

Justice

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[0 : 00] Well folks, great to see you this afternoon. Let me encourage you to have Genesis 6 and chapter 7 open in front of you. We're going to be in the story of Noah over the next two weeks because this is such a large section of Scripture.

We're just going to do it over two Sundays. And I really hope we'll see that everything we learn in Sunday school or heard in the songs that we sung when we were young really doesn't get the tone right of what the chapter is telling us.

We're going to see how good this God is and we're going to see as well His justice. So why don't we pray and then we'll get stuck into these chapters together. The words of Psalm 34, O taste and see that the Lord is good.

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. And so Father, I pray that you would help us to taste and see today that you are good.

For some of us here, that might just be for the first time. For some of us here, Lord, may we taste again just the sweetness and the greatness of who you are. Father, we ask that your Spirit would come, that He would help us and that He would lead us into all truth.

[1 : 07] We pray these things in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Well, just as we get into these chapters today, let me just tell you a couple of stories that I have either heard or read over the past couple of weeks.

So I'm going to give you three short stories and my question to you to think about is what connects the three of them. Okay. So here's the first one. I was traveling to church a couple of Sundays ago. And I don't know if you've ever listened to the radio at that time of day, but I listen to Five Live when I drive into church on a Sunday night, right?

It's just on. And normally it's the football phone-in. So they invite people to come on and discuss the talking points from the weekend. So there's a guy on the football phone-in when I turn the radio on, and he's absolutely livid, right?

He's seething about something. And I'm listening a bit more. And it turns out this guy's a Tottenham Hotspur fan. Okay. Bless him. He's a Spurs fan. And he's raging about the fact that someone in the opposition team committed a ridiculous foul in someone in the Spurs team, and he didn't get a red card.

Now, if you're a football fan, you might know the tackle that I'm talking about. Didn't get a red card. He's livid about this. And he's given it the classic lines. He's saying, the referee needs to go to spec savers. What's happening to the beautiful game that we all love?

[2 : 25] And then he said, what is the point in having VAR if we're still getting decisions wrong, right? He was livid at this. Then I turned on the, I think it was a BBC News article written by a lady the next day.

And she was angry about Ryanair, right? And she's angry about Ryanair because they have advertised themselves. I don't know if you've saw this over the last couple of weeks. They advertised themselves as the lowest emission airline, right?

Knowing how well that goes down in today's climate. And all the while, they have not got any figures to back up that claim, right? And she's livid about this.

She said, why not get the watchdog in to investigate them? What's going on? Why don't we just boycott this company? She's raging at this. And the third story was a lady writing about the Me Too movement.

And she's talking about how the fact that she's particularly thinking about men who have abused their positions, their power to exploit vulnerable women. And she's saying, we've got a culture now where women are too scared to come forward because they're scared as to what this might mean

for their jobs, for their reputation, for their families.

[3 : 35] And therefore, they're saying nothing. And she's angry. She's saying, what kind of culture are we creating that people can't come forward and tell their life stories about something wrong that's being done to them?

Now, here's my question. What is it that connects the three people? What do they want? They want justice, don't they? Right? On different levels, to do with different things, but they want justice. And we have to say that's a longing inside every single human heart that we understand. We intuitively, we get that. Anytime that we are wronged in any kind of way, we want justice. It's natural to us. In fact, I was hearing somebody tell me recently that our generation currently are probably the generation that's demanded justice, is the buzzword of our day, the most. If that's right or wrong, I don't know. But it's an interesting observation, isn't it, about how we live our lives in this world. So just as we get into this topic today, let me just ask you a few little questions and one big question.

[4 : 37] Okay? Friends, where does that desire for justice come from? Ever thought about that? That we instinctively know when something is right or wrong.

How do you explain those kind of feelings that we have intuitively? And what do you do in times when, humanly speaking, you don't get justice? Or you know somebody, you know a family member, a friend who doesn't get justice, who's wronged in the most horrific of ways. What do you say? Where do you go? What do you do with people when they get away with it? The Jimmy Savills of this world, the Hethlers of this world, who, for all intents and purposes, weren't made to face the punishment for what they did.

Here's the big question then. Do you think there can ever be such a thing as perfect justice? Come with me to Genesis chapter 6 and chapter 7.

We've been in this book of Genesis for a number of weeks now. And this opening section of the book has helped us get to grips with and meet the God who is there.

[5 : 47] He's there. He's disclosed himself. He's revealed himself. This is who he is. And if you like, these opening chapters have just kind of thrown us back to the jigsaw puzzle. Right? We've been kind of building this thing up that we saw the piece that he is the all-powerful God, that he is the loving God, that he is the good God, that he is the gracious God, that he is the all-seeing God, that he is the all-knowing God.

