

6.12.20 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning, and a warm welcome to the service this morning. Those who are in the building, it's good to see some faces, some that I haven't seen for a wee while.

Maybe this is your first time back in church for a while, and so it's good to have some in that place. And also those who are online, those who are listening in the telephone, it's good for us once more to come together and to worship God in this way.

Intimations, just a few things to note. First of all, to say the service is online tonight, just before 6, the online service, and I'll be taking that service.

The YF meet at half past 7 as usual on Zoom, and the prayer meeting at half past 7 on Wednesday as usual on Zoom. Next Sunday morning, I am due to be in Garibos doing supply.

I should have been doing that some months back, but was prevented by the weather for getting there. So I'm due to be in Garibos next Sunday morning. So Farrakhan MacLeod will be taking the service next Sunday morning, the evening service I'll take as usual.

[1 : 14] And just a note as well, especially for the young ones, good to see quite a few young ones here with us today. And the 20th of December, we'll have a family service, but rather than having it in the morning, as we would normally do here, and you're all taking part, what we're going to have is a service in the evening online.

So it'll probably come online slightly earlier than usual, but just for your, you probably don't have diaries, but for your heads, you don't need diaries. It's just people like me that need diaries.

So remember the evening service, or the late afternoon service on the 20th will be a Christmas family service. The morning service will be Christmas themed, but will be a service like we're having today.

The final thing is just to say that if there are any who are watching online or have been watching online in the past months, and maybe you've not been to church before and you're wondering if you're able to come, and I just want to say it would be excellent to see any who haven't come to church coming for the first time.

And if you'd like to do that, please speak to me or speak to one of the elders, the office bearers, or maybe Cammie, if you know Cammie, everybody knows Cammie. He manages the lists of who's coming on what weeks.

[2 : 36] So there is space. It's just the case of who comes each week. So be encouraged to come if you've never come before. So these, I think, are all the intimations, and we'll begin now this time of worship by singing to God's praise.

Well, Cammie will sing, and the rest of us will follow along in Psalm 40. Psalm 40, and we'll go through verses 1 to 5.

I waited for the Lord my God, and patiently did bear. At length to me he did incline my voice, and cried to hear. He took me from a fearful pit, and from the miry clay, and on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.

We sing down to the end of verse 5. To God's praise. Amen. I waited for the Lord my God, and patiently did bear.

At length to me he did incline my voice, and cry to hear.

[3 : 56] He took me from a fearful pit, and from the miry clay, and on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.

He put a new song in my mouth, O God, to magnify.
many shall see it, and shall fear, and on the Lord rely.
O blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies.

O Lord my God, full many are the wonders thou hast done. Respecting not the proud nor such as turn aside to lies.

[5 : 19] O Lord my God, full many are the wonders Thou hast done.

Thy gracious thoughts to us were far above all thoughts are gone.

In order none can reckon them to thee if them declared.

And speak of them I would they more than can be numbered are.

Let's unite our hearts now in prayer to God. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father once more we thank you for this privilege.

[6 : 41] For this opportunity that you've given us to come into your house. To come into your presence. To sing your praise from our hearts.

And to draw near to you in prayer. We thank you Lord that we have that promise that when we seek to draw near to you. And through the name of Jesus you will draw near to us.

And yet we know that behind that promise. You're the God who comes to us before we ever come to you.

You're the God who said to the disciples then. In the days when Jesus walked on this earth. And you're the God who still says to us. In these days through your word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

You did not choose me but I chose you. And Lord we acknowledge that as we come into this place this morning. We acknowledge that you are the sovereign God.

[7 : 49] You're the God who opens our ears to hear your voice. You're the God who opens our eyes to see our sin and our great need of Jesus the Saviour.

You're the God who calls us to come to you. And gives us that desire to respond. And even the faith that causes us to take a step forward.

To seek that salvation offered in Christ as a gift from God. So we thank you Lord for who you are.

We thank you for all that you have done for us in Christ.

