

## *Caring for God's Creation*

### [Genesis 9:8-17](#)

Today's scripture is a part of the story of Noah and the Great Flood. Recorded in the book of Genesis, from chapter 6 through 10, this is one of the most famous Bible stories. If you attended Sunday School as a child, you might remember the story with an image of a big boat filled with all kinds of animals. Of course, they all look so cute, even tigers and lions, foxes and wolves, and they all seem to get along.

But, this well-known, seemingly beautiful story of Noah and the Great Flood is a terrible story to teach our children when you think about all those people who perished in the rising waters. In fact, the story generates many questions for those who read it with a critical eye, and here are a few of those questions:

- How could Noah build an ark that could hold all the animals, even if it was just pairs of each kind?
- Where did he get enough food to feed not only his family but also all the animals on the ark for several months?
- Did God really send a flood to wipe out the whole human race and all the living creatures except those on the ark?
- Why are there so many different races in the world if we all came from one family of Noah after the flood?
- How do we reconcile the flood story in the Bible with other flood stories that are found in other ancient cultures?

If we examine these questions through the lens of common sense, we may come to the conclusion that Noah's story was not written necessarily to give us an account of a historical event but to teach us deeper truths, something about God and God's creation, about us and God's will for our lives. Then, what are these deeper truths, hidden in the story?

In the beginning of the flood story, there is a part that is very moving and sets the foundation for the rest of the story. You might want to take out the pew Bible and turn to Genesis, chapter 6, verses 5 and 6: *"The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And, the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart."*

Verse 6 is a profound statement about the relationship between us and God. Because human beings became evil in their thoughts and actions, God was grieving, heartbroken. The New International Version says, "God's heart was filled with pain." We forget this, but God is affected by how we think and behave!

As the prophet Zephaniah said, God takes great delight in us. When there is peace in our lives, when we are glad and sing with joy, God, too, rejoices over us with singing (3:17).

And, as the prophets Jeremiah (8:18-9:3) and Hosea said, when our sins hurt others and ourselves, God hurts, too. Yes, we can make God glad; we can make God sad! We affect God's emotions!

And then, comes another profound statement about the relationship between us and God. In chapter 9, verse 11, God says, *“I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”* And this promise is repeated in the rest of God’s covenant making speech.

Nowhere in today’s scripture do we find our responsibilities that the covenant binds us to. God entered into an eternal covenant with all creation without requiring anything in return! Yet, in other places in the Bible, we can find God’s clear mandates for us to care for God’s creation.

The first mandate is found in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. God created us in God’s image and entrusted us as stewards with all the living creatures on the earth. Caring for God’s creation is our privilege and responsibility.

Unfortunately, we have not lived up to the role we were created to have over the earth. We have destroyed and continue to exploit many areas of the earth to suit our own needs. Today, all across the world, people are facing many new and challenging environmental problems daily.

Here are the top 10 environmental issues according to the website *Schooled by Science*:

1. Climate Change - Mainly caused by greenhouse gasses, global temperatures are rising, ice caps are melting, and droughts, wildfires, and super hurricanes are increasing throughout the world.
2. Ecosystems and Endangered Species - The endangered species list continues to grow as ecosystems continue to decrease. By 2050, 1 out of 10 plants and animal species is expected to go extinct.
3. Deforestation - More than 70 percent of the planet’s plant and animal species live in forests. But, as we continue to cut down trees for lumber and land, by 2030, we may have only 10 percent of the world’s rainforests left.
4. Pollution - All types of pollution are affecting one another and causing other environmental issues.
5. Water Scarcity and Water Pollution - 780 million people around the world have no access to clean water, while water pollution continues to be a serious threat to public health.
6. Loss of Biodiversity - Biodiversity, or the variety of life in the world has declined 27 percent in the last 3 decades due to various threats including urban sprawl, deforestation, and climate change.
7. Overpopulation - The world’s population is expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, 11.2 billion by 2100. But, the maximum number of people our planet can support is only 10 billion.
8. Waste Disposal - The trash that ends up in environmental habitats and the ocean is a serious threat to nature as well as to humans.
9. Land Management and Urban Sprawl - Covering the landscape with concrete through urban sprawl interrupts the natural water cycle, preventing rainwater from soaking into the ground, therefore causing catastrophic floods.
10. Public Health - According to the WHO (World Health Organization), nearly 1 out of every 4 deaths each year are directly caused by unhealthy environments.

These environmental issues are daunting. As we have seen in recent years, they make us vulnerable to natural disasters and tragedies now and in the future. If we do not get serious about the environmental problems of today, there will be no future to consider. We do not have the excuse of not knowing. We have plenty of warning signs. Taking care of the earth is no longer an option, but a necessity.

So I invite our church family to respond to God's call to care for the earth, God's creation; to take responsibility for our actions as individuals and as the church to go green in various ways. Actually, going green is easier than you think, and here are some simple things you can do to save the earth:

1. Water Usage: Turn off the water while you brush your teeth. Consider turning off the water while you soap your body during the shower. Switch from bath to shower, and shorten your shower time. Do not pre-rinse the dishes when you use the dishwasher. When you do laundry, don't wash half loads but wait until you have enough dirty clothes to do a full load.
2. Energy Usage: Turn off lights when you are not in the room. Turn off your computer overnight. Unplug appliances when you are not using them. Use energy efficient light bulbs. If you can, dry your washed clothes naturally instead of using the dryer. Adjust the temperature in your home.
3. Paper Usage: Go paperless if possible. Print only what you have to. Print on both sides of the paper. Use all of the paper. Do not waste napkins. Take only one or two. Register to stop junk mail. There are several ways to stop them.
4. Reduce the amount of waste by Recycling: Recycle as much as possible, especially empty plastic water bottles and soda cans. Save empty plastic water bottles and soda cans and bring them to the church to help our youth with their fundraising effort for their annual SSP trip. Please do not put trash, especially food waste, into the recycling bin! Empty your bottles or cans before putting them into the recycling bin. Carry a reusable water bottle or a travel mug with you.
5. Compost your food waste if you can.
6. Walk or ride a bike as much as possible instead of driving.

I invite you to put these suggestions that you can easily implement into action! And, always remember these three words as you make an effort to go green: **Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle**. Of course, changing our behaviors to live a green lifestyle, to be environmentally responsible is not easy. Changing habits won't happen overnight. But it is not impossible either. I am sure we can do it together. By taking small steps and with God's help, we can live into our role as caretakers of God's creation.

Amen.