

Somewhere over the rainbow

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Date: 01 September 2019

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[0 : 00] Now, it happens to be the 1st of September, spring, I've mentioned that. When I was growing up, my mom said, you know, you can always expect it to rain on the 1st of September.

It's always a special day at school. Well, back in the day, it was a special day at school. Was it like Civvy's Day, maybe? I can't remember. But it's always going to rain. And was it raining in Plumshead? It was raining in Heart Bay this morning.

It was beautiful, soft winter rain. And we don't often think about the fact that these things come from God, but obviously they do. And we've been praying for rain in Cape Town.

But we don't often think about the fact that we're alive in spite of the rain. And so something to think about is we're alive because how many thousands of years ago God put a rainbow in the sky?

So something to think about as we start our sermon today. So turn with me to Genesis 9. We've just read it. Just have that open. And we'll look at the text together.

[1 : 12] Now, action movies follow a predictable and successful formula. We're introduced to the hero at the start of the movie. Normally a good-looking guy with some witty proverbs.

The bad guys come along with some crazy convoluted idea to take over the world. Lots of explosions and frenetic action. The action hero manages to solve all the problems.

He's got these great one-liners. Say hello to my little friend. Do you feel lucky, punk? I'll be back.

And in the last scenes, as our hero makes his way out of the wreckage of whatever's happened, a car, a bus, a plane, comes out in slow motion, there's sunlight, everyone is smiling, hugs and kisses, and we just know that everything is going to be okay.

Everyone is going to live happily ever after. Now, we all long for that. Happily ever after. For everything to be okay. Now, if the story of Noah, or the story of the Bible, was going to be written as a Hollywood action blockbuster, and they did make a movie.

It wasn't quite a blockbuster. It was quite a cool movie. It's strange, but still quite cool. We would expect that the fairytale ending would come as Noah walks out of the ark.

[2 : 39] Happily ever after. All the baddies are dead. We're primed and ready to begin again. You can almost smell the hope and the potential in the air.

In fact, Noah makes a sacrifice, and that smell does go up. God's just saying, I love the smell of victory in the morning. Unfortunately, that doesn't quite happen.

We heard about the reset button that God pressed last week. That massive flood that he sent. Now, if I'm reading the story of Noah, well, as we read the story of Noah, we should expect two outcomes.

Either the reset must work. The baddies are gone. The good guys are there. God did it for a reason. He wants his purposes in creation to come about, to stand up again.

So we either expect the reset to work. If the reset didn't work, we expect God to, well, reset it again. Maybe he's thinking, maybe the earth needs another rewash cycle.

[3 : 47] That 40-day thing didn't seem to work. Let me crank this up to 80 days. Now, the strange thing in the scriptures is that neither of these seems to be the case. First, it seems that the factory reset didn't take.

Now, I say it seems like that because obviously it's not outside of God's plan. It's not like he wanted to make it happen and then it didn't happen. It happened exactly as he planned it. But it doesn't seem to have taken well.

I'll point those things out in the story in a short while. It seems the factory set didn't retake. And in wonder of wonders, God doesn't send another flood.

Now, there's four things in the text that tell us that even after God had washed the whole creation clean, there's still a problem with creation. You'll just have to turn back, not turn back, but just

before chapter 9.

As they come out of the ark, just have a look at chapter 8, verse 21. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart, Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood.

[5 : 04] And never again will I destroy all living creatures as I've done. So just notice, they come out of the ark and God already knows that there's still a problem. You got that? Then as we read the story, there is a reset.

It kind of, it's got that creation language going on about it, doesn't it? But along with creation is that language of death. Do you notice that we can now eat animals?

Verse 3. Chapter 9, verse 3. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. I wonder what it was that Noah sacrificed, those first two animals that he sacrificed.

They made it through the flood. And then Noah calls him over. Okay, boys, I've got a special purpose for you. Yes? Yes, Noah? Yes, Noah? I'm going to have to kill you. What about the other animals?