We thank you for all that you are doing for us day by day. And causing us to look to Jesus. We pray for any this morning who may be here.

Or who may be watching. Who may be listening. Who have not yet looked to Jesus. Perhaps you have not yet even seen the seriousness of their sin.

[8 : 58] And we ask Lord that you would be working, moving in the power of your spirit. So that we would come to understand. The bad news of our sin.

And the good news of Jesus the Saviour. We thank you for the testimony. Which we sang from our hearts. The psalmist song.

He felt the reality of sinking into that mud and mire. That depicts sin for us. And calling upon the name of the Lord.

And being given that stability. That certainty of the salvation. That is found only in Jesus.

He is the rock of our salvation. He is the rock of ages. And he is the one in whom we find refuge and strength.

[9 : 54] As we come to him. So help us Lord this morning we pray. We ask that you would give us. All that we need. To have minds which are focused.

On your word. To have hearts that would be stirred. To have ears. That would be opened. And eyes that would be opened. That we may have an encounter.

With the living God. Who promises to be here with us. When we meet in the name of Jesus. And we thank you Lord for this month. Where the name of Jesus.

Is heard much more often. In the public place than normally. This month of Advent. When we remember Christ coming into the world.

We ask Lord. That you would give us opportunities. And that you would give us courage. As your people. To be able to speak. About the true meaning of Christmas. Help us to think often.

[10 : 54] About the wonder. Of the God. Of heaven and earth. Coming into this world. Being born. And laid in a manger. In Bethlehem.

The one who was greater. Than the world. Being cradled. In Mary's arms. And yet Lord. We know that the greater wonder still.

Is not simply the fact that he came. But the fact that he was willing to go. All the way to a cross. To secure. Our salvation.

We thank you that he died. So that we could live. He died that we might be forgiven. And we thank you that he rose. And we remember that on this sure day. And promises that. Resurrection. Everlasting life. For all who believe. So give us faith Lord. We pray. That we may. Be. Those who believe.

[11 : 50] And know. The assurance. Of the salvation. Offered to us in Christ. Bless this. Hour of worship. We ask. May. We truly be. In the spirit. On the Lord's day.

And may we know. That you are God. And that you are with us. Cleanse us from sin. Empty us of all. That would focus. On ourselves. Fill us with the Holy Spirit.

And enable us. To see Jesus. For we pray these things. In Jesus name. And for his sake. Amen. Boys and girls.

It's good to see. Some of you here. Quite a few of you here. This morning actually. So. I think I have helpers. And.

I've got something to show you. And I expect. Most of you. Will know what this is. So can. Can anybody tell me. What is that?

[12 : 51] First hand went out. Over there. So we'll start with Ailey. We'll start with Ailey. And the reason we'll start with Ailey. Is because she's sitting beside. Crescilla. And it's her birthday today. But she doesn't want anybody.

To know that. So. Ailey. Make sure you look after your mum. Today on her birthday. What's the answer to the question? What's this? It's a calendar. Yeah. That's a good start.

It's a calendar. Because it's got. It's got different numbers on it. Anyone want to give me more than that? Is it. Just any kind of calendar? What month is it for? Bethany?

It's an advent calendar. So tell me. What's an advent calendar for? Jono? Basically you get a chocolate every day.

Up until Christmas. And it helps you to remember about. It helps you to remember that we're going up to Christmas Day.

[13 : 54] Well that's always what I thought an advent calendar was as well. This one. This one. I thought it was chocolates that was in this. But I was a bit surprised when I could see there was actually still some.

Some things in it. And there's actually one day that should have been opened. That hasn't been opened. If it wasn't COVID times. I would say there's a chocolate there. Who wants to eat it?

But I'm not allowed to do that. Just now. But actually it's not chocolate. And the reason I know that is because I've been sitting in the car thinking. What's that smell? And it's gingerbread. Am I right? It's gingerbread behind every door.

So you get a bit of gingerbread every day until Christmas Day. Does that sound good? Not really, no. But anyway.

