

What a week (in the news) it has been... for me to come to the pulpit with today's passage. On Wednesday... California Governor... Gavin Newsome... signed an executive order for his state... which many... (including our President)... are saying... defies the will of the people... Governor Newsome has put a halt to the death penalty... which California voters had chosen to put in place... in 1978.

*"The death penalty" ... the governor said... "is not a deterrent... and is irreversible and irreparable in the event of human error," adding that "people who have been wrongly convicted are sometimes put to death". He said "it has also wasted tax dollars, costing California \$5 billion since 1978."*

This has sparked a whole new national debate... on the issue. ... Meanwhile on the other side of our country... New York Mayor... Bill de Blasio... on Monday made an announcement of his own... that has sparked a different kind of national controversy. Mayor de Blasio stood alongside of New York City Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza... as they announced Meatless Mondays... for their city's schools. In statements released from their offices... they suggest that people and our planet will be healthier. From the Mayor's office came this statement: *"Meatless Mondays will introduce hundreds of thousands of young New Yorkers to the idea that small changes in their diet can create larger changes for their health and the health of our planet."*

Now... it is not my intent to turn this pulpit into a political arena... but when we come to a passage of Scripture that speaks directly to an issue that is currently being hotly debated by politicians... I will not hold back on what

**Scripture** declares... regardless of whether or not it happens to agree with **popular** political expression.

It is easy to get a sense that the politicians would like to create a revolutionary new society... new attitudes... whole new ways of thinking... and new living standards... But this morning we are going to study an **actual** new and revolutionary beginning... a fresh new start of a new society... with new attitudes. We will observe some of God's standards for the brand-new humanity... that stepped off the Ark after the flood. And two primary issues that God instituted right away... are concerned with the death penalty... and the eating of meat. ... So we are going to talk about what God's Word says about these (very) two issues.

We will see God make a covenant with Noah... and please keep in mind... that when God made the covenant with Noah... He made it with you and me... (He made it with all mankind.)

So... as we get started... I am going to ask you to try to think about what - **surely** - would have been Noah's emotional state...( his state of mind)... as God began to speak to him and his sons. ... Noah had witnessed the terrifying judgment of God upon the whole earth... the volcanic eruption of the subterranean waters... and the torrential downpour of a worldwide storm that lasted for several months. ... And then... Noah had been cooped up in the ark for more than a year... (370 days)... knowing that he and his dear family — only eight souls — were the only living survivors left upon earth.

Noah had just stepped out upon some peak in the mountains of Ararat and what he saw was horrifying: the utter devastation of the earth... a barren earth with debris scattered all over its surface... here and there bones that had not been buried by the erosion from the receding waters... and then... most likely... he saw water still rushing and receding from the valleys below.

Noah had been so gripped by the power and judgment of God — so stricken with reverence and fear for God — that he immediately turned to God in worship. ... The very first thing he did after disembarking was to build an altar and offer a sacrifice to God. But he did not sacrifice one animal... he sacrificed hundreds of animals... (one of every kind or species of animal.) ... Noah was so thankful to God for saving him and so fearful of God's awesome power and terrifying judgment — so appreciative and so fearful — that he just lifted up his heart to God time and again. He was (most likely) stricken with such an intense fear and reverence for God... which has never been experienced by anyone else in human history. ... .. He must have trusted God explicitly... to instruct and guide him... as he made a new beginning upon earth.

Knowing exactly what Noah needed... and knowing his state of mind... God met to instruct Noah about the new society... that God wanted Noah to institute on earth.

### **Genesis 9:1**

Certainly... God was telling Noah to re-populate the earth. But... man's mission to be fruitful does not refer... ONLY... to the reproduction of the

species. It also speaks to being fruitful in every good work before God. ... Man is not here on earth to live according to his whim... but to live in accordance with God's plan. (God shows us here that He was interested in multiplying the population... but ***not*** at the expense of the ***quality*** of persons.)