Hello, boys. Hope you enjoy your new creation. But peckish today. Notice, though, also, that God is expecting people to kill each other.

[6 : 14] Now, I'm not saying he wants them to kill each other. It's just that he knows that they're going to do it. Chapter 6. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.

For in the image of God has God made man. It seems like he knows that we're going to continue this process with Cain and Abel, with Lamech.

The stories that we've heard of the people that killed other people. It seems like that is going to still happen. Then at the end of the story, we come across more moral failure. I'm mad. The first thing Noah does.

Okay, yes, he plants a vineyard. Okay, that's good. Part of the creation mandate. And then he drinks too much. Just so typical. Okay, so he's getting drunk.

Then he's laying exposed in his tent. A little bit rough there. And then Ham walks in and either makes fun of him or shows contempt or even worse.

[7 : 10] And then the first words out of our hero's mouth. The first witty one-liner that he gets. These are the first words of Noah in the Bible. Interesting. Cursed be Canaan.

The first recorded words that we've got in the Bible about Noah. Not a great witty one-liner, but there you go. So you've got evil. You've got sin. You've got death. And you've got the curse. And you've got moral failure. So just to show that this whole reset thing, it worked, but it also didn't work. Are you with me on that? We're just going to have to live with that tension a little bit. Please don't misunderstand me.

I'm not saying that God wasn't able to make it happen and that he failed somehow. That's the tension you've got to live with in the Bible sometimes. Okay, so basically sin, death, and the curse are still kicking around.

So now the big question arises, what is God going to do? What I would expect is for God to say, okay, let's send the universe, the creation, back for another rinse cycle.

[8 : 11] If anything, he has every right to be even angrier. You know what it's like when you're working on your car and that one little screw doesn't go in? You're tired of using the screwdriver? Get the hammer!

It's time for the hammer! It's not working properly. Okay, now what we see in this text is the amazing grace of God. Not only do we deserve judgment and death, but instead of bringing judgment and death, God promises mercy and life.

We are alive today because God put a rainbow in the sky. Now just to give you an idea when that was, just so that we orientate ourselves, we are living 2,000 years after Jesus.

Noah was born plus or minus 3,000 years before Jesus, 3,000 BC. If you use the biblical timeline. And the flood itself was maybe 2,500 BC.

Give or take a couple hundred years. I'm not 100% sure, but round about there. That's a long time for God to make sure that he doesn't send another flood. Although we know that we deserve it, don't we?

[9 : 23] And so what you've got, a bit of a complex storyline developing where God's world is not right. And yet God doesn't act out of judgment, but in mercy.

And the key to God acting in mercy is his covenant. So I want to spend the bulk of our time this morning looking at this word covenant. So if you look in chapter 9, you'll notice the word covenant jump out at you again and again and again.

I'm just going to go through those texts quickly so you can see it. Verse 8, God said to know unto his sons with him, I now establish my covenant with you. And just notice the verbs there, I'm going to establish my covenant.

Verse 11, I establish my covenant with you. Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of the flood. Verse 12, and God said, this is the sign of the covenant I'm making between me and you.

Verse 13, I have set my rainbow in the clouds and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Verse 15, I will remember my covenant between me and you.

[10:36] Verse 16, whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all creatures. Verse 17, this is the sign of the covenant I've established.

You get the point God is making. Why do you think he's repeating it so many times? Well, same reason parents repeat the same thing again and again. He wants you to get it. Okay, God promises not to destroy the world with water again.

Even though he knows the problem of sin is still there, he nevertheless promises never to destroy the world again with water. This repetition indicates absolute fidelity by God to his word.

In a sense, God is promising to promise never to do it again. He's making very big promises and then promises to keep his promises. Does that make sense? Now, how do we know that God has kept his promise?

We're living, help me with my maths, 4,000, 4,500, maybe 7,000, between 4,500 and 5,000 years after God made these promises.

[11:44] Somewhere around there. That's a long time for someone to keep a promise. One day, you know, we judge by our standards. How long are we able to keep our promises before we try and water them down?