You know what an advent calendar is for? It's for helping us count down to Christmas. And you could say, not so much for yourselves, the younger ones, but for the adults, for people like me.

[14 : 55] It helps us not to forget, but to remember Christmas is coming. So it's a reminder. Day by day by day.

All the way up to the 25th. That Christmas is coming. Now here's a question for you. Deeper question. We need reminders, don't we?

Do you think God needs reminders? Pardon? No.

God doesn't need reminders. We forget all kinds of things, don't we? But God doesn't need reminders. Now I know in Sunday school, you've actually been doing the same thing that we've been doing in church.

You've been looking at Noah and the story of the flood. And in the story of the flood, we see Noah. We're looking at this today, actually, when you go to Sunday school. But Noah, he's in the ark.

[15 : 55] And he's been in the ark for about 150 days. And he must have been thinking. Because for 40 days and 40 nights, the rain's coming down.

And you know what it's like when the rain comes down. We're sitting in our rooms and we can hear it on the roof. We can tell it's raining heavily. But for 40 days and 40 nights, the rain came down.

And then it seemed to stop. And Noah and his family, all these animals, are in the ark.

They're bobbing about, floating about. And it went from 40 days to 50 days to 60 days to 70 days to 80 days. All the way to about 150 days, which is about five months.

And they're still in the ark. Remember when we were in lockdown? Remember that, boys and girls? We weren't allowed to leave our house. Apart from for half an hour a day.

[17:03] Yeah, Michael? We stayed in the ark for 95 days, didn't we? Was it 95 days? I think it was less than that. I think it was only about three or four weeks, if I remember rightly.

I'm not too sure. But it just seemed to go on and on and on and on. But imagine being Noah and his family. And 150 days, they must have been thinking, has God forgotten about us?

But it says in the Bible, we're looking at this today, God remembered Noah. And he had to wait a long time to get out of the ark and get onto dry land.

But God never forgot him. God remembered Noah. Boys and girls, do you think, do you think God remembers you?

Yeah. How do we know God remembers us? Pardon? Because he does, yeah?

[18:15] Oh, he made us, yeah? That's a good answer. He made us. And then there was sin, wasn't there? Sin is in our hearts, and sin takes us, and it takes us far away from God.

But did God forget us and just leave us to drift far away from him and not to have any hope? Or did he do something for us? Yes, John? Pardon?

He sent his son, Jesus. So, this Advent calendar, it reminds us that Jesus came.

He came into the world, he lived for us, and he died for us, and he rose from the dead so that we wouldn't be far away from God, but that we could be God's friends.

God didn't forget us. He remembered us. He sent Jesus. And every day still, boys and girls, God remembers us.

[19:26] And when we pray, he doesn't close his ears, he doesn't say, I'm too busy, but he remembers us.

He hears every prayer because he loves us and he wants us to trust him and to be near to him. So, God is a God who doesn't forget.

We forget. But he remembers and he remembers us. So, let's pray and thank him for that. Lord God, we do thank you for your great love for us.

We thank you that you are the God, as we've been told there, who made us. And we know that it was no accident that we were made, but you are the one who decided that we would be made.

You're our creator. And you're the one who gives us breath. You're the one who gives us life. And you are the God who saw our sin and who saw the danger that we were in.

[20:32] and you sent Jesus, your son, so that we could be safe in this world and safe forever. So, help us, Lord, we pray, to know that you are close to us and to know that as we pray, you hear us and you answer us.

We pray for all the boys and girls here, those who are at home, and all those who are older as well. we ask that you would help us to know your love and help us to put our faith in Jesus, the one who came to be our saviour.

And we ask these things in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake. Amen. Okay, boys and girls, I think you are heading through to Sunday school now.

And we can turn now in our Bibles to Genesis chapter 8.

Genesis chapter 8.

[22:01] Genesis chapter 8. Genesis chapter 8.