### **Genesis 9:2**

God not only exhorts man to reproduce the human species... but He also provides protection for him... as he re-populates the earth. . The protection here is from animals. ... But the protection is twofold. ... **First...** God puts in animals a natural fear of humans. ... Now... of course there are times when an animal that is extremely hungry... or when it is provoked... will turn on man and attack him. But these exceptions do not prove this general rule to be false.

**Second...** man is given responsibility and authority over animals. "*Into your hand are they delivered.*" God ordained that man is to have the rule and priority over animals. ... Animals are not equal to man... and their protection is not to have priority over man. This fundamental doctrine is usually ignored by animal rights groups whose radical political agenda is in conflict with God's Word... ("*Into your hand are they delivered.*")

But... having said that... this phrase also means that mankind is also to be the animal's care-takers... helping them... when there is need to do so.

Unfortunately man's treatment of the animal world... has been a brutal story. Sometimes man has attempted to exterminate many of the animals. Man would have slaughtered all the whales around the Hawaiian Islands for the money they could get... if the government had not intervened. At

one time the buffalo were in great herds in the West... but they were slaughtered by man. Today we must have places of refuge to protect animals and bird life. It is good that we do that. The animals of Africa are being exterminated. ... (Elephants are dying off... for the sake of the ivory in their tusks.

Man (at the height of his sinful nature)... is a mighty ***brutal*** creature. ... But those who follow God's word ought to be far better environmentalists... than those who gravitate to the political left. If we are obedient to God's word (both here... and in Genesis 1:28)... we would be very ecologically minded. ... However... we will have a better ***balance*** than those who think man and animals are equal... and those who focus on saving baby whales... but think it is OK to kill baby humans in their mother's womb.

### **Genesis 9:3**

Here meat is introduced into man's diet.

(OK... I will say this very directly)... Either those who insist that we cannot eat meat are correct... or Scripture (here) is.

Since Genesis 1 speaks only of eating plant-food... and meat (apparently) is not granted for food... until ***here*** (after the Flood)... some have argued that vegetarianism is the ideal (it is what God ***really*** wants for us)... and permission to eat meat is only a ***concession*** (second best)... because of our fallenness.

But my objection against this... is that... when God gave Moses the Laws for the Jewish sacrificial system... God commanded certain sacrifices to be

brought... which required the priests to eat the meat. (LISTEN)... God has not simply tolerated meat-eating... with the priests... He prescribed it!

Now if someone wants to argue that having a meatless diet is healthier for us... I will weigh their arguments... but it is difficult to build a case for vegetarianism from the pages of Scripture.

#### **Genesis 9:4**

God has set one exception to eating animals. ... Man is not to eat an animal with its life — its blood — still in it. ... Why...? What is this about...? Well... this restriction is to prevent the horrid cruelty of mutilating or cooking an animal while yet it is alive and capable of suffering pain. ... The draining of the blood from the body means that it has already died. ... This is a needful restraint from savage cruelty. (So here we are again... as followers of God's Word... being told that we are to be against the cruelty to animals.)

#### **Genesis 9:5-6**

OK... now we have come to the capital punishment issue. Up to this point we have not been very controversial... have we...? (Oh wait! There have been a few things said about vegetarianism... the priority of man and environmentalist issues.) ... So let's cover another hot topic... shall we...?

From instructing Noah about the shedding of animal blood... the Lord proceeded to discuss an even more important topic - the shedding of human blood. ... So far in Genesis... mankind has not shown a very good track record. Cain had killed his brother Abel... Lamech had killed a young man - and then bragged about it!... and the earth had been filled with all

kinds of violence. God had put the fear of humans into the animals... but now He had to put the fear of God into the humans ... lest they destroy one another!

