

GOIN'GREEN: REPENT
Genesis 9:9-17

It is most appropriate that we dedicated our new John Deere Tractor this morning at the beginning of our Goin' Green series. Last week we mentioned how we are caretakers or stewards of God's creation. Part of our care taking is with our facilities, which includes our grounds here at St. James, in addition to caring for each other. The tractor was purchased so we could take care of what God has given us. We care for or another way to say it would be that we bring order to what we have been given. Imagine what this place would look like if we just came in and used it and never cleaned it, repaired it or just in general never maintained it?

Yet sometimes regardless of how we take care, things happen beyond our control that appear to ruin or destroy what we have been given to care for. Think about our fellow New Yorkers who are dealing with water that has caused devastation in their homes and communities. That reminds me, if you wish to help, please see Steve Perry regarding providing a flood bucket or health kit. We are all well aware of what water can do. Think of last winter when our water main broke and we had ½ foot of water throughout our building. Yet we found that what first appeared as a

hopeless situation turned into an opportunity to clean out, reorganize our rooms and also provided for much needed new floors.

In the early verses of the book of Genesis, we find water identified with chaos and destruction. Then, in the great flood, water IS literally an agent of chaos and destruction, somewhat like when we first viewed our flooded building as this past winter. But, beginning with today's chapter in Genesis, God shifts this image. God promised or made a covenant that "Never again will water be used to destroy all flesh." So who or what is God speaking of when referring to all flesh??? Well I am not sure about you, but when I hear that word "flesh" I think of humanity or human beings. Yet in reading the definition for the word flesh we find "a soft substance consisting of muscle and fat that is found between the skin and bones of an ANIMAL or a HUMAN. God's covenant is WITH US and the ANIMALS. This should give us some insight with respect to the importance of animals in God's creation.

God placed animals on the ark with Noah, not just people. Often it is easy to forget in the course of events our feathered or furry friends. Last week during our 9/11 remembrance we focused primarily on humans and

creation or the environment. If we start to look at things through God's eyes, then I was remiss in not including all of God's creatures that were impacted by 9/11. So this morning I want to share with you some heroes of 9/11. They say a picture is worth 1,000 words so I direct your attention to the pictures on the screen of God's amazing creatures.

First we have is 13 year old Moxie from Winthrop, Mass. who arrived with her handler, Mark Aliberti , at the World Trade Center on the evening of September 11 and searched the site for 8 days.

Next is Tara, 16, from Ipswich, Mass. arrived at the Trade Center on the night of the 11th. The dog and her handler Lee Prentiss were there for 8 days.

Then we see 12 year old Kaiser is pictured at home in Indianapolis, Indiana, was deployed to the World Trade Center on September 11 and searched tirelessly for people in the rubble ...

and then there is Bretagne, a golden, and his owner Denise Corliss from Cypress, Texas who arrived at the site in NY on September 17 and remained there for 10 days.

We can't forget 15 year old Guinness, from Highland, California who started work at the site with Sheila McKee on the morning of September 13th and was deployed for 11 days ...

In addition to Merlyn and his handler Matt Claussen who were deployed to Ground Zero on September 24, working the night shift for 5 days.

Here is Red who is 11 years old is from Annapolis, Maryland. Red went with Heather Roche to the Pentagon from September 16 until the 27 as part of the Bay Area Recovery Canines.

Then there is Abigail, deployed on the evening of September 17, searching for 10 days while Tuff arrived in NY at 11:00 pm on the 11th to start working early the next day.

Handler Julie Noyes and Hoke were deployed to the World Trade Center from their home in Denver on September 24 and searched for 5 days.

And we can't forget Scout and another unknown dog who were among the rubble at Ground Zero, just 2 of nearly 100 search and rescue animals who helped to search for survivors.

Photographer Charlotte Dumas, has captured portraits and stories of these heroic canines in a work entitled "Retrieved", who were among the first responders to 9/11.

Charlotte explained, "I felt this was a turning point, especially for the dogs, who although are not forgotten, are not as prominent as the human stories involved. They speak to us as a different species and animals are greatly important for our sense of empathy and to put things into perspective."

Water which once symbolized destruction of life, now symbolizes new life as in baptism. The Rainbow Covenant is God's invitation to look at the world and all that is in it THROUGH THE EYES OF OUR

CREATOR and to think about how we care for ALL OF GOD'S
CREATION! Amen.