And we'll just read in from verse 24 of chapter 7 and then we'll read the whole of chapter 8. This is God's word. The waters flooded the earth for 150 days, but God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with them in the ark.

And he sent a wind over the earth and the waters receded at 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 150 days, the water had gone down and on the 17th day of the 17th month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

The waters continued to recede until the 10th month and on the first day of the 10th month, the tops of the mountains became visible. After 40 days, Noah opened the 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.

[23:21] Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. But the dove could find no place to set its feet because there was no water, 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 out the dove again, but this time it did not return to him.

By the first day of the first month of Noah's 601st 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 27th 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.

[24 : 35] 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 that they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it.

So Noah came out together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives, all the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds, everything that moves on the earth, came out of the ark, one kind after another.

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart, Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood.

And never again will I destroy all living creatures as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease.

Amen. And may God add his blessing to the reading of his word. We'll pray for a moment again before we come back to look at this chapter.

[25 : 56] Lord God, we do thank you again for your word. We pray that you would help us as we study it. That you'd help us to understand and to take hold and to respond to the truths of the gospel.

And what we pray for ourselves here, we pray for the children in Sunday school. We thank you for them. We thank you for their willingness to be here.

We thank you for their willingness to engage with your word. We thank you for the softness of their hearts. And we ask, Lord, that you would enable each one of them to trust you in the early years of their lives and to walk with you all the days of their lives.

We pray for those who are in a particular need at this time. Although this is a month where there is much to celebrate, we are conscious this is a month that many find difficult.

And for those who struggle, we pray for them. For those who battle with addictions, Lord, we ask that you would give them the strength to yield to temptation, not to yield to temptation.

[27 : 09] For those, Lord, who feel that sense of loss as they remember many who were with them in times past and who have gone from time into eternity and who feel that sense of grief, we pray for your comfort to be with them.

For those, Lord, who are anxious, for those who struggle with stress and worry, we bring them to you in prayer. We ask that you would help them.

Pray for those known to us. We think of James' sister, Joanne. We pray for her after a difficult week. We ask that you would draw near to her where she is and enable her to know that you are God and that you are with her.

We pray for all of the family. We pray for those who were in hospital, for some who had surgery, we think of Katie McCaskill. We ask that you would be with her and with others and aid them and speed them in their recovery.

We pray for those who have moved from here to other places. We think of Nanny especially who sat with us in the church so often and who sat in the place of worship in her own home in Harris so many times and who has moved through to Stornoway and we ask, Lord, that she would know your presence and that she would know your hand upon her for good.

[28 : 37] We thank you that you are the God who is with us wherever we go and for all, Lord, who are in particular need, the varied needs that we encounter in the days of our lives.

We thank you that you are able to meet each one of us at the point of that need and we ask, Lord, that you would do so. We acknowledge, Lord, that our greatest need is that need of repentance, that need of salvation.

We pray for us as a country. We give you thanks for this vaccination which is beginning to be administered. We thank you that there's an answer to prayer.

We pray that it would be effective for all who take it at this stage. We ask, Lord, that as a country who have gone through things that we could never have imagined in terms of this pandemic, we ask, Lord, that the difficulty of these days where we have been caused to look to you, perhaps more than we have done in times past.

We pray that we would not be a forgetful people, but that you would give us repentance, that we would be looking in faith to Jesus, the one who is able to give us that cure for sin.

[30 : 02] So hear our prayers for ourselves, for us as a community, for our nation, and for all nations, Lord. Be at work, we pray, for your glory, for the salvation of many souls.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if you could have Genesis chapter 8 open in front of you, that would be helpful.

I remember hearing a story some time back, I don't know how true story it was, it was told to me as a true story, but it was about a dad, a fellow dad, who was having a bad day.

Now, what had gone wrong on this day? Well, he had been left on his own in the house with the children, and he had various chores to do, and one of the chores that he had to do was go to a store and do a big shop.

