

Notes on Gen 9 : 8 – 17 ‘Shout it from the rooftops – it’s Harvest time’

Gene Kelly loves ‘I’m singing in the rain’, well I don’t!! All you need to do is ask my family and they will gladly tell you how dreadful I am in it. I would have made an awful Noah not only because of the rain but also because, I am rubbish at DIY, let alone building an ark!! For Honduras the sound of raindrops keep falling on their heads is not a sound they associate with blessing and joy, which is how the Bible describes rain, but the opposite. Instead of seeing rain as a sign of God’s abundant goodness, provision and love, when they feel rain, it fills them with dread as they know only too well the destructive power of creation. For them the curses described in Genesis 3 : 17 – 19 seem not merely too real but also exaggerated beyond description. The story of the flood is because God’s stewards’ failure to fulfil their covenantal obligations and role but in Genesis 9 humanity has been given a second chance. At harvest we rejoice in God’s abundant goodness and we are reminded of the wonderful privilege we have of sharing in our God given vocation of stewarding God’s good creation.

In the beginning was the toilet roll, and then it was the panic buying of petrol. The news now tells the story of increasing gas prices and the collapsing of energy companies which promises a winter of discontent but in 2021 style!! It may well be a winter of anxiety, fear and panic which was very different to the anxiety, fear and panic of when the rains came down and the floods came up in Genesis 7. The flood story speaks of the de-creation of all that God had made, when chaos and disorder were allowed to reassert themselves bringing with them their harvest of death and destruction. This is why God gave a sign of hope, life, peace and love; the sign of the rainbow. Over the last 18 months rainbows have been seen everywhere as a sign of hope, life, peace and love through the often-sacrificial care of our NHS staff. The rainbow likewise is to inspire in all of us the desire to live such a life of sacrificial service rooted in hope, life, peace and love too. Such a life is not to be lived for the sake of the ill alone, but to live this life for the sake of creation, of the environment and in particular for the poor who are often affected the most.

The latest video of Greta Thunberg, the young Swedish environmental campaigner is very funny. It shows her giving her ‘blah, blah, blah speech’ where she ridicules the emptiness of the words of world leaders about what they are doing in relation to the current environmental crisis. She speaks of her generation’s “Hopes and dreams drowning in their empty words & promises...” She says that “Hope is not passive. Hope is not blah, blah, blah. Hope is telling the truth. Hope is taking action. Hope always

comes from the people.” Her words are very apt for our time, but she forgets one thing, our hope is found in our hearing and responding to the life-giving Word of God. In the TearFund video – ‘Burning down the House’ – did you hear the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit through the voices of our younger sisters and brothers as they appeal to church leaders to dare to speak on and about such burning issues and for us to not just listen but to act on it too?

The rainbow is a sign of the covenant, that is of God’s good and abundant promises we celebrate at harvest. It is the time when we delight in God’s ‘never again’ as described in verse 15 but it also reaffirms our vocation as described in Genesis 1 : 26 which humanity had denied. The rainbow calls us to make flesh God’s rule of love and goodness we all know in our own lives but to be also lived out to the benefit and blessing of all creation itself. Here we are to call on our government to not just blah, blah, blah but to act, act, act.

God’s ‘never again’ is why we are not to give up hearing, knowing and responding to him not just in our lives but in our vocation too. God’s never again calls each one of us to live our lives as those who are being remade into the likeness of Jesus who, after all, himself turned the rainbow into the flesh of his life which he lived and gave for us.