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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

Take a moment to remember the story of the Flood in Genesis. You will find the story in Genesis 7-9, but what do you remember of the story of Noah and the flood and God's covenant promise.

Almost all historic cultures have a story about a flood, many very similar to our biblical account in Genesis. A flood myth is a myth in which a great flood, usually sent by a deity or deities, destroys civilization, often in an act of divine retribution. The flood waters are described as a measure for the cleansing of humanity, in preparation for rebirth. Most flood myths also contain a culture hero, who "represents the human craving for life".

One example of a flood myth is in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Many scholars believe that this account was copied from the Akkadian *Atra-Hasis*, which dates to the 18th century BCE. In the Gilgamesh flood myth, the highest god, Enlil, decides to destroy the world with a flood because humans have become too noisy. The god Ea, who had created humans out of clay and divine blood, secretly warns the hero Utnapishtim of the impending flood and gives him detailed instructions for building a boat so that life may survive.

There are equivalents in Hinduism and other faiths, Plato tells a story of a flood and Native American tribes have their own stories of a flood. It is thought that many of these stories date back to trying to understand the changes to geography following the glacial thawing after the ice age. In our story we have the covenant of God's promise that never again will water become a flood and destroy life and yet that is precisely what we are in danger of causing due to climate change. The great glacier at Chamonix has reduced by over 18 metres in thickness in the last 20 years, that is a lot of water and it has to go somewhere. It is changing the landscape and how people use the land.

In the film *Evan Almighty*, Evan, a very successful congressman, becomes embroiled in a senior congressman's plans to develop National parks, something about which he is unhappy but knows that his career depends upon his response. Following a series of very strange occurrences Evan is faced by God who instructs him to build an ark to ride out a coming deluge. He becomes a laughing stock but he keeps going, albeit reluctantly at first. God has predicted the precise day and time the deluge will occur, crowds gather on the day to mock and jeer, there is a short downpour which leads to more jeering and even Evan's wife has her doubts. The Evan remembers that the senior congressman's plans involved building a dam and as usual he cut corners to save money. As Evan remembers the clock ticks to the hour and the dam breaks allowing thousands of gallons of water to cascade down through the valley containing new developments and the ark. People in the crowd rush to get on board as the tsunami approaches and in the nick of time the ark is sealed and rides the tsunami, all the way to the congress building.

We allow houses to be built on flood plains, we allow development on land which is part of the fragile balance of creation; we allow activities which are melting the polar icecaps and raising the level of seas and oceans, which is causing flooding in many parts of the world where people are vulnerable and live precarious lives. How will future generations interpret this story?

We were living in Taunton during the flooding of 2014, ten years ago this year, the road we frequently used to reach Street and Glastonbury cuts across the levels; it was under 10 feet of water for over two months. The train to London passed through lakes, farmers had to take food by boat to stranded cattle. Flooding is awful and it is becoming part of the reality

of living and which we cannot ignore. We are responsible and we have to do something or the story of the future will be very different from the covenant promise in Genesis.

Reading Mark 1:9-15

Mark gives us a microcosm of faith in just a few simple verses we read of Jesus's' baptism, temptation and proclamation. The other gospels elaborate taking chapters to explore what Mark mentions in six verses. We, the readers, are invited to use our imagination to understand what this means for us.

In 1 Peter 3, Peter explores baptism suggesting it is not about washing clean, making a reference to the flood and Noah, but rather about an appeal to God for the courage and commitment to follow the way of Jesus, the way of love and responsibility. Peter knows that even having made a commitment there will be temptations and we will need courage to hold fast to the way. Today we need to hold fast and proclaim against the actions which are threatening the lives of millions of people around the world, actions which we have to take responsibility for as we buy into the culture of accumulation. I am reading a new book by Brian McLaren and Gareth Higgins called 'The Seventh Story', in which they explore the way humanity has been tempted by six different framing stories.

[A framing story] gives people direction, values, vision, and inspiration by providing a framework for their lives.

Read a little of how these stories have emerged and meshed in an extract from the book. ([read here](#))

If our framing story tells us that we are free and responsible creatures in a creation made by a good, wise, and loving God, and that our Creator wants us to pursue virtue, collaboration, peace, and mutual care for one another and all living creatures, and that our lives can have profound meaning ... then our society will take a radically different direction, and our world will become a very different place.

We have to take responsibility, even when we are not directly at fault. Rather than buying into the victimisation story we can choose to respond differently, we can let circumstances define us or we can let our response define us. As we enter the period of Lent we can commit to resisting temptation and letting our choices make a difference. One of the great temptations is to buy too much food which then goes off and we throw it away adding to the great waste mountains and depriving others of food they need. So, could we take responsibility and only buy what we actually need, menu planning during Lent to better resist impulse buying. Could we pledge to only produce which is grown in Britain, if not locally and thus shop seasonally supporting local farmers? We would not suffer by doing this but it would make a difference and perhaps be the start of a long term change if we talk about to others – proclamation.