God will show mercy and not bring judgment. He will do it. He can be trusted. Now, let's just define what the word covenant is. We've looked at that last week.

You know, it's not a word we use every day in modern language. Hey, how's your covenant today?

That's fine. Just going off to make a covenant quickly. So we don't talk like that. So we need to understand what this word means. So, just as a working definition, Nick gave us one last week.

I'm going to sort of expand on that a bit. Covenant is a special, strong, and binding oath accompanied and sealed by covenant signs whereby God promises to act on behalf of a special family of people who God preserves from his judgment in order to continue his creative and redemptive purposes for the world.

Now, it's maybe a bit of a mouthful, but I'm not going to repeat it right now. It'll pick up as we go along. Just to give you what the English word covenant means, where it comes from, it's from a French and Latin term, *converere*.

[13:04] *Converere*. A bit of Latin there. *Convenerere*. We get the English word *convene*, so you bring people together once they've made an agreement. To come together, to make an agreement.

And essentially, that's what covenants do. They bring God and mankind together. They've been separated. God separates mankind from himself in the Garden of Eden because of his sin.

So, for God to bring people back, he's got to make a special dispensation. Just so you know, it translates the Hebrew term *berit*. Just something you could know.

That gets translated into Latin as *testamentum*. A testament, right? And, you know, in the Old Testament and the New Testament could easily be translated, or should actually be translated, Old Covenant and New Covenant.

So, testament, covenant, these are all similar words. Okay, I hope that helps you understand a little bit about what is happening with the word covenant. It's not everything, but it helps you understand.

[14:05] It's a working definition. It helps you understand what's going on there. Just notice also the different aspects of the covenant indicated by the verbs. How does God's covenant work?

Did you pick it up? I establish my covenant. I establish my covenant. Here's a sign of the covenant. Here's a sign twice. Each time it's repeated. I'll remember my covenant. I'll remember my covenant. And then again, here's the sign of the covenant. So, to establish means to... The Hebrew word is to stand up. To make something stand up.

To erect something. A pile of stones is established. A building is established. So, you notice it. It's there. It's going to happen. Everyone knows he's doing it. A sign.

The Hebrew word again, it's like a banner or a flag. It's to draw attention. Say, hey, this is happening. It's like a marketing tool. So that everyone know that God is doing it.

[15:05] And he will remember it. That's not that God forgets. But that he takes action on previous promises. So that everyone knows that God is doing it. Now, if God...

If that's how he makes covenants, does that not mean we can trust God? We can trust God when he says these things. Unlike the gods of the ancient world, they're used to playing tricks.

If you read the stories of the ancient Greeks and the Romans, those gods were tricksters. You couldn't trust them. They would lie to you. They would promise a thing and not do it. And promise not to do the thing. And then do the thing they promise not to do.

You just never knew. Okay, we don't believe in the gods of the ancient world. But there is a worldview that acts in a similar way. The evolution atheist worldview.

You have no idea why things happen in the atheist or evolutionist worldview. And you don't know when they're going to happen. And you don't know why they happen. And you don't know if you can stop them. Meteorites.

[16:00] Extinction level events. Global warming. These things keep people in a constant state of concern. But they can't really change their ways. You notice the politicians always want us to change our ways and pay more in taxes for things that they want us to do.

But they then fly around in these gas-guzzling airplanes to go to their meetings about how to stop carbon emissions. All right.

So just to pick up this idea of covenant, it's a major theme in the Bible. It's a major theme in the Bible. In fact, it's probably one of the binding storylines of the Bible.

It's a storyline of covenant. Each major biblical figure has a corresponding major covenant attached to him. I don't know if you've ever picked this up. Okay. Adam, you can say that there's a covenant with creation and a covenant with Adam.

Here's one with Noah. In a few chapters' time, we'll pick up one with Abraham. Moses has a covenant attached to him. King David. And, of course, Jesus.

