



From the Vicarage

Gen.9:8-17. Ps.25:1-10. 1Ptr.3:18-. Mk.1:9-15

I wonder if you've noticed the lovely Rainbows we have had over the last few months? Some have created quite a dramatic scene against the backdrop of snow. Sarah and I both remember a wonderfully bright Rainbow the day we came to look over the parish before interview. It was for us a time of great uncertainty; a time of leaving friends and family, of not knowing where God was taking us, where we would live or what the immediate future would hold, and then we saw the most vivid Rainbow straddling the Dale and reminded ourselves of God's words of **promise**, of love and protection. No matter what we were facing, we were not facing it alone.

God spoke words of promise to Noah and his family, King David knew he could trust God's promise, and we see the culmination of God's promise to us all in the life and ministry of Jesus.

The events recalled in the story of Noah come as the culmination of increasing human selfishness, greed and the dishonouring of God. We're told that the actions of mankind 'grieved' God's heart. ^{Gen.6:6} The flood didn't lead to total destruction but it did create the way to a fresh start, a new beginning and a new opportunity to start again with God. There was **hope** at the end of a wilderness experience. God makes a covenant promise. A promise that is binding. There are several such promises in scripture but this is one of the unconditional ones. Here is God making a promise to all creation that is not dependent upon our behaviour. It should be very re-assuring to us, especially considering the amount of rainfall we get in Wensleydale!

Mark's gospel account of Jesus' experience in the wilderness is fleeting indeed. If we are looking for further detail then we need to turn to Matthew and Luke. We do learn however, that Jesus spent 40 testing days in the wilderness but that he was not alone. God's promise over his life strengthened him and his heavenly Father ensured that he was attended by angels.

Noah and his family had a wilderness experience. There were trials and there was distress but they were **not alone**. God was with them and they came through to the other side

Jesus had a wilderness experience. There were trials and there was testing but he was **not alone**. God was with him and he came through to the other side

We have all had a wilderness experience over the last twelve months, some more than others, but thanks to God's promise to us, we are **never alone** and we will come through to the other side.

King David in his psalm reminds us that those who place their hope in God will never be put to shame. In these coming weeks of Lent I hope that we will return to our buildings to gather as church once more, but in the meantime, let's use these days to be kind to ourselves, enjoy God, enjoy living life *with* God and give thanks for his promises to us, for as Jesus tells us:

The Kingdom of God is near'

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