WHEN GOD RE-CREATES YOUR WORLD
Selected Verses from Genesis 1-9

Let's pray – Almighty God, thank you for giving us your word so that we might know you better and surrender more fully to your will and your way and so find peace in your presence. Please open the eyes of our hearts so that we might see and hear and understand better who you are today, and who we are in relationship to you. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

INTRODUCTION – When Your World Caves In/Falls Apart/Collapses

I think it was my second year in college when I realized I felt depressed. I had moved from Hong Kong to upstate New York about a year and a half before. Through high school I thrived on being overly busy. I excelled academically, musically and athletically. But my achievements in some ways masked an emptiness I felt inside.

By my second year of college, though I was doing just fine in school, working a couple of part-time jobs, volunteering copious hours at church, I was starting to feel homesick, a bit worn out, and still quite empty inside. I had been looking to a relationship with a particular person to fill the void in me, but when I felt rejected by this person I cared so much about, it felt like my house of cards came tumbling down around me.

I remember laying on the floor of my room one day just feeling the waves of exhaustion washing over me. It's like years of over-exertion had finally caught up to me. The energy I had been using over the previous I don't know how many years, trying to hold everything together to appear perfect on the outside, that energy was gone. Something in me felt broken and my world felt like it was caving in around me.

A mental image came to mind. I saw myself laying down on a track, worn out, and I hadn't even rounded the first bend. I had been a runner in high school, so the image made sense to me. But how on earth was I going to get up and finish the race when I couldn't even make it around that first bend?

Have you felt like your world was falling apart/caving in/collapsing around you, like a house of cards? Maybe you had carefully fit together the various pieces of your life – your career, your relationships, your health, your short term and long-term plans. But then someone metaphorically bumped the table, or someone slammed the door in your face, or a gust of wind blew through the room and all the pieces of your life, your carefully constructed house of cards, the entire structure came crashing down around you in a single moment. Has that ever happened to you? What was the triggering event?

Was it losing your job and wondering how you would provide for your family?

Was it hearing the doctor say a word like “cancer”?

Was it the death of a loved one?

Was it going through a painful divorce?

Sometimes just dealing with the normal processes of aging might leave us feeling like our life is falling apart. When we can no longer climb the stairs, when we can no longer drive. When we are forced to downsize to a smaller home or move into a place with assisted living. When all our belongings don’t fit anymore and we feel like whole life is being pressed through a narrow funnel. It can feel disorienting and frustrating, we might feel like our life is out of control or crumbling around us.

Last Sunday we talked about how it is quite common for people to feel like they have been forgotten by God when difficult life events occur. But Scripture reassures us that is not true and presses home the opposite message – God does not forget about us but rather cares deeply for us and is often working behind the scenes in ways we do not immediately see, to accomplish his good purposes in our lives and in the world. We can take comfort in that truth.

However, sometimes it is not enough to simply know the truth that God has not forgotten us. When it feels like our life has come crashing down around us, when earthly security has failed us and our plans have slipped away, we also need to know that God is more than able to preserve us through every major storm or loss, and He can help us pick up the broken pieces to create a new life when the storm has passed.

God is in the business of helping people make a fresh start when they discover their world can no longer be what it once was.

No story illustrates this better than the story Noah and the flood. In this story we see the world God created literally caving in upon itself, as God acts to wash away the evil that has taken root. But out of the watery chaos that ensues, God brings renewal and re-creates a world of possibility for Noah and his family.

Today, we are going to read selected Bible passages beginning with the creation account in Genesis 1 and continuing through the flood narrative in Genesis 9. We don’t have time to read all 9 chapters today, so I have left out some verses and even whole chapters from the middle of the story. I hope the parts I have selected from these 9 chapters will be sufficient to bring to light the connections between God’s original work of creation, the destruction of that creation in the flood and then the re-creation that God did to give Noah a new beginning after the flood.

My hope is that we will be encouraged to realize no matter how broken our lives might feel, no matter how much it seems like they have collapsed around us, God

is more than able to re-create something of beauty and blessing if we will listen and obey his voice as Noah did.

As we read the accounts, you can follow along on the projection screen or read from the handout in your bulletin if you prefer. It's going to take us approximately 8 mins to read. So, I'm going to invite you to sit back, relax and enjoy the ride.

And I'm going to give you a few questions to think about as we go. I'm hoping these questions will help you stay tuned in.