[17:03] Covenant becomes the vehicle which God uses to bring about his saving and redemptive purposes for the world. So, let's take a little bit closer look at this word covenant and see how it operates in the text to see if we can get a handle on it and to see how God uses it for us.

I've got six things to look at. Don't worry, it'll be brief. First thing, the covenant is initiated by God. It's started by God.

We don't enter into covenant with God. He enters into covenant with us. Covenants are initiated by him and made with whomever he decides to make them with.

He doesn't disclose to us who he's going to do it or why he does it, only that he does do it. This is the key to understanding how God works with humanity. God takes initiative in saving us.

You know that from the story of Noah. It's not that Noah chose God and he said, hey, what must I do? God chose Noah and then told him what to do. Later on in the story of Abraham, it's not that Abraham is looking to God and saying, hey, I'd really like this land.

[18:13] Would you mind giving it to me? God goes to Abraham and says, hey, I'm going to give you a land. Every single time God initiates a covenant, it starts with him in the same way that creation starts with him.

When God made the world, this mud that was there didn't say to God, hey, listen, I'd really like to be a man, you know, anytime it'll be really nice. God takes the mud and says, here, become a man. God takes the action, we do the responding. Obviously, this goes totally counter to much of what the modern church tells us about how God works. Covenant theology is totally opposed to the idea that we hold the key to our salvation.

Our salvation is a complete act of God from beginning to end. Okay, you got that. Happy?

Secondly, it's a total act of grace. Man doesn't deserve God's promise to never again finish us off with a flood.

If anything, we deserve it and we deserve it even more today. Just look at what the rainbow flag has become a symbol of, the very thing that got us to trouble in the first place. You know, how to wave a red flag in God's face.

[19 : 25] And God knew that what man was going to become. He knew that when he came out of the ark, the inclination of his heart is only evil from childhood.

And God still promises, yet, never again will I destroy all living creatures as I've done. So incredibly, God acts by pure grace, knowing that the problem of sin is still within man and yet, he promises never to destroy the earth again.

That is the definition of grace and mercy. We deserve to be flooded, or however God wants to get rid of us. He says, no, okay, I won't do it. I know you deserve it and I'm still not going to do it. Our covenants, then the covenant saves us from judgment. Kind of the same point. But just notice that covenants save us from something.

God knows our destructive tendencies and he saves us from our ultimate own destruction. But importantly, the vehicle of salvation is this idea of covenant.

[20 : 34] Then fourthly, covenants bring life. Now the purpose of the flood is to judge and to destroy life. Obvious. The purpose of the covenant was to make life possible again.

Noah is alive because God told him to build an ark. The covenant God made with him literally saved his life. We don't think about this, but again, it's strange to think, but the rainbow, it's not that the rainbow saves our life, but it's a sign to God and we'll get into what the sign means in a short while. Now when God enters into covenant with people to bring life, he doesn't just enter into a friendship type relationship. It's not just friendship here with Noah. He doesn't walk up to Noah and shakes him by the hand, gives him a high five or give him a hug.

A covenant is an elevated form of relationship. It's not a one-on-one equal relationship. It's a disparity of a relationship. You've got someone who's more powerful and in more authority helping someone who's helpless and has less power and way less authority.

The relationship God has with his creation and his creatures is covenant-shaped and that begins to work its way through the rest of the scriptures. Fourthly, covenants save whole families.

[21 : 50] Covenants don't save individuals only. In fact, covenants kind of save whole nations. Now this idea runs counter to the modern idea of individualism.

But you'll notice in the text that the Bible goes out of its way to tell us that Noah, that it was Noah and his whole family that gets saved. And it's his whole family that comes out of the ark.

Yes, part of his family goes a bit wonky a little bit later, but God doesn't enter into covenant with an individual and leave it for that individual. I guess in some sense covenant and creation work together.

You remember when God made Adam and Eve? Well, he made Adam but it wasn't long before he said, no, I don't want Adam to be alone. Adam needs a helper. I want to make Adam and Eve, husband and wife and then I want them to increase and multiply and he blessed them by doing that. Now, the main thing we're going to look at today is covenants are accompanied by a sign. You hardly ever have the promise without a sign.

