19)

Then in the next few verses, Moses tells us that after the Lord has restored all of creation, He has also restored life on the earth! Vv.13 tells us "The Lord said to Noah, 'Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. 17 Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.'" Here, we see that the Lord did not remake all the animals from scratch, but He intended to begin a new world with the elect animals! He told Noah to bring them out so that they might "swarm" and "to be fruitful and to multiply." This is a new beginning for the world, the Lord has intended to fill the earth again with His wonderful creation!

But more importantly, the Lord's command to Noah to "bring the animals out so that they may be fruitful and multiply" is actually very significant! It is because this draws our attention to what the Lord said to Adam at creation, Genesis 1:28, "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, '*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*'" Here, we see that the Lord has given Noah the exact same creation mandate to exercise dominion over the animals! This is telling us that Noah was given the task which He had given to Adam in the beginning, as His vicegerents, as His holy representative, as a king who rules on behalf of God. You see, the purpose of mankind has not been changed after the flood, mankind is still called to guard and to keep the world, even in this recreated world, all for the glory of God! And this is what you and I are called to as well, remember that we are God's special creation because we were made in the image of God, we were made to represent God, to reflect Him and His glory. Brothers and sisters, are you doing that? Are you reflecting God in a Christ-like way toward not only toward the creation, but to others?

Then Moses tells us that Noah, his family and the animals all came out of the ark and walked into a new world! This is a fulfilment of the promise that the Lord made with Noah that he and his family would be kept alive! And the Lord has been faithful! He delivered them from judgement through the ark, and brought them into a newness of life! Beloved in the Lord, this once again remind us of what baptism signifies. Just as the Lord delivered Noah and his family and brought them out of the waters of death into a new life, when we were baptized, it signified that we have died with Christ in His death and rose again with Him in His resurrection! The life you live you now live for the God and His glory! Paul in Romans 6:3-6 says, "*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His*

death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” So, beloved in the Lord, are you rejoicing in your salvation? You should be rejoicing, and rejoice also in your baptism, for it signifies that you have now become a new creation in Christ!

So we see here that the Lord has restored all of creation, and he has also restored the life on earth

III. The Creation preserved (vv.20-22)

And how did Noah respond to God’s gracious act of deliverance and bringing into a new creation? Noah responded with a sacrifice. Moses tells us that Noah built an altar and took of every clean animal and bird, and offered up a burnt offering. This is why in chapter 7, the Lord told Noah to bring in 7 pairs of each clean animal and only one pair of unclean animals into the ark. It is because the clean animals were for the purpose of sacrifice! And this sacrifice is an act of worship! This is an act of showing gratitude to the lord, praising the Lord for being faithful to His covenant promise! Beloved in the Lord, this is also how you and I must respond to God’s gracious act of deliverance from sin and misery. Worship is the proper response to God’s grace that He has shown to us in Christ! And that is also why you come on Sunday to worship. Think about it, He who has saved you by His precious Son, isn’t He worthy of the worship of all your heart?

And notice that in vv. 21, Moses says that “the Lord smelled a soothing aroma” and promised to never curse man again nor to destroy all living creatures again! It means that the Lord has accepted the sacrifice. But how could the sacrifice be so pleasing to the eyes of the Lord? It is because the sacrifice here was a type of the work of the coming Messiah. The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 5:2, “*Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*” And the Lord Jesus was the great High Priest who was greater than Noah, and all the priests of the OT, because He did not repeatedly go into the holiest place by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, in whom we have redemption through His blood, and the forgiveness of all our sins. You see, the Lord has accepted the sacrifice because it was a type of the ultimate sacrifice of His Son, whose work has appeased His holy, righteous wrath!

But notice that this promise to never destroy everything living thing was made not only to the elect people, but it was made to all of creation! You see, the grace of God was extended to the rest of the creation. Remember that the Lord destroyed the whole world because of sin, but now, He promised to never to destroy it again for the sake of the soothing aroma of His Son. Not until the day of final judgement, the Lord will preserve all of creation. The Apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 3:7, “but the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

But in contrast, there will also be a new heaven and new earth for those who belong to the Lord! At that time, the curse of sin will be taken away, all things will be made new, our bodies will be glorified in the twinkling of an eye, we will no longer be troubled by sin, and will be with the Lord forever. But until that day, all of creation eagerly anticipates the day when all things will be restored, the Apostles Paul says, Romans 8:22, “*for we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*” Beloved in the Lord, this is also what you and I should be eagerly anticipating, the final day of restoration. For we believe that just as the Lord has delivered Noah from the water judgement and brought him into a new creation, He will also restore all things according to His promise. And we will be brought into the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.

CONCLUSION

Beloved in the Lord, are you anticipating the day when the curse of sin will be lifted? Are you anticipating the day when you will no longer sin, and will be with the Lord forever? You know, that day will come, according to the promise of God. So, let us therefore, wait eagerly, yet patiently, looking forward to the day of final restoration, when we will be free from sin and worship Him truly, in our thought, word, and deed. Amen.

Let us pray.