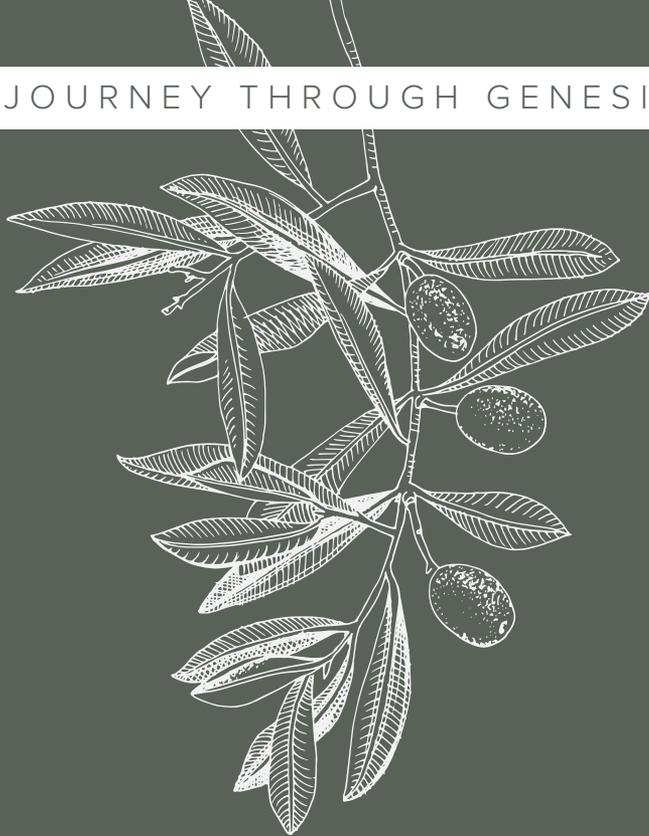


JOURNEY THROUGH GENESIS



50 DAYS OF

Eastertide

A DAILY DEVOTIONAL

by the pastors of First Presbyterian Church of Nashville

WEEK 2

DAY 8

SUNDAY, APRIL 19

READ

Genesis 8

REFLECT

I have to admit that it wasn't until reading through chapter 8 this week that I realized how long Noah and his family were in that ark! I thought it was only 40 days, but that was how long it rained. The text tells us that it took another 150 days for the rains to subside. Then Noah sent the raven and doves out to find vegetation. Can you imagine? 190 days in a smelly ark with your family?! Maybe you can! Maybe that's how you're feeling right now on what seems to be day 190 of this quarantine!

What do you think Noah and his family were feeling? God had been faithful and saved them from the flood, but now what?

The beginning of chapter 8 reads, "But God remembered Noah..." The Hebrew word for "remember" here is not the same as what we would use if we left our keys in the car or had forgotten to feed the dog yesterday. No, to "remember" here reminds us of the faithfulness of God who did not abandon Noah and his family, but knew exactly where they were and responded with love to blow the waters apart and create a place for the ark to settle on Mt. Ararat.

RESPOND

Do you feel God has forgotten you in this time? Or perhaps that God has forgotten a certain person or group of vulnerable people during this pandemic? How could you use this text as a way to pray and ask that God remember those who feel isolated or alone? How could this story encourage you and others to trust in God's timing and his faithfulness in the midst of the storm?

PRAY

Faithful God, there are moments we feel cooped up and trapped like Noah on the ark. We feel as if we're looking out over a vast ocean of uncertainty just waiting for the waters to recede. Help us to trust you. Remember us Lord in Your mercy, that we might grow in faith and encourage one another as we continue to navigate this strange season. We ask it in the name of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

MONDAY, APRIL 20

READ

Genesis 9

REFLECT

The flood is over. God establishes a Covenant with Noah and his family. God has cleansed the earth of wickedness and cleared the path for a new beginning. God says the same thing to Noah and his family that was said to Adam and Eve, “be fruitful and multiply”. God even gives Noah, his family, and all creation a reminder of this covenant. God will never again flood the earth. God’s bow is now turned heavenward. *The Jesus Storybook Bible* puts it best “God’s strong anger against hate and sadness and death would come down once more - but not on his people, or his world. No, God’s war bow was not pointed down at his people. It was pointing up, into the heart of Heaven.” Creation will not bear the brunt of God’s wrath again, but on the cross, Christ Jesus will. No sooner does God set everything right, than Noah’s family makes a mess of it again. In the same chapter that God makes a new covenant with Noah, we are reminded that humanity needs God. That even though all of creation has been cleansed of wickedness, sin remains. How often do we interact with God’s the same way? How often do we treat our faith as if it’s a done deal as opposed to a life we are invited to live with God? Our faith is not the one time event of our conversion. In Christ, the Holy Spirit calls us into a relationship with God that unfolds more and more every new day. Could it be that we are still learning this lesson from Noah and his family in Genesis 9?