[22 : 54] There's maybe one or two covenants in the Bible where there isn't a corresponding sign but most of them carry a sign with them and the sign is important. It acts as an active reminder to both parties of the relationship that they're in.

Now, interestingly, there's no Hebrew word for rainbow like we've got in the English language, rain and bow. Make sense? It looks like a bow. In Hebrew, it's just the word bow.

The same instrument you use for killing animals and people. Instrument of war. So how does the sign of the bow help us understand what God has done here in the covenant?

A New Testament scholar from the States, Thomas Schreiner, says this, the bow in the clouds, the sign of the covenant testifies that God has withdrawn his weapons of war and that he will preserve the world until redemption is accomplished.

Isn't that interesting? So covenant signs are for both parties. For us, to remind us that God is good, that he cares for us, that he won't forget his promises, and that he will act on our behalf.

[24 : 06] It means that the promises of God and indeed God himself are as concrete and real as the signs that you can see, feel, taste, and touch. Now, a little bit difficult to touch a rainbow, but if you're good enough, if you're fast enough, you can get there and there's a little pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Speak to Naomi about that. Interesting. We only discovered what a rainbow was in the 1600s. Isaac Newton discovered that it was sunlight broken up into its constituent parts.

But here's the thing. The sign here in the text is actually for God, not so much for Noah, although it is that as well.

It's a reminder for God. Now, this is not an aspect we often think about. We take it for granted that God loves us and that he wants the best for us. Well, to be honest, that kind of theology doesn't quite fit in with the flood narrative.

God is acting out in justice on the vast majority of mankind but showing mercy to only a very few. The sign acts as a reminder to God that he must also remember that he promised not to kill us all again with a flood.

[25 : 22] Do you see how the sign is appropriate to the promise? You only see a rainbow when there is both rain and sunlight. You can't see a rainbow when there's just rain and you can't see a rainbow when there's just sunlight.

You can imagine Noah and his family. I mean, imagine God hadn't made this promise every time it starts raining. It's been three days now.

There's a rainbow. It'll be okay. Okay, that's the intention of the sign from our side. Now, from God's side, I'm getting really angry with these people.

I'm going to send a flood again. Oh, there's the rainbow. You guys are so lucky. I don't know if that's theologically correct. I'm just, anyway.

But notice how the sign is appropriate. It works. It reminds us. It reminds God and it's raining but there's sunlight which means it's not going to rain forever. So, it's an active kind of a sign.

[26 : 31] Okay. So, hopefully you're getting a bigger picture of what covenants do and how they work. Now, this is not the only thing to say about covenants in the Bible. You're going to come across them again in our storyline of Genesis especially and there's more to say about them.

But I just want to pick up a few things about covenants and signs which we are not really familiar with in the modern church. This idea of covenant and sign can be a little bit strange to us although I know that you've been receiving some good teaching on it.

Now, just so that you know our Anglican heritage we're in a church of England church an Anglican church can actually help us with this. It actually has a very good theology of covenant and signs although it uses the word sacraments kind of analogous to covenant.

It's not 100% equivalent but it's a fairly good equivalent. It's a good theology of covenant and signs.

So what I'd like to do so we're just exploring this idea of signs and covenant.

You've got your prayer books so just pick them up quickly for me. You might have to share them and just turn to the back because literally it's got good teaching on what these things on what they are and I'm going to look at baptism because it comes up in our text in the New Testament text.

[27 : 53] So if you turn to the back of your prayer books the 39 articles were written by the whole church back in the 1500s when it was reformed when it became Protestant.

They needed to explain what we believe as a Protestant church and they've kind of formed the backbone of our church ever since. Now yeah they don't get used a lot now but they're not just historical things they're actually real they still order what we believe in the Anglican church when you take your oath as an ordinate as an ordained person you promise to use the prayer book and uphold the 39 articles.

