



Call: Genesis 1:27- 31(The Message) God spoke: “Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.” God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God’s nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: “Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.” Then God said, “I’ve given you every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth and every kind of fruit-bearing tree, given them to you for food. To all animals and all birds, everything that moves and breathes, I give whatever grows out of the ground for food.” And there it was. God looked over everything he had made; it was so good, so very good!

Hymn: STF 102 For the beauty of the earth

Watch on YouTube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bDoMfIYErE>

For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies:
*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.*

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and
flower,
sun and moon and stars of light:
Chorus

For the joy of ear and eye,
for the heart and mind's delight,

for the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight:
Chorus

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
pleasures pure and undefiled:
Chorus

For each perfect gift and sign
of your love so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven:
Chorus

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Prayer of Praise: Loving God, on this day particularly we come to praise you and to celebrate your great goodness. We come with thanksgiving, joy and wonder, reminding ourselves of the richness of your creation, and acknowledging your faithfulness in providing for all our needs and beyond.

Loving God, for the beauty of the seasons, the constant cycle of day and night, and the vital gifts of rain and sunshine, we praise you.

For the miracle of growth, the wonder of life, and the incredible variety of harvest, we bring you our thanksgiving.

Receive then our worship, accept our offering, bless our celebration, and fill us with thankfulness for all you have given.

You have blessed us beyond our deserving, and we bring this prayer in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. AMEN

Prayer of Confession: Gracious and merciful Father, we have sinned against you. We have disobeyed even the simplest command in our selfish desire to go our own way. We have not been faithful and trusting, but acted out of greed and envy. We learn from the scriptures that you are a loving and forgiving Father, who faithfully keeps all the promises you have given us, as undeserving as we are. We thank you that through the faithfulness of Noah you promised that despite our wrongdoings the earth continues to flourish, the seasons continue to bring good harvests. We thank you that you keep your covenant with us, and when we come to you in repentance you are a faithful and forgiving Lord. AMEN

Hymn: STF 124 For the fruits of all creation

Watch on YouTube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CRW9qC2pqU>

For the fruits of all creation,

Thanks be to God;

For the gifts to every nation,

Thanks be to God;

For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,

Silent growth while we are sleeping,

Future needs in earth's safe-keeping,

Thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,

God's will is done;

In the help we give our neighbour,

God's will is done;

In our world-wide task of caring

For the hungry and despairing,

In the harvests we are sharing,

God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,

Thanks be to God;

For the good we all inherit,

Thanks be to God;

For the wonders that astound us,

For the truths that still confound us,

Most of all that love has found us,

Thanks be to God.

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Reading: Genesis 8: 15-22, 9:12-17

Message: Have you ever picked up a book and started reading from the last chapter, or perhaps watched a film from near the end to get the final action? It's like watching a James Bond film just as the villain is dispatched in a great fireball and not knowing what adventures have happened beforehand, or like watching Romeo and Juliet as he declares his love for Juliet without understanding the antagonism between the two families.

The story of Noah, is the story of God's action in response to the culmination of events going back to the time of Creation. In order to understand why God reacts in the way he does, it is important to see it in the context of what has gone before.

So here we have the first few chapters of Genesis in a nutshell.

God created light and dark, sea and sky, heaven and earth, plant life, everything that walks on land, swims in the sea or flies in the air. He created man and woman, in his image, and all was good. Everything was perfect. Everything was equal. Everything was beautiful.

Then we, mankind, Eve and Adam, disobeyed the one rule that God had made, and so the relationship with God was broken. But it was not only that relationship, but also the relationship between Adam and Eve that was damaged. From that day on men were doomed to physical work in order to try and tame the land to produce food, women were doomed to suffer pains in childbirth and to be ruled over by men. This was not a recipe for harmonious relations.

This curse was not just for Adam and Eve, but continued down the generations. We see the expression of jealousy, anger and even murder in the next generation. And so that fractured relationship with God, and

with each other continues in our world, even today. We see anger and jealousy, we see greed and hunger, violence and suffering. We see the fractured relationship with creation in our abuse of the earth's resources, with the pumping into the atmosphere of greenhouse gases, with the spillage of sewage into our rivers, and microplastics into the oceans.

