



June 1 • 2008

Focus Scripture

**Genesis 6:9–22; 7:24;
8:14–19**

Additional Scriptures

Psalm 46
Romans 1:16–17;
3:22b–28, (29–31)
Matthew 7:21–29

From your love, O God, comes our life.
From your grace, O God, comes our future. From your compassion, O God, comes our redemption. Hold us always in your presence, and lead us to live with trust in you. Amen.

Waters of New Life

Genesis 6 reports that the earth will be destroyed because of humankind's evil ways, yet also tells of the possibility of a fresh start through waters of new life. Noah lives according to God's plan, and participates in God's new beginning for all creation. Other scriptures also witness to God's redeeming and transforming power at work to secure our future.

Focus Scripture: Genesis 6:9–22; 7:24; 8:14–19

The book of Genesis took form when the Hebrew exiles were in Babylon, between 586 and 536 BCE. The exiles discussed their experiences and God's activity in Hebrew history as they reflected on their current situation. These reflections brought hope for a different future. Each time the stories were told, people learned more about God: God was present. God listened and watched. God was not a bystander. God was involved. God was not against them, but for them.

In today's focus passage, God is imagined as having already seen the results of people's wickedness (Genesis 6:11–12). The earth – once good – is now corrupt. When the earth was created, God spoke all creation into being and then saw that it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). This story seems a "reverse" of that account of creation. God sees, then speaks (Genesis 6:12–13).

Human sinfulness leads to Earth's destruction; but, in an act of grace and compassion God will re-create and redeem. Destruction will not be final. Noah is obedient to God, and witnesses God's renewal of creation after the flood. God's covenant with Noah is evidence of God's commitment to faithfully protect the earth (Genesis 8:21).

In an ancient worldview, where gods were considered responsible for the future, destruction provided a way to clear away the past and allow a new beginning. This story of the great flood conveys immense hope for the future. Human responsibility for destruction is admitted, but God has a righteous person and a plan. Noah listens and obeys God's instructions. People will once again enjoy a relationship with God, beginning with Noah's family. Having received God's plan (Genesis 6:14–21), Noah stays the distance and plays his part. God involves people in

bringing about the redemption that only God can accomplish. Such action is a witness to God's grace and compassion.

Imagine you are a Hebrew exile. How might you feel as you hear this story of God's re-creation and redemption? Perhaps you would recall the creation story because it echoes in this story. Maybe you would compare God to the Babylonian gods. Likely, you would hear that God is different than the gods of your captors: God is able to re-create and redeem; God is gracious and compassionate; God enjoys relationships with people. In this reflection, you are reminded of God's identity and your own.

In this story, water is the means of God's cleansing and rebirth. Christian tradition associates such living water with Baptism, recalling the power of water to cleanse and make new.

The other readings affirm that God's presence with us is certain and that the possibility of new beginnings is found in relationship with God. **Psalm 46** offers an image of God who strengthens us through waters that "make glad" in the midst of waters that threaten. In **Romans 1:16–17; 3:22b–28 (29–31)**, Paul reminds us that we cannot earn God's saving work in our lives. We can only receive in faith. Jesus taught with authority about living in God's way. In **Matthew 7:21–29**, the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus implores disciples to trust his teaching and take action based on God's word.



God continues to redeem and transform, offering the gift of new beginnings in our lives and in all creation. How might you and your church respond to such opportunity in your worship and service? In what ways can you cooperate with God's ongoing work of creation?

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