If you turn to article 25 just to read a little bit there about what the sacraments are and you'll pick up this language of signs and covenant maybe.

the sacraments so article 25 on page 152 it's right at the back. The sacraments prescribed by Christ are badges and tokens there's that sign language of our profession as Christians and more particularly they are trustworthy witnesses and effectual signs of God's grace and good will to us.

So notice that. The sacraments are effectual signs that actually do things. of God's grace and good will to us. By them God works invisibly in us both arousing and also strengthening and confirming our faith in him.

[29 : 21] We don't often think of this when we take the sacraments obviously the Lord's Supper and baptism now but that's actually what they're intended to do. And I guess they actually do do that whether you realize it or not but it's nice to know that that's what they actually do.

They arouse they bring out faith and strengthen and confirm our faith. Now it's a long section on the sacrament there. I'm just going to leave it there for now. The rest of it is about how we're not Catholic and only that now but if you turn to article 27 on baptism because I'm just going to pick up something about that in our the New Testament reading.

Baptism is a sign of the faith we profess and a mark that differentiates Christian persons from those who are unbaptized. Makes sense? And it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth by which as by an instrument those who receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church.

The promises of forgiveness of sin and of our adoption to be the sons of God are visibly signified and sealed and faith is confirmed and grace increased by virtue of prayer to God. The baptism of young children is under all circumstances to be retained in the church as a practice fully agreeable with the institution of Christ.

Now, just to pick up one or two things there. Do you notice what we get when we get baptized? It's a sign that's covenant language of regeneration or new birth by which as by an instrument those who receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church the promises of forgiveness of sins and adoption to be sons of God.

[30 : 59] There's one other thing we receive which they leave out is reception of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one that cleans us on the inside. Okay, so I just wanted to highlight the fact that we've actually got a really robust a really strong theology of signs that's still kicking around in the church today.

Now, let's end our time together in 1 Peter chapter 3 and just highlight one or two things from that text for us that maybe can help us understand that although these things happened so many years ago in the Old Testament God still works by means of covenant and signs in his church today.

So 1 Peter 3 The first point I want to make is that baptism is a powerful sign that reminds us of our salvation by Christ. So the sign that we kind of live by today is baptism.

And I'm sure you picked it up in the text verse 21 so chapter 3 21 and this water talking about the water of the floods of Noah symbolizes baptism that now saves you also.

But notice what the power behind baptism is. It's not just the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God.

[32 : 27] what that means is you get your conscience cleaned. You get your insides scrapped. So the problem of sin is still kicking around at the time of Noah. And God knows that's the problem.

So you can kill the bad people but you can't kill the bad inside the people. And God has got to kill the bad thing inside the people for the people to be good. And in his providence he waits over 2,000 years for the time of Christ to start making people clean on the inside.

And how does he do it? Well this text tells us. Go back to verse 18. For Christ died for sins once for all.

The righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit. Now do you notice what it's saying there about our sin? Our problem of sin is finally dealt with in Christ.

He takes it away. He rubs it out. He makes it null and void. And it's his death that does it. Killed in the body but notice what makes him alive.

[33 : 33] The Spirit. Indication that it might be the Holy Spirit there. Notice what else saves us in this text. So Christ's death saves us by taking away our sin.

Baptism saves us so that's a bit of a difficult one to get our head around. But that's what it says. It doesn't save us just by the washing of water.

That's kind of the outward sign. The outward sign tells us something that's happening on the inside. We're washed on the outside but what it's an indication of is that we're being washed on the inside. We're having our conscience cleaned. Now, you often hear me pray about our heart and our mind and in the scriptures they kind of work the same way. That's where the problem is located in us humans.

It's our heart that's a bit wicked and our mind is really depraved. You've got to have those fixed if you want to participate in God's new creation. The other thing that saves us is Christ's resurrection.

[34 : 34] In verse 21, water symbolizes baptism that saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God.

It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels and authorities and powers in submission to him.

So baptism is a sign of new life. Being united with Christ brings new life and the power to live this new life in the same way that Christ rose again from the dead.