So we went off with this big shopping list, the Tesco's or the Co-op, whatever it was, and he buzzed around the shop from this place to that place with no particular order, taking forever to get through this shopping list, trying to keep the children under control the whole time, failing miserably, and eventually, after a long time, he had ticked off everything on this list.

[31 : 31] His trolley was full. He went to the cash desk. He paid for the stuff. He put all the shopping in the boot, and he set off home.

And he was almost home when he realized that although he had remembered to take all the shopping, he'd forgotten to take the children, and the children were allegedly still sitting back in the shop.

Seems far-fetched, but perhaps with the dads in mind, maybe not all that far-fetched, because we are a forgetful people. But the first point to note today is that our God is the remembering God.

That's our first point. We see in this chapter, in the first verse, the remembering God. we have the backdrop of this judgment, these waters that have flooded the earth.

We've thought about Noah in this ark. And it says here, but God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with them in the ark.

[32 : 45] I've never done this, but it struck me in preparation this week that perhaps one of the most encouraging studies that we could do would be to look at the different instances in the Bible where it says, but God.

I think that would be an interesting and an encouraging study for us to do at some point. Look at these instances where we see these words in the Bible, but God.

Think about Ephesians chapter 2. There's such a bleak picture in that chapter of our sin and our transgression and wrath and death.

And then everything changes with that phrase, but God. Or think about Romans chapters 1 through 3 that we studied not so long ago.

We have this very detailed and graphic dark picture of what sin has done. And then in chapter 3 towards the end of it, everything changes and the gospel rushes in levering on that same truth, but God.

[33 : 58] And here in Genesis chapter 8 we see this world flooded by God's wrath. We see sin punished. We see Noah and his family locked in this ark, perhaps wondering when is this all going to end?

Perhaps wondering after these 150 days, has God forgotten us? But the answer to that question that may have been in Noah's mind was no, God had not forgotten Noah.

God remembered Noah. And all the wild animals and the livestock that were with them in the ark. God remembered Noah.

And we see that we have a God who remembers us. He's the remembering God. John MacArthur says, this does not mean that God had forgotten Noah, but that his wrath against the wickedness of mankind was now appeased.

He remembered his divine mercy towards mankind as his divine judgment had now been fulfilled. Or Hale, the commentator, says that to say that God remembers someone means that God cares for and is concerned for that person and has decided to act on that person's behalf.

[35 : 27] God did not forget, but he remembered Noah. I think it's fair to say that there are some times in our lives when we feel like Noah may have felt on that ark.

There can be dark days in our lives when we have this growing sense that God may have forgotten us. The psalmist felt that.

The psalmist gave expression to that. In Psalm 10, verse 1, the psalmist says, Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

Psalm 13, verse 1, again, the psalmist says, How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

These are prayers that we would almost think should not be allowed to be written. And yet they're in the psalter.

[36 : 51] They're given to us in Scripture because there are times, there are seasons when this is how we feel. We feel that God may have forgotten us, even forsaken us, but that's not true.

Just as God remembered Noah, he remembers us. think about that in light of the cross.

Remember, on the cross as Jesus carried our sin, he knew, in a way that we cannot really enter into, he knew the dark reality of God forgotten us.

in these moments on the cross when Jesus cried out, he felt the horror of God forsaken us, and he did it, so that you and I can be assured that we never have to.

we worship the God who remembers us, who remembers us in mercy.

[38 : 13] That's his promise. He's a remembering God. He remembers us in mercy. But here's another promise.

He remembers us in mercy, but he remembers our sin no more. That's an amazing thing for us to just think about for a moment.

He remembers our sin no more. Isaiah chapter 45 and verse 25, God is speaking through the prophet Isaiah and he says, I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and remembers your sins no more.

What an amazing thing to think about that the only thing that God forgets is our sin. And I think we need to learn from that and try and take that in because we can be very slow to forget our sin.

Sometimes the sins that we have committed in our past, God has forgotten them. He has forgiven them.