And today in chapter 6, here's what we see, that he is the perfectly just God. He is the perfectly just God. And he sits as king over his creation.

This is the picture we get in this, as we enter chapter 6 here. He sits as king over his creation. And while nothing has changed or will ever change with this God, everything has changed with human beings.

Right? Everything has changed with humanity. That harmonious relationship that we were made to have, and in the beginning did have with this God, broken because of our rebellion against him. And we saw that the words in the opening chapters of Genesis were good, delightful, pleasing, and very good. And then all of a sudden we hit Genesis 3, 4, 5, and begin to get words like anger and murder and revenge.

[7 : 04] And the picture is that human beings are sliding further and further into chaos. Sliding, choosing to go further, further away from God.

And so God looks out on the river of humanity in this chapter, and he sees two things. And these are two points for today, okay? He sees two things. Here's the first thing that he sees.

He sees a world heading downstream. So this all-knowing God looks at the human heart. Right? And what does he see? Come with me. Verse 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.

So there is God's take on the human heart. God's take on the human heart. Compromised. Tainted. Soaked in sin. Broken. And how is this wickedness expressing itself?

Right? What's the... How is this manifesting itself? Verse 11. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and what was it? It was full of violence. Violence. Right? See the Hebrew word there?

[8 : 14] It implies more than just fisticuffs. Right? More than just brute force. It's meant to encapsulate the effects of that violence. And what it has on real people. Okay?

So abuse. Injustice. Oppression. Cruelty. Exploitation. And so here's the point. Human beings are not only being disobedient to God.

But stemming from that, they are being harsh and abusive to one another. This point in the story. And do you see how this is a million miles away from where we were a few chapters ago in the Garden of Eden? And how does God feel about this?

And this is so key to see. Let me encourage you to get your nose in the text in this one. Right? Verse 6. How does God feel? The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth. And his heart was deeply troubled. So here's the author trying to communicate to us in a way that we will understand.

[9 : 15] That God is pinned to the very core of his being. When he sees how the human beings that he made brilliantly and wonderfully in his image.

He sees what they are doing with their lives. And so this God who is perfectly just, he won't. Indeed, he can't stand idly by and watch.

His very nature, who he is, implores him to judge. The holy God that we were singing about earlier. The holy God. His holiness requires that he acts.

And what is God going to do? Verse 17. He's going to judge the wickedness of the earth by bringing a devastating and a total flood.

Right? Not immediately. I think that's what the mention of 120 years at verse 3 is most likely the time gap before God does this. But God is going to do it.

[10 : 21] Right? So God in his kindness is giving human beings time to repent and turn to him. But make no mistake, says God, that I will bring this to pass as God executes his perfect justice.

Let me just pause there for a minute and do a little bit of apologetic work. Right? I wonder what you think of this. I don't know. This is the first time you're coming to church today and you get this passage and you think, boy, I'm never coming back.

What do you do with this stuff? Let me just say the fact that this God is this kind of God is good news. Right? Some of us here today will be thinking, why would you want to worship a God like this?

Fair question, yeah? Why would you want to worship a God like this? And that's a great question to ask. Let me just say lovingly that I'm not going to do justice to it in two sentences, right?

But let me just challenge you with a thought. Be thinking. And flip the question around. And say, why would you want to worship a God who doesn't judge?

[11 : 26] Who isn't like this? And I don't know. My sister-in-law, she used to work for sport relief. You ever watch sport relief? Remember, Friday nights in our house growing up, the one Friday night of the year that we look forward to every year was comic relief.

I used to love watching that. You ever watch it? You know how it goes. They get celebrities. Celebrities, they send them to different parts of the world. And some of them go to the townships in South Africa.

They go to the slums in India. And all of a sudden, when they start understanding and come to grips with what is going on in the world, what do they do? They just bawl their eyes out, right? Bawl their eyes out.

And they say to the camera, I just had no idea that this was going on in the world. I had no idea that this kind of stuff happened.

So often we're sheltered at times in our Western middle class suburbia that we just forget and we're ignorant as to what goes on in the world, right?

[12 : 25] But exploitation, injustice, it is not just a world thing. Friends, it is going on right here in our city at the minute. Right here in our lives, under our noses. I remember the first time we moved to the city centre, walking around town trying to get to know the place, looking down the steps just where we lived.

And there's a place that said sauna, right? And you speak to the locals, you get to know the place, and you realise that it's got nothing to do, nothing to do with a spa break.

This is going on in our city. Exploited, what is going on in our city? And I remember speaking to somebody who said to me, you have got faith in God, and I've got faith in the goodness of humanity.