There's other scriptures that tell us that same power is at work within us, us, here, Christians, today. and that is a power that no other power or evil can withstand or stop.

So in your battles with sin, realize that because of your baptism you've received a sign that tells you you are washed, you are cleaned, and you can fight and you can win against sin.

[35 : 37] Does that make sense? And of course you're going to fight your whole life long and we're all going to pass away. That's okay. Jesus came back from the dead.

I've received the sign of the covenant. I'm coming back from the dead. Okay. Then just lastly, a few more points. Notice in the rest of our reading, once you've been baptized, once you've received the sign of the covenant, how are you meant to live?

Well, you're meant to be a nice person. Not just that you're meant to be a nice person, you are going to be a nice person. you're going to stop messing around and doing all those bad things that pagans used to do.

That's not going to be fun anymore. And you're going to start being nice to other people. You're going to open your homes. You're going to pray. You're going to offer hospitality.

Have a look at chapter 4 now. Verse 7. The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear-minded and self-control so that you can pray.

[36 : 45] Notice what happens in your brains, in your heads, once you receive the signs of the covenant. Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins, so we don't worry about the small things anymore.

At my previous church, they had a huge argument about the flower ministry. They asked me to intervene. I said, no, no, if we have to stop fights about the flowers, then we've already lost.

Okay? But we just don't sweat the small stuff. It's not important. Okay? Love covers a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others. Now, that's where part of my ministry is going to come in. I'm going to call that out of you. You've got stuff that you can offer and give and it's enjoyable and it's nice to do that.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. And when we talk, say nice things, be encouraging. Don't say the horrible things.

[37 : 52] Bite your tongue and say nice things. We don't live for ourselves, we live for God. Just the end there. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. Now, just a few things about the covenant and to help us think covenantally of ourselves. Because we don't, we wake up in the morning going, yep, in the covenant today, good, good.

Kids, do you realize when your dad brought you forward to be baptized, you received a secret little covenant mark? Now, there's some kids here, hey? We've got some kids. Some kids, okay, good. Kids who have been baptized. You've received a secret covenant mark of God on your life. You've been brought into this amazing covenant, this amazing relationship with God.

The best thing your parents could do for you is baptize you and bring you into the church. Now, I know you don't see the signs, but God sees the signs. It's like an invisible ink. I noticed that when Nick did it, he made the sign of the cross, which is quite cool.

[39 : 00] It's your secret between you and God, and it can never be rubbed out. God has set his mark on you and you belong to him. Adults, that's obviously for us as well, but it's nice to remind the kids. Ladies, are you honoring your man as the covenant head of your household?

God, how are you doing with your covenant vows to love, cherish, and bury? But you made a promise, not a small promise, a big promise, and you must live up to that.

Men, are you living up to your covenant calling as image bearers of God here on earth? How is your leading at home going? How is your leading at work going? How is leading in your community going?

How are you filling your family's life with goodness and blessing and life, and with the Holy Spirit and with Christ? Do you lead your wife well? Do you lead your kids well?

Is your life leading, is the leading that you're doing in your life bringing greater praise to God? Well, these are the things we need to remember and remind ourselves of, that we're in the covenant, we've received God's signs, and all the things that he promises, that he tells us in Genesis 9, are true of us.

[40 : 10] We've been brought into this covenant, we've been given grace, we've been given mercy, and we should live our lives based on that covenant and remembering that we are covenant people, and that gives us energy and power to live a Christian life.

Does that make sense? Happy with that? Amen. Well, let's pray together and ask God to help us live these things out. Heavenly Father, all those years ago you sent your rainbow into the sky and a lovely reminder of your promise never to destroy the earth again.

You've given us grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, and you've given us covenant signs by which we can remember your promises to us. You've washed us clean in baptism, inside and out.

You've given us a new heart and a new mind and your Holy Spirit. Help us men, Lord, to be good covenant bearers. Help us to make our families covenant families and help us, women and children, to be good covenant members as well.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.