So here are some questions for you to think as we read –

What happens to both the water and land as the story progresses?
What changes do you notice in the relationship between the humans and the animals?
What is different about the dietary restrictions immediately after creation and then after the flood?
What do you notice about God's blessing throughout the story?
What do you notice about the role of obedience?

With those questions in mind, let's begin our reading of God's word.

SELECT PASSAGES FROM GENESIS 1 – 9

Genesis 1:1-10

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **2** Now the earth was
formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of
God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. **4** God saw that the light was
good, and he separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light "day," and the
darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first
day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from
water." **7** So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water
above it. And it was so. **8** God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there
was morning—the second day….

9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry
ground appear." And it was so. **10** God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered
waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:26- 2:3

26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may
rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild
animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the
earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every
living creature that moves on the ground.”

29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth
and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. **30** And to all the
beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the
ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.”
And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and
there was morning—the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.
2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh
day he rested from all his work. **3** Then God blessed the seventh day and made it
holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Genesis 6:5 – 8

6 **5** The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the
earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the
time. **6** The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart
was deeply troubled. **7** So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human
race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move
along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” **8** But Noah found favor in the
eyes of the Lord.

Genesis 6:11 – 15 & 22

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. **12** God saw how
corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. **13** So
God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with
violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. **14** So
make yourself an ark of cypress[c] wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside
and out. **15** This is how you are to build it:…

22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

Genesis 7:1-6

7 The Lord then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I
have found you righteous in this generation. 2 Take with you seven pairs of every kind of
clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male
and its mate, 3 and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their
various kinds alive throughout the earth. 4 Seven days from now I will send rain on the
earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living
creature I have made.”

5 And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.

6 Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth.

Genesis 7:11-24

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second
month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of
the heavens were opened. 12 And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

13 On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife
and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. **14** They had with them every wild
animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that
moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its
kind, everything with wings. **15** Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them
came to Noah and entered the ark. **16** The animals going in were male and female of
every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord shut him in.

17 For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they
lifted the ark high above the earth. **18** The waters rose and increased greatly on the
earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. **19** They rose greatly on the earth,
and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. **20** The waters rose
and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits.[a][b] **21** Every living
thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that
swarm over the earth, and all mankind. **22** Everything on dry land that had the breath of
life in its nostrils died. **23** Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out;
people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were
wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

24 The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

Genesis 8:1-5

8 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. **2** Now the

springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the
rain had stopped falling from the sky. 3 The water receded steadily from the earth. At the
end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, 4 and on the seventeenth
day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. 5 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.

Genesis 8:13-22

13 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. 14 By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the
earth was completely dry.

15 Then God said to Noah, 16 "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and
their wives. 17 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."

18 So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. 19 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.

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and
clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. 21 The Lord smelled the pleasing
aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of humans,
even though[a] every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never
again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

22 "As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat,
summer and winter,
day and night
will never cease."

Genesis 9:1-7

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in
number and fill the earth. 2 The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the
earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground,
and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. 3 Everything that lives and
moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you
everything.

4 "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. **5** And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.

6 "Whoever sheds human blood,
by humans shall their blood be shed;
for in the image of God
has God made mankind.

7 As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."

How often do you come to church and get to listen to the Bible being read for 7 or 8 minutes? I flashed to the days of Ezra when he had the people of Israel stand and listen to the Scripture being read for almost a whole day. It's not a bad thing to read large portions of scripture in Church, but we don't often do that.

We discover a lot of parallels when we read the creation account alongside the account of Noah and the flood. The connections help us understand some important truths. We don't have time to list all the parallels today, but I'll just highlight a few examples. Then we'll talk about why they are significant.

1. In the beginning, when God was creating the world, water covered the whole face of the earth. The Spirit of God hovered over the waters. In time, God separated the waters, putting some water above the sky and some below it. He also gathered the waters covering the earth to one place so that dry land could emerge. After that, God created the plants and animals and humans.

2. In the flood, the separation of the waters was undone, as all the springs of the great deep burst forth and the flood gates of heaven were opened. All the dry land disappeared; it was swallowed up by the sea. And all life on earth was annihilated. So, we see the world literally collapsing in on itself and falling apart. We see the world return to a similar state it was in at the beginning. Covered with water with no viable life on land. Yes, the sea creatures were there, but nothing that lived on land.

