

Sermon – 09/27/20

Text – Genesis 6:17-18

(The Lord said): “And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”

Theme – “Noah – Savior of the Race”

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Everybody knows the story of Noah. Noah and the Flood. Noah and the Ark. Noah and the rainbow. Even those who have only a passing knowledge of the Bible still know who Noah is and why he is famous. But, how much do we REALLY know and remember? Today, as we continue our look at Old Testament Sunday School stories, we will talk about Noah. (pause)

To start with, Noah kind of just pops up on us in Genesis, chapter 5, in a long list of Adam’s descendants. However, it is in chapter 6 that the story of Noah *really* gets going. There we are told that Noah lives in the midst of a most wicked and evil and sinful world. Listen to how it is described for us in verses 5-6:

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

Think about those words, for they are truly staggering. Sin was everywhere. Among every person. In their every thought — let alone their words and deeds. It was so foul, so offensive, so wicked that it made God sorry He had created mankind at all! Man was made to be God’s own, His children and heirs, the crown of His creation. And just look at them! What evil beasts they have become! How far they have fallen! There was no good in them at all. It was so bad that God wanted a do-over, so to speak.

It must have been really bad, right? But have we done any better? Look around our world. What do you think God thinks when He scans around now? Terrorism all over the world, as men blow up other men, shoot them, stab them, destroy them. Women raped. Children sold into slavery. Cities and countries awash in violence and mayhem, rioting and looting and mob violence. The world -- now even our own country -- paralyzed in fear and panic and dread.

We hear accusations of racism (from all sides). Cries of poverty and demands for taking/re-distributing the wealth of others. Sexual acts that just a couple of years ago virtually ALL people considered to be perversions so foul that they were not even mentioned in polite company, now being paraded and accepted – even lauded and praised and taught to our youth. And how many million babies have been aborted in our country since Roe v. Wade? What about those videos showing Planned Parenthood employees talking about using babies for parts, sold to the highest bidder? What do you think God thinks when He looks at us? Do you think He harbors those same feelings of disgust and regret and grief at our world? (pause)

So, what is God's response to all that wickedness of Noah's day? Does He just shrug His shoulders and ignore it all? Does He excuse their sinful behavior? Does He turn and walk away, rejecting and abandoning His creation? No, to all those questions. Instead, He has a plan of action. And He tells Noah all about it. God will send a great Flood, one so devastating and overwhelming that it will wipe out all life on earth. And then God will start over, new and fresh. But in this thunderbolt of judgment there is also a ray of hope, of peace, of salvation: God wants Noah to build an Ark.

An Ark. What is *that*, Noah must have wondered. Listen to how God describes it for him:

Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

So, this Ark is to be roughly 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. With three decks or levels. Made out of wood. Sealed and lined with tar, to make it watertight. What an undertaking that must have been for Noah! He had no blueprint, no plans, no model. Just the basic measurements and materials as God assigned. And, of course, he had no experience in building such a thing. But he did it.

Then he was told to gather the animals – two of every kind, but 7 pairs of every clean animal and bird that might be used for sacrifice – so that God might repopulate the earth. And then the rains came. For 40 days and nights. But not just those rains. Oh no, we are also told that God opened “*the fountains of the deep*” – that is, the waters under the ground – and “*the windows of heaven*” (the water vapor in the atmosphere which enveloped the earth). Such a deluge! So much and so great that it covered the entire earth. Even the mighty and towering mountains were underwater. And all those not on the Ark died, man and beast. (pause)

Now, there are two ways you can look at that Flood. The first and more obvious way is as pure judgment and punishment. After all, it was man's sin which caused God to bring about the Flood. It was man's sin which caused all that death and destruction. The Flood was definitely a judgment from the Lord upon that sin, and those guilty of it. It's pretty hard to miss that. It's also pretty hard to miss the point that sin offends God and requires punishment. Even unto death. Sin is no light matter, indeed!