We cannot harm or kill another human being... without answering to God. God declares that a penalty must be paid. (God announces how justice is to be served.) Look at verse 5! Three times we see God use the word “require.” ... So I am going to be very direct... once again. ... Capital punishment is a requirement from God. All the opposition to capital punishment is simply opposition to that which **God** requires.

The first part of this requirement is when an animal kills a human. The animal’s life is to be taken. But the second part... is getting a lot of attention and push-back in our culture today. When a human kills another human (on purpose)... the murderer is to be put to death.

But even among believers... there is strong disagreement. At one end of the capital punishment debate... we have those who agree that the Bible mandates capital punishment. ... However... they view it with cultural suspicion... and feel no obligation to its mandates. ... Such people may contend that the practice is barbaric or they might produce statistics that say it does not deter would-be murderers from their crime. ... AND at the other end... we have those who insist that biblical law is clear and that society’s law should conform to biblical law regardless of the problems.

Now... in between these two extremes... there is another group. These take biblical mandates seriously... but for various reasons believe that the mandate no longer applies... perhaps because the New Testament

overrides it with the law of love and forgiveness. ... And yet another group in the middle... agrees that the biblical mandate remains theoretically in force... but our inability to make the justice system work fairly and infallibly... argues against actually enforcing it. ... In fact... this past October... the governor of Washington State has declared a moratorium on executions in Washington... because several inmates have been released from death row... who had been proven to be wrongly convicted.

So... we have two factors that we will briefly explore: #1. the Bible's mandate for our contemporary society... and #2. the mistakes of our justice system.

We must unflinchingly declare that nothing God commands may be justifiably labeled "barbaric." ... Furthermore... if God commands capital punishment... it is **not** for us to wonder whether or not it is an effective deterrent. We can argue with our "cherry-picked" facts and statistics all day. (BUT LISTEN!) it is a command regardless of whether or not it deters.

Well OK... but does the Bible's command (all the way back in Genesis 9) remain in force? ... .. In the context of our needing to fear our human rulers (and government... in general)... over in the New Testament... the Apostle Paul writes...

**Romans 13:4 (ESV)**

*for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.*

"Bearing the sword in justice" implies capital punishment... and is presented as what God still intends for us. ... .. In conclusion... then...



from the Bible side of the debate... it is difficult to make a case against capital punishment.

(#2) But what of society's fallibility? ... Doesn't the fact that such punishment is irreversible... call for extenuating circumstances? ... Certainly the possibility of false convictions should encourage us to be as careful as we can be. ... In a fallen world... there are bound to be both mistakes and travesties of justice. ... But that was just as true when the command was given... as it is today. ... Murder by the judiciary system is as serious as any other murder... but the fact that some choose to abuse the system... does not demand that the system be dismantled. It only mandates that more safeguards be applied.

In the category of mistaken convictions... the number of releases in recent days testify to our increasing ability to apply such safeguards. ... Many who have been charged with murder... have been the beneficiaries of DNA testing... which greatly improves our ability to provide absolute proof of guilt or innocence.

I believe that the biblical mandate... still calls for the continued use of the death penalty... as drastic and irreversible as it continues to be. ... And for those who argue that these criminals should not be executed... in case they might turn to Christ... repent... and have their souls saved... it can still be said that capital punishment sent people to their eternal destiny in the Old Testament too... yet God still required it.

But how did God arrange to punish murderers... and see that justice is done... and His requirement be upheld? ... I ask this... so you can see

what is clearly implied here. ... The accountability to God for preserving human life is put into humanity's hands. (YOU SEE)... God is also establishing human government here. It is the only basis we can have to carry out this requirement. There is to be a shared responsibility of acting on God's behalf. Human government and capital punishment go together... as Paul explains in Romans 13:1-7. Government authorities carry the sword and have the right to use it.

And God also explains why murder is so wrong: To kill a person is to kill one made in God's image. Because all human beings are made in God's image... all people possess the qualities that distinguish them from animals – morality... reason... creativity... and self-worth. (Again) modern environmentalists are wrong! Man is higher than the animals. We possess the image of God. ... And when we interact with others... we are interacting with beings with God's image... beings to whom God offers eternal life. God wants us to recognize His image in all people.

