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*Sunday 10th May 2020 – Easter 5*

*Readings: Genesis 8:1-19 & John 14:1-14*

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## **Genesis 8:1-19**

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded. Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky. The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.

After forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry.

Then God said to Noah, 'Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you – the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground – so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it.'

So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds – everything that moves on land – came out of the ark, one kind after another.

# John 14:1-14

*Jesus comforts his disciples*

‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.’

*Jesus the way to the Father*

Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’

Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.’

Philip said, ‘Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.’

Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.’

## **Reflection**

We have some close friends who are very adventurous! They will just head off for the day without any sort of plan. As they drive along, they look out for an interesting sideroad that they haven't followed before. When they see one, they turn off. All the time, they are keeping their eyes peeled for anything interesting – signposts to a beauty spot, or to a historic landmark or building; where they can stop and explore further.

They have many an adventure, even if sometimes they have ended up driving down a no-through road! They just laugh and retrace their steps, until they find another interesting possibility.

The fun is in the adventure - of not knowing what they will find, or how the day will turn out! They'll even go away for the weekend without knowing where they will stay the night. They rely on finding somewhere, wherever they get to. And if they don't, they always have a pair of sleeping bags in the back of their car!! Now I am spontaneous – but I still like to know where I'm going to rest my head at night! Moreover, I'm married to a man who loves to plan every detail...sleeping in the back of a car because you haven't booked a room in advance is just not his style!

I wonder how we would have coped if we had been Noah? Not knowing if he would survive the floods; not knowing when the floods would stop; not knowing where the ark was even taking him...? Noah really was living in a time of uncertainty. (As Adam said last week, Noah was in 'lockdown' with his family, as well as all those animals!!) He couldn't even escape to the park by himself for some exercise! He didn't have anywhere to go.

What strikes me about this passage is that Noah doesn't grumble! The Bible mentions other people who grumbled and complained (like the Israelites in the wilderness) but there is no mention of Noah complaining. If I was going to describe Noah using two words, I would choose resilience and patience... And Noah especially needed that patience when the boat came to rest on the slopes of Mt Ararat! Having been cooped up for so long, Noah must have been tempted to leave the ark immediately. I for one would have found it hard to wait even another second!

But Noah is cautious. He wants to be sure it really is safe. And there was no point leaving, if there was nowhere for them to go, where they could find food for themselves (and for all those animals!!) Just because he'd arrived on Mt Ararat, didn't mean lockdown was over! He had to be patient for a little while longer. This was why Noah sent the birds to scout out the land. An olive leaf meant the ground was producing food again.

Above all, Noah waited for God's command; "Come out of the ark!" For Noah had always listened to God and obeyed him – and lockdown hadn't changed that. He was still God's man. And this, I believe, is the secret of Noah's resilience and patience. He trusted in God – and, as Genesis 8:1 reminds us, "God remembered Noah." It's

interesting that this week's Gospel passage, John 14, is also about trust. Jesus knew the disciples were about to experience uncertain times. What does he tell them? "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me."

My faith was really challenged when our son Andy died. I asked a friend to pray for me. She passed on to me what she heard from God; "Do you trust me? Trust me!" It felt like a command, rather than a suggestion! In other words, "If you trust me, then DO just that! Trust me!" Trust is a CHOICE as well as an attitude. Will we choose to keep trusting in God when so much about our lives is uncertain? When we have no idea what the future holds? All I can say about that difficult time, is that I chose to trust. Because I knew if I let go of my faith in God, I really would be lost.

If we choose to trust, and keep on choosing to trust, we will find in God someone who is trustworthy and true; the God who remembers us.

Amen .

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