Let me just say, if that's you today, let me just lovingly pose you a little challenge to do, right, this week. Next time you go on holiday, right, you go away, five days, ten days, fourteen days, whatever

you do, go away for that amount of time.

Just leave the front door open. Right? Just leave the front door open. And let me know how you got on when you come back. Right? And let me know, especially when you're on the phone to direct line, you're trying to claim for your contents insurance, and they say, how did the burglary happen? [13:37] And you tell them. Come and tell me how they respond to you. Seems to me that insurance companies believe that this is true. Right? This is the world that we live in.

And this is what God is saying about the human heart. And we have to say our experience tells us that this is true. This is true. And the wonderful news, why this is good news for any of us here today who have suffered this, who know people who have suffered injustice in life, is that this God sees every deed, every thought, and it will be judged.

And God's judgment is not overly harsh, and it's not overly lenient. It is perfect. It is perfect. In other words, with this God, the punishment will always fit the crime.

And that is why we were praying earlier, weren't we, for Christians in China. Right? We know what goes on in the world in these countries, the Christians, North Korea, Iraq, different places.

Right? And this is why this will come as wonderful news to people who have been persecuted, suffered injustice. The God who is the friend of the oppressed. The God who is the enemy of the oppressor.

[14:48] This is good news. But let me just also say that this is bad news. I remember a friend who told me a joke once. He said, what do you get for pudding at the karma restaurant?

And he said, you get your just desserts. People love the idea of karma, right? We hear it battered around all the time. What goes around comes around kind of thing.

But here's the thing. See if the karma manifesto was to deliver perfectly on its promises. Friends, you and I would be absolutely done for. I'm seeing a moment that this God isn't a karma kind of God.

That's not how he operates. Karma knows nothing of grace. But for now, do you see that we are all part of and we're culpable in this Genesis 6 world? And we know the depths of our hearts.

And we know this is true. And we know the people that we have hurt by our sin in our lives. And so God looks out in Genesis 6 on the river of humanity and he sees a world that is heading downstream.

[15:50] A world that has rejected him, that wants nothing to do with him. And that should, as I say, good news, bad news. But for many of us today, if we were still rejecting this God, if we're not trusting, as we'll see in a minute, Jesus as our king and our savior.

Friends, we need to see that we are heading downstream to destruction. God sees a world heading downstream. But here's what he also sees.

He sees a man swimming upstream. He sees a salmon. Right? What did he say? Remember the late John Stott used to talk about how it's only dead fish that go over the stream, go over the flow. Here is the salmon. What is his name? Do you see his name? Here is Noah. Noah. First gets a mention at verse 29 of chapter 5. Here is Lamech's boy.

Right? Different Lamech the guy we met in chapter 4. Here is another Lamech. He's living his life in this Genesis 6 world. Right?

[16:50] And see his prayer in the name he gives to his son. We see what his prayer is. We see what his longing is. Do you see it? He will comfort us in our labor and painful toil of our hands.

Caused by the ground the Lord has cursed. So do you see what Lamech's praying? He's praying with all of his soul. Lord, would you rescue us from this world?

Would you send the one that you said you would send to rescue us from this world? And do you know what? Please may it be my boy. Right? When you consider the name Noah, it sounds very similar to the Hebrew word for rest.

Right? You understand what this guy is praying for. You get his heart in this. He's saying, Lord, give us rest. May it come through my boy. And so when we meet this guy, verse 8, look at this.

Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Right? So quite literally, Noah found grace. He found grace. But we can't just leave it there.

[17:55] Right? You can't help but notice how the author portrays Noah. Right? Verse 9. Noah was a what? A decent bloke? No, he was a righteous man.

Right? So here is a guy whose life is different from the world, whose life is about humility and gentleness. And here is a man whose life is described as being righteous.

Now, every time that word righteous is used in the Old Testament, it's referring to somebody that is a law keeper. Someone who is walking in the direction of God. And here's what this means. Right? Get into this text. Try and get into this guy's life. If you were around in this day and you were in this generation, right, and you're looking at Noah, you would have seen something very different to the people around about you.

Right? Someone living for a different purpose. Someone walking in a different direction. Someone dancing to a different beat. Someone striving towards a different goal.

[18 : 55] And notice where Noah played that one out. Blameless, what? Among his generation. He's not a holy hermit. Right? He's not retreated to a desert island and is trying to live a life of obedience out there.

He's not meditating in a tree house like some kind of Yoda thinking blessed thoughts. Where is he? He's among the people. Yeah? And there's a wonderful little lesson there for us in secondary application, isn't there?