3. In the creation account, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. In the account of the flood, God sent a wind to dry up the waters after the rain had stopped. The Hebrew word for Spirit and wind are the same – Ruach. So the wind of God's spirit is present over the waters in both the creation account and in the account of how God re-created the world for remnant on Noah's ark.

4. In creation, God gathered the waters covering the earth to one place so that dry land could emerge. In the flood narrative, the land re-emerges from the water. First, the mountain tops, where the ark comes to rest. Then eventually the rest of land emerges from the water as well.

5. In creation, God made a garden full of plants and animals and he put the people in it. After the flood, the plants come back on the land (as symbolized by the olive branch the dove brings back to Noah) and the animals and humans emerge from the ark to repopulate the earth. Clearly this signals a new beginning for them.

6. In creation, God blessed Adam and Eve, telling them to be fruitful and multiply. After the flood, God blessed Noah and his sons, telling them to be fruitful and multiply.

7. In creation, God gave dominion over the animals to Adam and Eve. They were told to rule over them. But after the flood, something changed. God put the fear of humans into the animals and gave the animals to Noah and his sons for food.

8. In creation, God rested from his work of creating on the 7th day and so he blessed it and made it holy. In the lead up to the flood narrative, we learn that Noah's name means rest, relief, comfort.

9. One of the most striking parallels for me is that 10 times in the creation account, we're told, "God said…and it was so." God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." God said, "Let this happen, and it happened." In the account of Noah's life, 10 times God speaks as well, and we are told Noah did everything as God commanded. This is perhaps the most powerful link. For the first time since God created the world, there is someone who does what God commands.

Why do these connections matter? What are we supposed to understand from them?

The parallels between these 2 accounts are not accidental. They show that the God who originally created the world was able to powerfully deal with the effects of human sin, that had ruined his creation. He was able to re-create the world again after the flood, giving Noah and his family a fresh start.

In the new creation, many things were the same – the plants and animals and people were there again, to repopulate the earth. God's blessing was there again, upon them. But some things were different in the new world. And they had to be. Because when we are wounded by sin, it changes our world.

Most notably, the relationship between the humans and animals changed. The animals would now fear the humans, and the humans were now free to eat them animals. But God instituted a new rule about bloodshed. He would hold to account anyone who shed another human's blood.

In between when God had created the world and this point in Noah's life, we saw Cain murder his brother Abel and Lamech boast about killing another man. Yet God allowed them both to live. But now God is saying, the rules have to change because God

doesn't want violence to continue to grow. He didn't want to see the violence that had led to the flood happen again. God also instituted a new covenant with Noah which we will talk about next week. But for now, it is sufficient to say, God was able to take the broken pieces of the world he had made and re-create something of beauty and blessing after it had all fallen apart.

I don't have experience working with a potter's wheel, but I remember watching my great aunt sit at her potter's wheel, working a lump of clay when I was quite young. I vaguely recall her having to reshape it.

So I asked AI if it is common for clay to become deformed on a potter's wheel. The answer was yes, and it gave me various reasons. So my next question was what would a potter do when the vase becomes deformed? Here is a summary of the answer.

The potter begins with a lump of clay that is unformed. But as the potter begins to work with his wheel, the clay begins to take shape. Sometimes as the clay is being formed, imperfections arise and the clay becomes deformed. If the deformation is minor, the potter might try to save the piece right away…cutting off a wobbly rim or cutting away a collapsed top section to turn a tall vase into a short vase.

If the imperfection is more severe and the potter cannot make it perfectly round again, the potter might choose to alter the shape, squishing it down or making it an oval instead. Perhaps the potter will add texture instead - Slapping, spiraling, or fluting the deformed area to make the mistake look like an intentional design choice.

The potter's last resort is to start over. If the clay has become too waterlogged or has completely collapsed and cannot be saved, the potter might scrape the ruined piece off his wheel and throw the wet scrap into a bucket to dry out, wedge it and reuse it later. (See website at the end for the reference.)

The process a potter goes through in making a vase out of clay sounds much like the process God went through when he sent the flood to destroy the earth.

A potter realizing the vase he is creating has become deformed and ruined on his wheel, will destroy his vase, by once again returning it to a formless ball of clay so that he can reshape it into something beautiful again. If he doesn't destroy what was ruined, he cannot re-create it into something new.