But the second way to look at the Flood is to see it as God's saving work. Now, I know that's a lot harder to see, but it is there. First, God saves Noah and his family. Do they deserve it? I mean, Noah and his family were sinners too. So, why were they not swept away? Why were they not punished? Why were they not destroyed? Simply put, because they trusted God. That is what is meant by the description given of Noah, when it is said: "*Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.*"

Yes, Noah was a sinner. And for that reason he too deserved to die. But he did not – and his family did not – because of faith. Faith in God's Fatherly goodness. Faith in God's grace and mercy. Faith in God's promise of a Savior. Noah and his family were sinners, but they (alone among all people who lived at the time, apparently) trusted in God's promised salvation. And that faith led them to "*walk faithfully with God*" – that is, to live as His forgiven children. To strive to follow His Law and do what was right and pleasing to the Lord. And when they failed (which they did, as do we all), to then throw themselves onto their Father's mercy in that coming Savior.

That Flood, then, was a way of delivering Noah and his family from the wickedness which surrounded – and imperiled – them. What persecution, what temptation, what false teaching was removed by the Flood! It was not just to destroy, but also to preserve and protect, that God sent the Flood: to preserve and protect His children from those who would destroy them and their faith.

But also being saved by that Flood (and the Ark) were the animals, and the rest of God's creation. Remember Adam in the Garden of Eden: he was to tend and care for God's earthly creatures. And when he sinned, they too suffered in his fall. Adam's sin brought them death too, for before that there was NO death. And now, in Noah's time, the sin of mankind also brought death to the earth and its creatures. But remember the Promise: God would send One who would crush the devil and thus

restore fallen, ruined creation. Noah surely is a reminder of that coming Christ, for in his building the Ark, in his gathering the animals, in his tending and nurturing of them during the Flood, we see creation being saved. When Christ comes again, to establish the new heaven and earth at the end of time, all of creation -- including the animals -- will rejoice. Eden will be restored.

Additionally, you and I -- and all people -- have cause to thank God for the salvation in Noah. Without him, we would not be. The human race exists only because of him. In a very real way, then, Noah is a savior. No, he is not THE Savior (that is Christ, and Christ alone, for only He can pay for our sin), but Noah is a savior in that God used him to save us from extinction and death. All people alive today trace their ancestry back to him. Just as we do to Adam. And, for all those who have *eternal* life, we all trace that to Christ, THE Savior. (pause)

*“Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.”* Those are most wonderful words. Noah was righteous and blameless -- not because he was perfect but only because he had faith in God’s promise of a Savior. Noah walked with God -- that is, he trusted God as his loving Father. The One who would provide the salvation he needed. In the Flood and Ark, yes. But even more in the coming Christ.

That description of Noah also fits us as Christians. We too are righteous and blameless before the Lord -- not because we are such holy and sinless people (for we most certainly are not!), but only because we too put our trust solely and completely in Christ. We too are able to rightly and truly call God our Father, in Christ. We too walk with God by faith.

Noah was given life, despite the Flood of sin, by the wooden Ark. And you and I are given life, despite the flood of sin (our own and of others), by the wooden cross. Just as the Ark was the instrument of salvation for Noah and his family, so is the cross for us. There OUR sin was paid for.

There OUR sin was carried. There WE were saved. So whenever the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh threaten to rise up and drown us, we cling to that cross for dear life. And it will not fail. Christ crucified gives us life.

St. Peter also makes the connection between the Ark and baptism when he writes:

...in the days of Noah...the ark was...built. In it only a few people -- eight in all -- were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

Note that last sentence: not only was Christ crucified for you, He also was raised for you. His death leads to new life, just as the Flood led to God's renewal of life on the earth.

And then, to seal that promise/that covenant/that new life, God gave Noah the sign of the rainbow. It was to prove God's gracious love, His promise of life and forgiveness. Every time Noah and his descendants saw a rainbow, they remembered God's promise. God has given us such signs too in the Sacraments, which seal and prove and give that forgiveness and life. Every day we remember our baptism and how God has washed away our sin in the flood of Christ's blood shed on the cross. Every time we come to the communion rail we hear that promise repeated, that forgiveness and life renewed: *"Take and eat; take and drink. This is My Body and Blood given for you."*

And so, like Noah, we trust our Father. We walk with Him, blameless and righteous, because Christ's righteousness IS ours. We know we are safe and saved, even as we are surrounded and engulfed by a flood of sin around us. In our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

OS – Offertory/Prayers

FE – Offertory/Prayers