Friends, if we want to be distinctive for Christ in our generation, we don't sell out. We don't pull out. But we stand out.

And as we stand out, we hold out. The gospel. The good news. And how did Noah stand out? It's a great question. How did Noah stand out?

Would you see the description of him? That he walked faithfully with God. Noah's difference in his life stemmed from the fact that he wasn't a decent person.

[20 : 00] Right? Trying to make good decisions. It flows from the fact that this guy had a deep and meaningful relationship with the Lord. And it was him that he was living for.

Right? He knew God. Love that word there. Right? He walked. He walked. Every day. He walked. Another day. Another day. Another day. Another day. Another day. Another day. I'm walking towards God. Long-term obedience in the same Godward direction.

That is Noah's life. And here's something really interesting I learned this week. Right? And I'm indebted to a friend for pointing this out to me. How many words does Noah speak in these chapters?

Get your eyes on the text. Glance at it there. How many words does Noah speak in these chapters? None. None. Not a single word.

[21 : 03] Is that interesting? Not a single word does this man speak. What a lesson for the first generation of readers. And what a lesson for us today. That walking with God is not primarily about your talk.

It is about your walk. Every day. Every day. Every day. Walking in obedience to Yahweh. To the Lord. Love that.

Isn't that amazing? See how this plays out in Noah's life? God tells Noah, verse 17, to what? I'm going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens. Every creature that has the breath of life in it.

Everything on earth will perish. Right? So God, by his grace, is telling Noah what is going to happen. To pick that up in the text. It's grace here. Right? Noah found grace.

And what is he going to do? He's going to build an ark. Right? And you get the dimensions of it there at verse 15. That's really important for us to see. Why? Because this isn't a blow-up dinghy.

[22 : 04] Okay? It's not. Right? We've got a paddling pool in the back garden in the summer. Right? I've got one of those little motors that you put in and pump it up. Right? It's up in 10 minutes. I can get that going. Right?

Not the ark. Do you see? This isn't going to take hours. This isn't going to take days. This isn't going to take weeks. This is going to take a long time.

And if Noah is living his life among the generation of people, this generation, do you not think people are looking at that every day and saying, what are you doing? Why are you wasting your life?

Who told you to do that? God told you to do that. God said that this was going to happen. Why don't you go on with something more constructive with your life? Right? Why don't you just join in? Not Noah. He just keeps on building. See it? He just keeps on building. In the text, look at this. The repeated phrase.

[22 : 59] Verse 22. Right? Noah did all that the Lord commanded him. Verse 5. Noah did all that the Lord commanded him. Follow with me. Verse 9.

God. Sorry. As God commanded Noah. Verse 16. As the Lord had commanded him. Noah kept on building. Day after day after day after day.

Why? Why? The author to the Hebrews will pick this up. I talk about how, although Noah couldn't see the flood. He couldn't see what God had said.

In reverent fear, he built the ark. It was by faith. That's what Noah's walking in. Faith. Right?

Because he fully trusted that God would do exactly what he said he would do.

And that is the life of faith. Faith. Day after day after day after day. Walking in obedience to the Lord. Trusting him. Loving him. Knowing him.

[23 : 58] Life of faith. And do you see, it's really important to see who is on the ark. Okay? You might miss this in the text. It's not just Noah. Do you see? It's his family. It's food. And it's two of every animal.

Now, it's important in the bigger picture of the Bible that we understand what's going on here. What is on the ark? Do you see how it's almost like a starter kit for a new creation? You see that?

Right? Everything that they will need for a new creation when they get off of it. Right? So important we see that because of where this points us, the trajectory. Okay?

So not only are they going to be safe on the ark from the judgment that will come on the rest of the world as God deals with sin. God will save them and he will take them to a new creation.

As it were. And verse 18, that is God's covenant promise to Noah. Right? So God has said, that is a promise. I am going to do it. And so important for the rest of the Bible story that we see both sides of that.

[24 : 59] That we see judgment and salvation. That they go right together. And that there is life in the ark. There's life in the ark. And so at the end of verse 16, do you see how the Lord shut him in?

The Lord has got him. Got his family. Got the animal. Everything. He's got them. He's not going to let them go. And the flood happens exactly as God said it would.

Exactly as he said it would. Right? And the description of it that you get from verses 17 to 24 is absolutely total. Total.

As this perfectly just God deals with sin. And fast forward years later and we see Jesus picking up this real event in Matthew chapter 24.

The verses that we read earlier. Right? And the context is that Jesus is talking about the day when he will return as God's ruling king to judge the world.

