

2/15/26

The Mountain of Renewal

Genesis 8:1-22

Pastor Doug Scalise, Brewster Baptist Church

Throughout the Bible, people often encounter God on mountains. These elevated places become sacred spaces where heaven touches earth — where God reveals His character, renews covenants, confronts idolatry, and ultimately reveals Jesus. From Ararat to Moriah, from Sinai to Calvary, each mountain tells part of the great story of redemption. During this series, *The Mountains of God*, we'll journey through these defining moments in biblical history, watching how each summit points us more clearly to Jesus Christ. As we walk this path together, through Lent and Easter, we'll discover that the same God who met people long ago still meets us today — calling us to trust, obedience, surrender, and resurrection hope. I pray this journey will lift our eyes, deepen our faith, and draw us nearer to the heart of God.

Today, we're joining the story of **Noah** towards its conclusion, so I thought it would be helpful to spend a little time understanding how Noah, his family, and all those creatures ended up in an ark. If you want to get a sense of the size of the ark, you can visit, as the Prangas have, Ark Encounter, a Christian theme park in Williamstown, Kentucky. The centerpiece of the park is a large representation of Noah's Ark. It's 510 feet long, 85 feet wide, and 51 feet high.

One of the key points in the Book of Genesis that we see in the story of Noah is that **God is impacted by our behavior**. You may not think about it much, but God is affected by your behavior — you bring God joy or pain, every day, by how you live, speak, treat others, the choices you make, and how you respond to the Lord.

In Genesis, God created human beings, and gave them the responsibility of caring for creation and for each other. But human beings, from the beginning, failed to carry out this responsibility. They didn't do what God required; they didn't live up to God's expectations. Noah, however, lived differently than those around him. He was "*righteous, blameless, walked with God, and did all that the Lord commanded him.*" *Genesis 6* tells us that the world Noah lived in was full of violence, corruption, evil, and the wickedness of humanity was great (an ancient description that, sadly, is just as apt today). Human nature hasn't made much progress over thousands of years. There are billions more people than there were in Noah's time, and technological advances have

only increased the frequency and the devastating consequences of human violence, corruption, evil, and wickedness.

In *Genesis 6*, God is so heartsick that the Creator is ready to blot out and destroy all the creatures that God has made. We see God's anger and frustration, as well as the Lord's mercy and compassion. God basically says to Noah, *"I'm going to blot out everything...except you, and your wife and your sons and their wives, and the animals (I mean, have you seen a giraffe and a kangaroo and a tiger? Do you know how long it took me to come up with them? And how about the birds – have you seen an oriole, a cardinal?)"* God just can't bear to destroy all that God has made, and so Noah is given an incomprehensibly difficult task, which has him in the place we're at in the story – waiting in an ark, resting on a mountain to see what will happen next.

**Genesis 8:1-22.** **"But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark.** And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters gradually receded from the earth. **At the end of one hundred fifty days** the waters had abated; and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, **the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.** The waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared. **At the end of forty days** Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. He waited **another seven days**, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited **another seven days**, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more. In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was drying. In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the

earth was dry. Then God said to Noah, *‘Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals 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.’* So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families. Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.’”

*Genesis 8* begins **after** the 150 days of flooding and judgment mentioned in *Genesis 7:24*, and ends when the earth is fully dry, and Noah can leave the ark. The story turns with one powerful phrase: **“But God remembered Noah.”** This doesn’t mean God had forgotten; it signals divine turning — God’s covenant faithfulness moving creation from chaos toward restoration. The same God who sent water sends wind (the Hebrew word *ruach* can mean spirit or breath), echoing *Genesis 1*, as God again brings order out of chaos.

The ark rests on the mountains of Ararat, but renewal unfolds slowly. There is waiting, testing, watching, and finally worship. *Genesis 8* reminds us that rescue and renewal are not the same thing — restoration takes time, discernment, and trust. Today, we’ll reflect not only on Noah’s story, but on where we may be on our own journey: some of us may feel that we’re still in the storm, others may be waiting on the mountain, others testing the waters, and some of us may be stepping into something new. Let’s walk through the story together.