[39 : 40] He has blotted them out. and yet we dig them back up. And when we do that, we doubt the sufficiency of the blood of Jesus.

We doubt the certainty of the promises of God. The God who promises that he will remember our sin no more.

And sometimes it's the sins that others do that hurt us. And where there's been repentance, God has forgiven them.

He's forgotten them. But we, because of who we are, we are people who like to hang on to these sins and hang on to these hurts and we can be guilty sometimes of holding them against people when God has long since set them aside.

And so we need help, I need help to worship the God who remembers us in mercy. And we need help to be more like the God who is rich in grace and forgiveness.

[41 : 02] So that's our first point. we look to God, we see the remembering God. The second thing we see here is the receding waters.

As we look at this picture of judgment and of the flood as it begins to dissipate, we see the receding waters. Verse 1, that God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with them 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. The end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down and on the seventeenth day of the seventeenth month, these details I think are given to us so that we note the fact this is history, not some myth.

On the seventeenth day of the seventeenth 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.

[42 : 14] And what I want us to see here in this point is that it's God who caused the waters to recede. he sent a wind, verse 1, over all the earth and because of that wind the waters receded.

And in the Hebrew text the same word that is used for wind is the word that's translated as spirit. So we can see in the receding waters the spirit of God is active in mercy.

And so it's God who causes these underground subterranean springs to dry up. It's God who causes the rain to stop falling.

It's God who's pushing back the waters of his judgment. And what we see in shadow form in Genesis we see in detail in Jesus.

God's God's judgment. Because remember the floodwaters, they speak to us about the judgment of God. So what can we as those who are sinners, as those who are guilty, as those who can expect rightfully to be those who are flooded by God's judgment, what can we do to push God's judgment back?

[43 : 49] we can do nothing. So what did God do? Well, he sent his son.

He sent his son to be the savior, to push back the judgment that we were deserving of, but that God wanted to save us from.

Think about the angels' visit to Joseph. When the angel tells Joseph about the child that Mary is carrying and Joseph hears these words, you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

If we think about Noah on that ark, as he felt the wind of God's presence blow, as he sensed the waters receding, he knew that God had not forgotten him, but that God had remembered him, and that God was with him.

[45 : 29] And as we look to Jesus, as we take time this month, as I pray that we will, to meditate upon the incarnation, to think about Jesus coming into the world and think about Jesus going to the cross to die, we know the same truth in greater measure than what Noah ever did.

We know the wonder of the fact that God is with us. He's not far from us. God is not holding us at a distance.

He's not leaving us to sink under the flood of his judgment, but he's with us. He's our Savior.

He's the one who came to push back the judgment that we are due. he's the one who came to take it from us on that cross.

So we see the remembering God. We see secondly the receding waters of judgment. God is pushing them back. And the third thing we see here as we look at Noah is the reasonableness of Noah.

[46 : 56] You know there's some people who think that faith and reason are two things that have nothing to do with each other. You know they're like oil and water.

They just don't mix. But that's not true. And Noah shows us that. Because Noah as we've looked at him he's a man of great faith.

I mean you have to have great faith. to spend 120 years building an ark in the middle of nowhere where there's no water anywhere near you. He doesn't have a flash of faith.

He has steady steadfast strong faith. But Noah he's a reasonable man. He's a man who uses his head.

He's a man who thinks. He's a man who has common sense. He's a man who has initiative. And so we read in verse 6 after 40 days Noah opened the window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven.

[48 : 05] And it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. Now why does Noah do this? Why does he open this window, this high level window and let the raven out?

Well Noah believes just as God had promised that he'd get out of the ark at some point, back onto dry land. But Noah just doesn't know when.

So God had supernaturally told Noah when to go into the ark, but he hadn't yet told Noah when it was time to go out of the ark. So Noah thinks about this, he uses his reason.

He sends out a raven. So he takes this bird, this was the common practice, and he sends it out.

John MacArthur says, the raven is a carrion eater, a bird of death. It undoubtedly found much rancid flesh to feed on, but there was no dry ground suitable for it to roost.