### **Genesis 9:7**

This is almost an exact repeat of verse one. ... But you see... it is said again... because God has just established that conditions will be different. There have been many startling changes... that are so common to you and I... it is hard for us to identify what a shock it must have been for Noah and his family. Some of the vast alterations are that animals will fear you... This will make it more difficult for you to be their care-takers. You will have to be creative. ... And you will now need to govern yourselves. ... So God seems to know that they need to be encouraged and says: "*You can do it!*"

## Genesis 9:8-17

Noah stepped out of the boat onto an earth devoid of human life. But God gave him a reassuring promise. This covenant had three parts: (1) Never again will a flood do such destruction; (2) as long as the earth remains... the seasons will always come as expected; (3) a rainbow will be visible when it rains as a sign to all that God will keep his promises. The earth's order and seasons are still preserved... and rainbows still remind us of God's faithfulness to his word.

Shall we dive into the controversial topic of climate change here as well...? Perhaps... why not...? ... If the presidential hopefuls are correct in what they have said this week... that we only have 12 more years before it is too late... and that global destruction and flooding are going to occur... then God's covenant here is worthless. (Like I said – what a great week for us to study this passage in Genesis!) ... My finger does not point to **SCRIPTURE** as “worthless”!

We hear so much talk today that the so-called "global warming" effect could endanger the world with a flood if all the ice caps of the earth melted. Every time you see a rainbow... you can write off that prognostication as nothing but foolishness. ... God's promise is that He will never destroy the earth again by flood. But the next time He judges the entire earth... it will be by **fire**. ... So the ONLY "global warming" that we need to be concerned about... is the destruction of the earth by fire (as 2 Peter 3:10 announces.). But few are concerned about **that** global warming.

The assurance that God gives us is the rainbow. The term for 'rainbow' is *qešet*, which also refers to the bow used as a weapon. The word literally

means “battle bow.” God has put His bow away (He has hung it on the clouds)... because the battle is completed. The rainbow speaks of peace and God's grace. Instead of a symbol of combat it is now a symbol of peace.

In closing today... let's do some thinking about the bow. ... The bow was an instrument of war... but God has transformed it into a picture of His grace and faithfulness... (a guarantee of peace.) ... God could certainly turn the bow of judgment upon us... because we've ignored Him... turned our backs on Him... and broken His laws. We certainly deserve His judgment.

*But He has turned the bow toward heaven and taken the punishment for us Himself! ... When Jesus died on the cross... it was the Just One suffering for the unjust... and bearing the suffering that rightfully belonged to us.*

**1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)**

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*

Rainbows are universal. You see them all over the world. God's many-colored grace is sufficient for the whole world and needs to be announced to the whole world. ... After all... God loves the world... and Christ died for the sins of the world.

But the rainbow isn't only for us to see... for the Lord said, "*I will look upon it*" (in verse 16). Certainly God doesn't forget His covenants with His people... but this is just another way of assuring us that we don't need to be afraid. ... When we look at the rainbow... we know that our Father is

also looking at the rainbow... and therefore it becomes a bridge that brings us together.

If the rainbow reminds us of God's faithfulness and grace... then why do we fret and worry? ... God hasn't promised that we'll never experience storms... but He has promised that the storms won't destroy us.

**Isaiah 43:2 (ESV)**

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

When the clouds appear and the sun is hidden... we have nothing to fear.

The great problem is this: too many of us do not receive the great mercy and grace of God. Too many of us walk through life ignoring... neglecting... even denying that He has mercy and grace specifically for us. We never allow God to bless us... to look after and care for us. ... The great need of man today is to receive the mercy and grace of God... the blessings of God... which He has poured out upon the earth through His Son... the Lord Jesus Christ.