**God remembered Noah, *Genesis 8:1*, “But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark.** And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.” “God remembered” is a decisive theological turning point — from judgment to renewed commitment. In the Bible, remembering means acting faithfully according to covenant

love. Even when nothing appears to be happening, God is already moving; the wind begins to blow before Noah ever sees dry land. This invites us to trust that divine silence is not necessarily divine absence. How does this shape the way we think about God during long seasons of waiting or silence? God is often at work behind the scenes before we're even aware of it. The theological term for this is "prevenient grace," which means God is gracefully at work on our behalf, preparing the way, acting behind the scenes, and we don't even know it. "**God remembered Noah**" shifts the movement of the story from *divine judgment* to *divine commitment and hope* — it's God's initiative that re-opens the future, despite humanity's sin, showing that God's purposes endure beyond catastrophe. God remembering Noah opens a new world, signaling divine faithfulness amid human failure. It's the remembering of God that gives us hope and makes new life possible.

Next, comes a time of **Waiting on the Mountain**. The ark comes to rest on the mountains of Ararat, but everyone stays inside for months. Why do you think God allows such a long gap between rescue and release? Can you think of a time when renewal was slow or incomplete, at first, for you? *Genesis 8* begins **after** the 150 days of flooding mentioned in *Genesis 7:24*, and ends when the earth is fully dry, and Noah can leave the ark. If you add up all the references to time in *Genesis 8:4-14*, Noah and company remained in the ark another seven months and ten days, about 220 days. That's a long time to be feeding and cleaning up after all those animals, and keeping them from eating each other. If you add up the flood days, and *Genesis 8*, Noah and all were in the ark for about a year. I'm guessing that felt like a long time to wait; yet, this period of waiting was also part of God's providential care. God wanted all the people and creatures in the ark to be able to move successfully into a new future, and that required waiting until the ground was prepared to welcome them safely. In a similar way, sometimes periods of waiting for the future to reveal itself can feel long and cause uncertainty for us; yet, it may be part of God preparing the ground for our future as well, and we need to be patient. The ark has landed, but the earth is not yet ready — stability takes time. God often brings us through crisis quickly, but restores us gradually. The waiting protects Noah from stepping onto ground that cannot yet sustain life. **Sometimes God's delays may be forms of care rather than neglect.** The ark's resting on the mountain is part of the **move from chaos (waters) to stability**

**(land), from judgment to promise**, and is a symbolic **elevation of a renewed world order** under God's ongoing care.

**Testing the Waters** – Noah sends out the raven and the dove to look for signs of new life. What do these small, tentative steps teach us about discernment and trust after a crisis? How do you usually look for signs that it's "safe to move forward" again? Noah doesn't rush ahead recklessly; he discerns patiently. The dove's olive leaf is a small, but profound, sign that life is returning. After upheaval, trust is often rebuilt through small steps, rather than dramatic leaps. Noah sending out the raven and the dove reminds us that God often guides us through subtle confirmations, rather than overwhelming certainty.

**First Steps into a New World** – The first thing Noah does when he leaves the ark is build an altar and worship. Why do you think worship comes before any rebuilding, organizing, or planning? What might that say about how renewal is meant to begin? Worship re-orders the heart before the work begins. Noah acknowledges that survival and renewal were God's doing, not merely human effort. By building an altar before building anything else, he centers the new world on gratitude and relationship with God. Renewal that begins with worship is grounded in grace, rather than anxiety. The flood narrative functions as a **dramatic re-creation** motif: just as God brought order out of chaos in *Genesis 1*, so now, after judgment, God establishes a *renewed world*, with Noah at its beginning. Noah isn't just a survivor; he and his family embody a fresh start for humankind in covenant with God.

**God's Response to Human Weakness** – In *Genesis 8:21–22*, God promises stability, even while acknowledging that human hearts are still inclined toward evil. God clearly sees that "*the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth*," yet God commits to sustaining creation anyway. God's promise of ongoing seasons — seedtime and harvest, summer and winter — rests on divine faithfulness, not on human perfection. **Grace is not blind to sin; grace is stronger than sin.** Renewal depends on God's steadfast character. God's vow not to destroy the earth again with a flood and the assurance of seasonal cycles turns a story of destruction into one of **ongoing commitment**, affirming that God chooses life and stability for creation, rather than perpetual judgment. **God judges, God saves, and God remains steadfast.**

**The Mountain of Renewal Today** – *Genesis 8* is the story of a season of transition. Noah moves from seeing the first signs of hope as the storm subsides, to stability, and then to worship and renewal. What might renewal look like in your life right now? Where do you sense God inviting you to step out of the ark — but also to be patient with the process? Renewal may look like a small act of obedience, a restored relationship, or simply continued faithfulness in waiting. Some of us may still be “inside the ark,” needing safety and time; others may sense that it’s time to move forward. Renewal is both an invitation and a process. The same God who remembered Noah remembers us, and is still bringing new life and new beginnings out of chaos.

