

New Life

Genesis 9:1-17

Sunday June 13^h 2010 Morning Service

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1. Love People (1, 7)

Even after the sin prior to the Flood, and knowing that people were still going to be sinful, the command to humanity is to multiply, to reproduce. God still wanted this planet to be populated by people. In spite of our being sinful he still loves us. The basic point is that God loves life; he is a life producing and life ending God. Life, the beautiful, complex and wonderful plethora of vitality that we experience on this planet is God's idea. In particular, he loves human life, an example we are to follow. We should value people, even sinful fallen people. Grace should characterise our perspectives of all people.

2. Respect Animals (2-4)

Relating to animal life – There was now, to some degree at least, a breakdown in the original intended relationship with animals. Now animals generally dread us – and sadly often with good reason.

Eating animal life - We eat animals. God's original intent was that human beings should be vegetarians. In the Garden of Eden only plants were given for them to eat. Up to the Flood people had been vegetarians. Now animals were given to them as food. It is therefore allowable to eat meat now. There may well be other legitimate reasons for vegetarianism, like economics and ecology, as a given plot of land can clearly produce more plant food than animal food to support a population in difficult circumstances. This is a pragmatic reason. And then, of course, there may be legitimate personal preference, or taste. All we can say is that biblically, the eating of meat is now given as a gift in this fallen world, and yet we will probably not do so when Paradise is restored in the new heaven and new earth.

Honouring animal life. In the very beginning animal life was originally given to us to fascinate us and also to bless us in a whole multitude of ways. The animal kingdom was given for us to explore, to serve us in practical ways and even to provide a limited companionship. There should therefore be a proper respect for animal life. This passage shows us that there should even be a respect for dead animal life. There is something sacred here about their blood because it represents something very special to God: the essence of life. All life is precious to God. This is why people were not allowed to eat the blood.

Recognising the symbolism of animal life. The blood represents the essence of life. Here is the heart of the rationale behind the OT sacrificial system. The shedding of blood was meant to represent the taking of the punishment another deserved. It did not actually have the power to wash away sin, but it pointed prophetically to the blood of Christ, which can actually cleanse us of our sin.

The essential point here is that we were created to enjoy animals and they were put here to bless us. To a certain extent this relationship has been damaged and ruptured. However, there is something, even in the life blood of animals that is deeply precious, which we should not be contemptuous about. This life-blood speaks and points to the life-blood of Jesus which was shed to enable our sins to be forgiven.

3. Protect Life (5-6)

Human life is extremely precious to God. We are made in the image of God and so to take a human life is a form of sacrilege; it is an offense to God.

God will call an animal to account if it kills a person – it must be put to death. Again, this highlights the value of human life. This is reinforced and confirmed in the Law given at the time of Moses – it must be put down.

God will call people to account if they kill someone (22) He will punish them. The Bible here suggests capital punishment as a response to murder. See also **Exodus 21:12-14**, Numbers 35:16-32, **Romans 13:3-4** and 1 Peter 2:13-14. The institution of the state has a role in protecting human life through law and punishment. We should respect the state as God's instrument of justice. The underlying reason for this is that people are created in the image of God. To kill a person is to show contempt for God as well as for the person.

4. Trust the Life-giver (8-17)

The Covenant - Never again will all life be destroyed - There will be partial disasters, but not total disasters. This will be the state of affairs until the final day of judgement when the earth ends. This is to give people opportunity to turn to him. See 2 Peter 3:9.

The Covenant - With every living creature - An agreement with people *and with every living creature*. He gives them value. God values his creation. We should.

The Covenant – The sign A covenant sign is a visible seal and a reminder. When we look into the sky while it is raining we may see a rainbow. It is written across the heavens that God will not destroy the whole world by flood, that he will not destroy the world until the day of judgement. Therefore remember God is being gracious – we deserve to be destroyed right now, but we are not, and why are we not destroyed? Because God is patient and wants us to turn to him.

The rainbow is a sign and a seal of God's covenant with creation. All covenants have their appropriate sign to seal them and remind people of them. **The covenant with Abraham was sealed with circumcision (17:11) – it was to remind the people that they were part of the race of Israel.** This was why the reminder was on the male reproductive organ; it was a reminder of race, of promise to a particular race, to a particular lineage, the people of Israel. The sign was appropriate to the promise. **The next covenant with Israel was**

given on Mt Sinai when the Law was given - and this was sealed with the sign of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was to remind the people of God's Law; and it was to do this every week. It was also pointing to something in the future – a final rest, a final freedom from guilt, a final entrance into heaven, the ultimate Sabbath rest.

The Lord's Table, or communion, is a sign of the New Covenant through Jesus. What does this remind us of? It reminds us of the work of Jesus on the Cross to forgive us. But also it is a meal that points to our present relationship with the Lord and with each other. Signs are given to us to remind us of God, to point us to God.

The basic point of the rainbow, then, is to remind us of God's promise, of his grace, and his glory - and to warn us that he is righteous and that we deserve punishment. It points back to the judgement of the Flood; it points up to God who is gracious. It is a declaration; it is a reminder.

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