At the time of Noah, the world was in chaos. He was the only human who was still faithful and obedient to God, and God needed to mend the fractured world. So he sent a flood of epic proportions. This was a message of judgement on the disobedient and faithless world.

But his message was not only about judgement. It was primarily about salvation, about mending a broken world.

So what has this to do with harvest?

God's act of salvation is to bring Noah, his wife and their three sons and their wives out of the ark, along with a pair of every living creature, so that they can all multiply and be fruitful. God's act of salvation is relational, we are to care for the world that God has saved. We are once again given stewardship of the land and all the creatures that live amongst us. He gives us a second chance, and we are to be responsible in the care of His creation.

God promises he will never again curse the ground because of humans, even though we mess up time and time again. He promises that the seasons will continue unrelenting. He promises that there will always be seeds to sow, and fruit to harvest. He promises that there will always be sun and rain, day and night. There will always be the conditions for healthy and fruitful life.

What are our responsibilities in response to God's covenant promise to Noah?

Go back to the beginning of the book. God's curse on Adam was that he would have to work hard on the land for it to be fruitful.

We give thanks for our farmworkers, for our food distributors and for our shopkeepers. We too have our part to play, in supporting the farming industry particularly in areas of the world where there is inequality between the money given to the growers of our food and the price the supermarkets charge us for goods. Fairtrade seeks to work for equitable remuneration.

When we think of the working conditions that some have to endure, then we can seek fair working practices as well as decent wages, in our attempts to lift the curse laid on Adam.

Eve was cursed with the pain of childbirth and domination by Adam. With advances in medicine that pain can be diminished but still has to be endured. Society today still sees broken relationships where one side dominates another. We thank God for the wonder of new life, and pray for families where relationships are broken. We thank God for those who choose to care for children whether by fostering or adoption.

As we have travelled, rapidly through the first chapters of Genesis, we acknowledge that we have all sinned, that we have failed to care for God's wonderful creation. We thank God that his judgement on the world was completed by an act of salvation so that the world could once again be fruitful and multiply.

We of course remember that as Noah offered burnt sacrifice to God, in thanksgiving for his salvation. We also remember that it was through the sacrifice of God's only Son Jesus that we receive salvation, and so we bring our harvest thanks to God for his provision, for his covenant promise made to Noah and for his faithfulness through seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night. AMEN

Prayer: Lord of all promise, as we thank you for the fruits we see around us, let us remember there are parts of the world where people do not or cannot celebrate. We think of areas affected by too little water or too much water, and how climate change is affecting so many areas of the world. We think of areas where ploughs are laid down in favour of guns, and pruning shears are exchanged for bombs. We particularly pray for all affected in so many different ways by the conflict in the Middle East. Creator God, you looked at the land and all you created and said it was so very good. May your land once again be fruitful, and your people live together in harmony and peace.

We thank you Lord, for the food we have, and remember, those who so much less, the poor and needy, driven by famine, disaster or civil war to the brink of starvation. Help us to respond with love and concern, and with very practical ways to help.

Speak to us at this time of harvest, so that our hearts are stirred and our consciences quickened. Teach us to share our bounty with those who have nothing, recognising that all we have comes from you, the creator of all things who made us all in your image.

Lord, you have blessed us richly, teach us to remember and serve others with willing hands and hearts.

AMEN

Hymn: STF 51 Great is thy faithfulness

Watch on YouTube : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErwiBz1QA4o>

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not,
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be.

Great is thy faithfulness!

Great is thy faithfulness!

*Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided -
great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!*

Summer and winter, and spring-time and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Chorus

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Chorus

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Blessing: May God the Father bless us, who first sowed the seed of eternal life in our hearts; may God the Son bless us, who nurtures us with the rain and sunshine of love; may God the Spirit bless us, who brings all to fruition; and may the blessing and the covenant promise of God be with us now and always. AMEN