The good news I want to leave you with from the Mountain of Renewal is that **we have a God who remembers us**. We’re not a “memory”; God remembers – that’s present tense. During storms, we may feel like no one cares and no one understands what we’re going through; yet, God's love is unfailing. Our Creator often provides love through other people. God works through our lives to encourage and support one another. Yet, we all let one another down and hurt one another and even, sometimes, forget the flood or storm someone else is going through because we get focused on ourselves or other things. We’re limited in the amount of time, energy, and emotion we can invest. God is infinite. God remembers us... no matter what... in every moment. God remembers us. That never changes. God doesn't say “*I forgot about you... how are you doing these days?*” We worship a God who remembers each of us, day by day and night by night, and promises to be committed to our well-being.

The story of Noah teaches us that our hope rests with God. God’s grief over humanity’s violence and corruption didn’t end with Noah’s generation. God continued to grieve over human sinfulness, and eventually, emptying himself, the Lord came among us and died for us on the cross on Mount Calvary. God sent Jesus to earth in the ultimate expression of God’s love and mercy. The New Testament book of 1 Peter (*1 Peter 3:18-22*) tells us that, after his death on the cross, Jesus went to preach to all those who were disobedient in Noah’s time. God gave those people one more chance to embrace God’s love. God’s last word in the story of Noah is (*Genesis 9:15*), “***I will remember my covenant.***” God will remember God’s people.

On Saturday, June 12, 2004, I led a committal service on the front yard of the church for BBC’s former pastor Rev. Dr. Glenn Abbott; his wife, Joan; and their son,

Geoff. All of them had died in a relatively short period of four years. We heard, in *Genesis 8*, that Noah sent out a dove to see if the waters had subsided from the ground. In a similar way, to conclude the service, the Abbotts' son, Gregg, arranged for three white doves to be released in honor of his parents and brother.

As a bagpiper played a Scottish tune at the end of the service, the doves flew out of the cage toward the bright blue sky, all the way... to the roof of our Chapel – where they landed and stayed. The three doves were walking around, listening to the bagpipes, and looking at us, as we looked up at them. All of us were amazed and surprised. After some time, the doves finally flew up, leaving three white feathers resting on the dark shingled roof of the church. The doves circled around a couple of times, and then took off southeast, back to their home in Rhode Island.

I'm amazed that God makes creatures with the ability to navigate and remember how to find their way home. At the same time, God has wired us in such a way, that **we can remember the God who remembers us**, the God who one day will call us to fly home after we've done our best to live as God's children on this earth.

God's covenant promise to Noah is still being honored. *"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."* I invite you to sit quietly for a moment, reflecting on where you need to trust God's steady faithfulness and grace in this season of your life.

**Closing prayer:** Faithful God, Thank You that You remember Your people and never abandon us in the storm. Teach us to trust You in seasons of waiting, and to recognize the quiet ways You bring renewal. Give us patience when restoration is slow, and courage when it is time to step forward. May our first response always be worship, grounded in Your steady grace. Amen.

**Blessing:** At a later point in Israel's history, the prophet Isaiah described the lament of the people and the response of the Lord. *"Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.' Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you"* (Isaiah 49:14).

**Questions for Discussion or Reflection**

1. *Genesis 8:1* says, “God remembered Noah.” How does this shape the way we think about God during long seasons of waiting or silence?
2. The ark comes to rest on the mountains of Ararat, but Noah stays inside for months. Why do you think God allows such a long gap between rescue and release? Can you think of a time when renewal was slow or incomplete at first, for you?
3. Noah sends out the raven and the dove to look for signs of new life. What do these small, tentative steps teach us about discernment and trust after a crisis? How do you usually look for signs that it’s “safe to move forward” again?
4. The first thing Noah does when he leaves the ark is build an altar and worship. Why do you think worship comes before any rebuilding, organizing, or planning? What might that say about how renewal is meant to begin?
5. In *Genesis 8:21–22*, God promises stability, even while acknowledging that human hearts are still inclined toward evil. What does this reveal about God’s grace in response to human weakness?
6. What might renewal look like in your own life, right now? Where do you sense God inviting you to step out of the ark — but also to be patient with the process?