[49 : 15] It kept going to and fro, that is out of the ark window, and back again. So Noah, having sent this raven out, it's going back and it's going forth, and it's going back and it's going forth, and that indicated to Noah it wasn't time to go out yet.

Verse 8. So then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground, ground, but the dove could find no place to set his feet, 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. And that was another indication.

He thinks about things as he uses his reason, as he uses his practical common sense. He's given another indication here through this dove. it's not time to go out yet.

Verse 10. 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.

[50 : 29] And again, that was significant. Calvin says, as the olive trees, as the olive tree does not grow on mountainsides, and because it's not a very, very tall tree, the Lord had given his servant some indication that pleasant regions, productive of good fruits, were now clear of the flood.

And so verse 11, Noah, as he gathers all this intelligence, as he thinks about all these things that are giving him information back, Noah knew, verse 11, 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. So what did Noah do next?

Having received all this information, does he kick the door down and go rushing out of the ark?

Well, no, he doesn't yet.

he waits on the Lord. He's still listening for God's voice. He's still using not simply his eyes, but he's living by faith.

[51 : 51] And Noah, I think, is a man who gives us a good example of what it looks like to have faith, but to think reasonably and practically.

God has given us minds. We don't switch our minds off when we open our Bibles. He's given us resources and he expects us to use them.

And the fact that Noah, he sends out these birds, it doesn't show a lack of faith, it shows an evidence of faith. He believes that what God said to him by way of the promise, he believes it was true, he believes that the waters would recede and that he would be rescued from this flood, and so he acts on the strength of God's word.

And I think we have to take this lesson from Noah. we have to be people who yes, live by faith, who believe, but we have to show out our faith through our works, through what we do.

James, in James chapter 2 and verse 14 says, what good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds?

[53 : 23] Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, go in peace, keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. Noah's living faith, his belief in what God has promised, I think is seen in his reasonable works and the things that he does.

We see there the reasonableness of Noah. The fourth thing we see here is the restraint of Noah. Verse 13.

By the first day of the first month of Noah's 601st 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 27th day of the second month, the earth was completely dry. So what does Noah do now?

Now that he can see that the surface of the earth is dry, completely dry it appears, what does he do now?

[54 : 49] Does he kick the door down now? Does he go charging off out of the ark? Well, no, he doesn't do that yet. There's a restraint about Noah.

Even though he has evidence that the flood has dried up through the dove, even though he can see with his own eyes, the ground appears to be bone dry, he waits.

He brings it before God. Before he takes a step, he acknowledges the Lord and asks the Lord to guide him.

He waits for this word of confirmation from God. And he gets it. Look at verse 15. 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's with you, the birds, the animals, all the creatures that move along the ground so that they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it.

So Noah, again we see the obedience, the straightforward obedience of Noah. So Noah came out together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives and all the animals, all the creatures, we have a mirror image.

[56 : 08] God says it, Noah does it. But I think if we try and put ourselves in the shoes of Noah, it must have taken a lot of self-control, must have taken a lot of restraint to not go out.

After all that time in this ark, imagine the smell in it, imagine how much probably this small family were annoying each other by this stage. You can see all this land, all this space, but he has this self-control, this restraint.

He will not go out until God said he could go out. We see there the restraint of Noah.

Noah. One thing that, just as a side issue, I think, perplexes me a little is it's just the design of this ark.

My construction mind still operates a little. And for Noah, it seems that he can't see anything until the covering comes off the ark.

[57 : 31] He's in this ark, they're close to this ark, they're bobbing about, he can see nothing. Then the raven and the dove are going out, and there's this kind of window that allows them access out, but it seems that they can't see anything through this window, just an access point.

But it's not until the covering comes off the ark, and they can see dry land, that Noah has any kind of visibility of the land, and it must have taken huge restraint and self-control for Noah not to go out once he could see.

The question I want to just ask for a moment is why is the ark designed like this? why is there this covering that makes everything, gives them no visibility?