In a similar way, God saw that the beautiful and good world he created had been ruined by human sin. He had spoken to the people, he had warned them, he had given consequences. But most of them refused to listen or obey his voice. He had waited for centuries, but they continued to hurt each other and the world he made. Their corruption, violence and evil escalated and filled the earth. This caused him deep grief. And finally, God had to act in a way that would give his world a fresh start. He sent the flood which returned the world to a waterlogged, formless state, much like it had been in

the beginning of creation, so that he could re-create the world again and give a remnant of the people, as well as the animals a fresh start.

Like a potter shaping his vase, God had to destroy what was already ruined, to re-create something of beauty again.

This brings us back to where we started today. What do we do when it feels like our world is caving in around us? What do we do when our earthly security has failed us and our plans are slipping away? What do we do when we feel like our life has come crashing down around us like a knocked over house of cards?

We understand that all of this is part of God's work at the potter's wheel to shape us and make us into his image. And we put our hope in the Lord who can make all things new.

In Revelation 21:5 we read of the one who sits on the throne proclaiming total renewal someday for those who believe in him. He promises to wipe away the old sorrows and tears, the death and the pain. That will all be gone. He says, "Behold, I am making all things new."

The re-creating process of our lives and the making of all things new for us can be a difficult process. It can feel like a storm that has come into our life. Like a flood that is causing our world to cave in.

That's because when God wants to give us a new beginning, he must often put an end to things in us or around us that are truly not good for us.

And so, sometimes, in his immense mercy and love for us, God still sends metaphorical storms into to our lives to wake us up and to help us face and deal with the things that are not right that are there.

Sometimes it is thought patterns.
Sometimes it is attitudes.
Sometimes it is behaviors.
Sometimes it is addictions or bad habits.

For me, as I lay on the floor of my room in college during my sophomore year in college, I came to the realization that I had built my sense of self-worth on things that were not stable. I had based my sense of worth on performance, and on the acceptance or approval of another person. My house of cards had to fall for me to realize what I had built my life upon, so that God could build it back a new, with a better foundation.

Much of that re-building process happened over a period of time – the insights I gained came through prayer and journalling and talking with a therapist. Eventually God led me to a place of healing and led me into ministry. But without that storm that came into my

life, and knocked me off my feet, the trajectory of my life most likely would have been quite different.

How about for you? When the storms come, will you see them as opportunities to reflect on what God wants to shift and change and grow in your life?

There are times we go through storms because there is something we need to examine, something God wants to shift in us.

Sadly, at other times we go through storms not because of anything in us, but because God is dealing with issues in the lives of the people around us.

We are told multiple times in the account that Noah did everything, just as God commanded him. He was obedient. He was righteous among his generation. God's favor was upon him. Yet through no fault of his own, Noah had to pass through the storm. Noah had to go through the flood. Noah had to watch God's judgement fall upon the world. It was not easy. It was not pleasant. But Noah was safe, in the ark that God commanded him to build.

If that is your experience, take heart, as God preserved Noah through the storm, he can preserve you too. Hang in there and be patient. Trust that he is working out his good purposes behind the scenes for you as well.

No matter how broken our lives might feel, no matter how much it seems like they have collapsed around us, God is more than able to re-create something of beauty and blessing if we will listen and obey his voice as Noah did.

CONCLUSION –

From the story of creation through to the flood as told in the book of Genesis in the Bible, we see that God knows quite literally what it feels like to have your world fall apart. But as we discovered today, he also knows how to re-build it back and give us a new beginning.

God often puts an end to the old things that need to go from our life so that new and better things can begin to grow in their place. Life might bring sudden storms that break up our plans. God doesn't just fix the pieces; he can make something new.

GOD is a master at giving us new beginnings. If you feel like the pieces of your life have fallen apart, will you give him the broken pieces of your world today? Will you walk forward in his fresh strength and peace? Because, just as he was able to bring Noah and his family, and all the animals out onto dry ground and give you a fresh start, he can do that in your life too.

God is in the business of helping people walk into a new beginning when they discover their world cannot be what it once was.

Let's Pray – Gracious God, thank you that you are more than able. That you have the wisdom and the love and the power and the strength to help us grow, to help us face the things that are not pleasing to you, to deal with the people and things around us that are not pleasing to you and that you can preserve us and keep us safe through the storm. Help us to put our faith in you. Guide us through. Help us to be patient as we wait. And we will be careful to give you the glory and the honor when we come through on the other side. We look forward to seeing what you will do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BENEDICTION:

Numbers 6:24-26

24 "'The Lord bless you and keep you;
25 the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;
26 the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.'

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