

God's Promises



Rick writes...

I have been very exercised by recent events in India, in Brazil, in Venezuela, in Sub-Saharan Africa, in China and the Middle East and in the burning tropical forests, bleaching coral reefs, melting ice caps and polluted chalk streams. At the Under the Thinking Tree quiet session, you asked us to lay down our worries under the shade of a tree. I struggled to do that, and this picture of grassland and a rainbow and a tree popped into my head. I knew I had found the right image when this rainbow and rolling grassland cropped up early in searches for grassland and for rainbow.

The picture is not how I would have composed it because I would have used the 'rule of thirds' and made the rainbow more vertical and moved the fig tree inwards. I love the way that God the Spirit has just ignored human conventions of composition in making this incredibly powerful composition, so much more powerful than mine would have been.

The scriptures that contain God's promises that sprang into my head along with the painting are things I needed to be reminded of. I have been really struggling as I said earlier, and through this painting and these scriptures, God has reassured me. I feel less anxious because I know that, even though times are simply dreadful in many places, God's arms are around the suffering people, victims of poverty, of injustice, of pandemic and of crime. God's arms are around catastrophic collapse of biodiversity worldwide, the burning forests, the bleached coral reefs, the melting ice caps and the polluted chalk streams. God's arms are around the victims of war, genocide and apartheid, wherever they occur.

Now is the time that the worldwide Church needs to move forward together, non-judgmentally, inclusively; it needs to promote justice, fairness, compassion, love and truth. The worldwide Church needs to pray for and to thank all those people who have been willing to give up their life for friends and for strangers, the health workers, the scientists,

the emergency services, the shop workers, the bus drivers, the vaccinators, the teachers, the chaplains, the parents, the carers, everyone who has willingly placed themselves in danger for others. The worldwide Church needs to cultivate and ripen a radical and sustainable Gospel, promoting stewardship of this beautiful but fragile planet on which we all live. The worldwide Church needs to provide world leadership; it needs to be seen and it needs to be heard; it needs to pray and it needs to act; it needs to be the irritant that leads to the world producing a pearl of great value.

'God's Promises' is a painting that powerfully reminds us that God makes promises to us and that he never breaks those promises. The scriptures that sprang into my mind with the painting include (obviously) Genesis 9 (Noah), God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 'in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.', 2 Samuel 7:12-16 God's promise to David that the Messiah would come from his line (also Luke 1:32-33), God's promise that the light will shine in the darkness and the darkness shall never overcome it (John 1:5), God's promise that he would send us the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-17, 26 and Acts 2:1-3, Acts 10:44-46), God's promise that Jesus would be resurrected and that through his resurrection our sins would be forgiven, that Jesus came not to condemn the world but to save it, Job:19:25, 'I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand on the Earth' John 3:16-17, John 11:25-27, Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19 and Jesus's promise that he will be with us until the end of the age, John 6:37, 10:10, 14:21, 15:9-15, Matthew 18:20, 28:18-20, Jesus's promise to give us rest, Matthew 11:28-30 and finally God's promise that even when we are too distressed to know what words to pray, the Holy Spirit will groan intercession on our behalf, Romans 8:26-27.

I hope that you find it as helpful as I have.

Love from Rick