RESPOND

Think about the way you interact with God. Do you view your faith as a one time thing or as a dynamic and unfolding relationship lived with God? How often are you more concerned with what God can do for you (or what you can do for God) than what God is calling you to do together? What would it look like today, if you took a step further toward a life lived with God? Where are the places, relationships, and struggles that you have decided to go it alone? What would partnership with God look like there?

PRAY

Gracious God, at times I'm content to receive your forgiveness but resist your relationship. Thank you for the covenant You've made with Noah. Thank you for the new covenant You've made with me through Your son, my savior Jesus Christ. Loving God, You have cleared a path for us to be in relationship. Grant me the courage and vulnerability to say yes to living my life with You. You are not content to keep me at a distance. Remind me Oh God, Your covenant with me is not the end but the beginning. Continue to begin, grow, and multiply the intimacy of our relationship. In the name Christ Jesus, Amen.

DAY 10

TUESDAY, APRIL 21

READ

Genesis 10

REFLECT

Not every story has a moral; not every passage of the Bible has an exhortation. Genesis 10 is descriptive. It traces the nations of the known world back to their beginnings in men with names: Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah.

Have you ever wondered what God thinks of nations and their boundaries? Does God applaud those dotted lines that people draw, making boundaries that are invisible from space? Does God grieve them? Or does God simply shrug?

Genesis 10 doesn't definitively answer those questions. It does acknowledge the existence of nations. Perhaps a reader could conclude that such nations fulfill God's early command to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." Perhaps one also could conclude that the many nations, parading by as if in the opening ceremony of an Olympiad, express God's blessing of great variety within the creation.

Ponder that as you turn the page to chapter 11. Consider what the Tower of Babel might say about human efforts to set ourselves as one before God, akin to Adam and Eve eating of the fruit, that they might "become like God."

RESPOND

Is it easy for you to chant "USA! USA," and not just during the Olympics? Or do you find yourself embarrassed to be an American? Take an accounting of your gut feelings about your country. Try to write one sentence about the relationship between the LORD God, Maker of heaven and earth, and the nation that you happen to live in, which is 244 years young. Hold on to that sentence and revisit it in weeks to come.

PRAY

Lord, help me to accept with wisdom the reality of nations, neither cursing their reality nor turning my own into an idol. I acknowledge the nations; I love my own land; I pray that you would bless us, humble us, even chasten us, that we would love rightly. Grant that we may honor our nation, but fear and serve only You. Through Christ Your Son, who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

READ

Genesis 11

REFLECT

Our world, nation and community are composed of persons with different cultural backgrounds, religions, languages and political views. There is much that serves to divide us and cause conflict between us. We tend to prefer that everyone be like us and certainly to share the same religious and political views and to speak the same language. Yet, we do share a common humanity and common vulnerabilities and common enemies that can, indeed, serve to unite us.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed us that as humans we share the common fear of serious illness that can take our lives or the lives of our loved ones. We quickly recognized that unified efforts between and within nations are needed to ensure the greatest protection possible against a common enemy.

But perhaps common goals can also serve to unite us. Jesus taught us to love our neighbors and our enemies. He taught us that our neighbors include all the people that God brings into our lives. May the Holy Spirit work in our world to make the goal of mutual love and respect the goal that unites all people.

RESPOND

Think of persons you know who hold far different views than you on significant issues. Do these persons include family members, neighbors, co-workers? How do you respond to these persons when such controversial topics arise in conversation or do you seek to avoid such conversations or even to avoid encountering these persons all together? Prayerfully consider asking God to help you encounter these persons with respect and the love of Jesus Christ. What can God bring into your life to unite you with this challenging person? What common goals might you share?