[26 : 08] And when that happens, it will be just like in the days of Noah. Right? People will be eating. People will be drinking. People will be marrying. Right? You want to put that in a modern day context.

People are playing Xbox. They're on the school run. They're on Instagram. They're watching Have I Got News For You. Right? They're just doing their thing. But God's faithful people will be doing what?

They'll be walking by faith. Saying, I love you Lord. I trust you Lord. And I'm choosing to walk in obedience to you. Walking by faith.

And you see, the faith comes to us as we run to the one place where life and safety can be found. Right? Not in the ark. But where this points us.

To the ark who is Christ. And that is where we are safe. Why are we safe there? Because God's perfect judgment, friends, the one that we deserved.

[27 : 05] The one that we deserve. Was upon him. Jesus took that judgment that we deserve on the cross.

And as the grace of God reaches new heights towards a world in rebellion and a need of rescue. The cross where the love of God and the perfect justice of God.

Where they kiss. Where they meet. And it's there and it's only there in Christ. The true ark where we will find safety and life. So friends, do you think there can ever be such a thing as perfect justice?

Let me just tell you as we close. I was thinking about this week. Let me just tell you why I do.

Because it's important as Christians that we think through this stuff. Why do we believe that?

Why do we believe that Jesus said that's going to happen, that is going to happen? Why would I stake my whole life on that being true? Well, I started off by giving you a few little questions and one big question. Let me just give you a few little answers and one big answer.

[28 : 09] Okay. Why I believe that. You know, you live long enough in life. Right. And I am almost 35. I mean nothing in the life experience scale. Right. Compared to some of you guys here today.

But you go on in life and you see it round about. You see injustice. Right. You experience it in your own life. You see it in the lives of others. And you think, how can that happen? Is anyone seeing that? Right. You experience it in your own life. But the more you go on in life, and I definitely know this one is true. The more you see the depths of your own heart. And you know this is true in your own life.

And so when I'm encountering the God of perfect justice, there's something logical about that in my mind. That that makes sense. Right. But here's the biggie. Why do I believe this?

It's because Jesus is alive. And that he conquered the grave. And that he is risen. Because see if he said this stuff about giving, the father giving all authority to him to judge the world.

[29 : 11] If he said all that stuff and he is, you can dig up his bones somewhere in Palestine. Right. If he can do that, then isn't it worth believing this? But the fact that he is risen, that changes everything.

Why do I believe this? Because this is based on historical fact. That God has exalted King Jesus to the place of all power and authority. And he said, if you want to check this out in your own time, Psalm 2, there is my king on my holy hill.

We want to listen to what he's saying. He says one day, and we find this in Matthew 24 and 25. He's talking about when he returns. And he's talking about the day when he will separate when he comes the sheep and the goats.

We hear him talking about heaven and hell. And we hear him talking about, and remember this is the most loving individual who's ever walked this earth. Talking about how he will have the final word as God's king.

So the question is, what are we going to do? How are we going to respond to this this morning? Let me just tell you, this is a close story I heard. There's a British man on holiday in Australia. And he's sitting on a beach with his Aussie mate.

[30 : 17] And he gets up, he's sweating. He's a big guy, right? He's sweating, he's hot. He's thinking, right, I'm going surfing. So he grabs a surfboard under his arm and he's heading out. And his mate shouts in his Aussie accent, I won't do it.

He just shouts out and he points at a sign. And the sign on it is the one on the screen, right? Yellow sign, black fin on it. It says, danger sharks. And the British guy says, come on, come on.

Don't worry about it. Let's just go in. I really want to go swimming. And his mate says back to him, it's up to you, right? After a bit of back and forth, it's up to you. You've got to decide whether that sign is there to spoil your fun or whether that sign is there to save your life.

And so friends, as we close, which is it for you today? Which is it for you? Let me pray. And so, Father, we thank you so much for your word.

Thank you, Father, that the privilege we have of having it in our own language, that we can read, that we can contemplate, that we can understand. And we pray, Father, that as we come to grips this morning with who you are, as we sang earlier, that our God is a consuming fire, a holy God, a perfectly just God.

[31 : 33] And I pray, Lord, that you would help us to respond like Noah did, as he understands, understood who you are, to respond in reverent fear and to place the whole weight of our lives by faith in the person of your son, Jesus Christ.

Lord, I pray, Father, for many of us here today, this might have stung a little bit, this might have brought back some memories. And so, Lord, I pray that your spirit would do your work in our lives today, that he would bring healing where it's necessary, that he would bring conviction, and, Lord, that he would bring a right understanding of your truth.

So, Father, thank you that you hear us, that we can call you our Father because of your son, Jesus. We pray in his perfect name. Amen.