Why can they see nothing until the very last moment? Well, the reason for that is because God designed it that way. But if we ask another question, why did God design it that way?

I think and other commentators think it was because God is a God of mercy and God did not want Noah to see what was going on on the outside.

[59 : 05] See, all Noah's friends and relatives, those he worked with, as the floodwaters rose, they could see Noah and his family in the place of safety.

The water levels were going up, Noah was safe, but Noah, from the safety of the ark, he could see nothing.

As his wider family and friends and co-workers were being swallowed up by the waters of God's judgment, God in his mercy allowed Noah to see none of that.

I think that's the reason for this strange design. And you know, that's the way it will be in the end.

Those in hell will see the salvation that they could have had, but refused.

But those in heaven will see nothing of the judgment of those they loved and prayed for and sought to persuade to come to Jesus, but who rejected Jesus time after time.

[60 : 43] that I think is what is behind the strange design of this ark. But back to Noah, as we come to an end, we see him waiting for God.

He's waiting for this word to go out. He's waiting for the confirmation that salvation had come. And that was what we see in Genesis, and that's what we see going on.

Prophet after prophet would come. And they would speak about salvation. Prophet after prophet would come and speak about a saviour who would come.

And the people of God, they waited and they waited and they waited until Jesus born. And through Christ, his life, his death, his resurrection, we are offered salvation.

And how do we receive that salvation? By waiting upon the Lord. Not by doing, not by working, but by waiting in faith upon the Lord.

[62 : 08] I waited for the Lord my God, we sang, and patiently did bear. At length to me, he did incline my voice and cry to hear. He took me from the fearful pit and from the mighty clay and on a rock, it's a picture of Christ, he set my feet, establishing my way.

you know, if Noah had gone straight out and believed what his eyes could see, even though the ground looked dry, he'd probably have sunk into this marsh.

It was God's time. And for you and I, if we go out trying to work out the details and the timings of salvation ourselves, our way, we sink.

There needs to be that restraint, that readiness to wait upon the Lord and take hold of the Saviour who calls to us.

two more points, no more time, we'll pray. Lord God, we thank you for this account of what happened in history.

[63 : 45] we thank you that as we meditate upon it, we see the seriousness of how you deal with sin.

And yet we see the wonder of the fact that you're the God who is rich in mercy and who offers us salvation. salvation. And we know that in our day, in our age, the salvation that we need comes not through an ark, but it comes through the one whom the ark pointed to, and that's Christ.

we thank you that as we look in faith to Jesus, as we wait upon the Lord Jesus, we are promised, we are assured that we will not sink into the muck and the mire of sin, but that we will be lifted and placed in that sure, steady rock of our salvation.

So help us, Lord, we pray, whilst there is time, to look to and to trust in Jesus. We pray that we would not be like those who watched the waters rising and who saw the salvation that they were offered so many times out of reach, but we ask, Lord, that we would know the assurance of being in Christ.

We pray for those whom we know, those whom we love, those whom we pray for, those whom we seek to reach out to in the name of Jesus and who are still on the outside.

[65 : 34] We ask, Lord, that they would look to and trust in Christ whilst there is time. We thank you that this is still the age of grace.

We thank you that you are still the God who remembers us in mercy and he promises to save us if we will simply look to you.

So help us to do just that, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. we will sing, or Cammie will sing to conclude.

The words are, the words in Mission Praise, 71, and the carol is that carol, Child in the Manger.

Child in the Manger, 71, and Mission Praise. Child in the Manger, infant of Mary, outcast and stranger, Lord of all, Child who inherits all our transgressions, all our demerits on him fall.

[67 : 23] Once the most holy child of salvation, gentle and lowly lived below, now as our glorious mighty Redeemer, see him victorious, or each foe.

Prophets foretold him, infant of wonder, angels behold him on his throne.

Worthy our Saviour of all their praises, happy forever, are his own.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forever more. Amen.