PRAY

Gracious God, Grant us both wisdom and humility that we might hold all we believe before You with open hands. Lead us in Your righteousness and make Your way clear. Where our closely held views need to be released unto You, help us to do so. When we need to speak or act boldly and teach others, help us to do so with kindness and in and through the love of Jesus Christ. Show us all that unites us and grant us Your love to share with others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

DAY 12

THURSDAY, APRIL 23

READ

Genesis 12

REFLECT

That there is a Genesis 12 is one of the great surprises in all of Scripture. That there is any story beyond Genesis 1-11 is a testament to the grace of God. If you've been reading along, then you might have gotten a bit blue from all this sibling rivalry turned murder, catastrophic flooding, and god-complex tower building stuff. There isn't a bright spot, on the human side anyways, in all of the first 11 chapters combined.

The only explanation for there being a Genesis 12 is that God is merciful, that he is not only a covenant/promise-making but also a covenant/promise-keeping God.

Even in Genesis 12, Abram begins with some promising potential. He is willing to leave everything to heed God's call. That's a good start. Eventually the Lord appears to Abram and they talk about a bright and very long future for Abram and his family. This could be good, finally! But not more than 10 verses in to the chapter and Abram goes off the rails, like everyone before him, and passes off his wife as his sister to Pharaoh in order to protect his own hide. If you haven't noticed, there is no such thing as a healthy and functional family in the Bible.

Genesis makes you wonder: Will there be anybody worthy of God's love? Well, the list is quite small. In fact, it is one person: Jesus, a carpenter from Nazareth, God's only begotten Son. But a strange thing happens. Jesus on the cross bears our sin in order that we might *be seen as* and *become* worthy of God's love. Already, in Genesis 12, the story of Jesus is being told. Every page of Scripture whispers his name.

RESPOND

Give thanks! This is the only response. Salvation doesn't add up from our end, but because of Christ we are redeemed and forgiven from our past, present, and future failings. If God can forgive you, then learn to forgive yourself. You are a child of the King!

PRAY

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – God who brought Israel out of Egypt and raised Jesus Christ from the dead, our stories deserve to be very short, if non-existent. And yet, through Jesus you have redeemed Abram's story and given it a holy purpose to bless the world. Take my tattered life, and bless it as well to be a blessing. Through Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.

DAY 13

FRIDAY, APRIL 24

READ

Genesis 13:1-18

REFLECT

Abraham can be a fickle follower of God's call upon his life. Sometimes he stands on the promises of God, and other times, well, he sort of sits. Walter Brueggemann looks at chapter 13 in relation to chapter 12. In chapter 12 Abraham is concerned about survival, so much so that he is willing to offer his wife, Sarai, to Pharaoh. In chapter 13, Abraham displays a much different posture towards God's promises. Brueggemann says, "in chapter 13, Abraham rejects the ideology of scarcity and acts on a different perception because he does not doubt God's promise." In Chapter 13 Abraham builds an altar to commemorate God's promises. In the New Testament Peter shows the same sort of attitude towards Jesus. At times Peter is swinging a sword about and other times he is at peace with Jesus reigning on the throne. It is a consistent task of God's children to trust in the sufficiency of God's promises.

RESPOND

In this season of life, are you standing on God's promises? What part of your life testifies to God's providential promises? If you could trust God with just one more thing in life, what would it be?

PRAY

God of all creation, You have always been a God of provision. From the Garden of Eden, to the garden of Gethsemane, You have worked good for Your people. We do not know what the future holds, but we know You hold the future. May Your Spirit work a Spirit of trust in us; that our lives may testify to Your provision. Amen.

DAY 14

SATURDAY, APRIL 25

READ

Genesis 14

REFLECT

Lot seems to always be getting into trouble, especially when he separates himself from Abraham. Lot is caught up in the midst of war and becomes captive. Abraham comes to the rescue. Or is it God who provides? Abraham is victorious, saves Lot, and apparently captures an abundance of goods as well as people. The following exchange between the two parties is instructive. Abraham refuses the invitation of the king to act in an acquisitive way. Instead, he makes a faith affirmation. He will not rely on the king nor give the appearance of relying on him. He will rely only on the God whose name he knows and to whom he has sworn an oath. The well-being and prosperity which Abraham already has and which he is yet to receive is not to be credited either to military or political machinations but only to the free gift of God.

RESPOND

During this time of coronavirus captivity, we too want to be delivered. Who will deliver us? Read Psalm 146. Our trust is not in political leaders but our help and hope are in the Lord our God. Yes, Abraham led the forces that liberated Lot, but it was the Lord God who empowered.

PRAY

May we put our trust in the Lord God revealed to us through Jesus Christ. May God use us this day to reach out to someone in need sharing the love of Christ. May it be so. Amen.