

## **Noah's Flood**

Back to School: Part 3 “Noah's Flood”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – August 20, 2023

12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

**Readings:** Genesis 6-9 (various)

**Reflection:** Psalm 124

**Greeting:** Scripture helps you to be wise in seeking salvation. All scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching. Scripture equips each person to do what is good. Let us learn and continue to grow in Christ our Lord!

**Prayer:** God, we believe that you provide us with all that we need in this life. You have not set us adrift in a sea of ignorance but have set us on the path of wisdom. Help us that we may grow in your love and knowledge. Let us never stop learning about your mercy and grace. Give to us a spirit that is eager to always know more so that we may do more for your sake. Help us to walk in your ways and that we may always seek your truth. And give to us a heart that we may love you more day by day as we share your love with the world. And may you guide us and lead us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Reflection:** Psalm 124

*If it had not been the LORD who was on our side —let Israel now say— if it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when our enemies attacked us, then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us; then the flood would have swept us away; the torrent would have gone over us; then over us would have gone the raging waters. Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as prey to their teeth. We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the hunters; the snare is broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*

*(Psalm 124 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 124 and we hear of God's care and protection. That we are secure whenever the Lord is on our side. That we know redemption because of God's love. How have you experienced the grace of God in your life? What is a way that you can share that grace with others? How can you extend the mercy and love of the Lord with your actions this week? How can you make grace a focus of your personal growth? How can we join together to always learn more in God's love and care?

**Prayer:** Lord, we turn to you in all things knowing that you are always there for us. Help us to continue to grow in knowledge and truth by your Holy Spirit. Help us to grow in mercy and grace through our risen Savior. As we come before you this day we bring to you the concerns

and joys that we have shared aloud together. We bring before you the unspoken worries and celebrations of our hearts. May you guide us and lead us so that we know your blessing in our joy and our sorrow. We pray you will help us to grow in love through our laughter and our tears. May your steadfast love and faithfulness be our constant guide and companion. And may we always continue to grow in faith and in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our reading for today comes from Genesis 6-9 and will contain various readings from the accounting of the flood narrative.

*The LORD saw that the wickedness of humans was great in the earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made humans on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will blot out from the earth the humans I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air—for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the sight of the LORD. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters 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 come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up, and it shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark, they and every wild animal of every kind and all domestic animals of every kind and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth and every bird of every kind. They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him, and the LORD shut him in. The flood continued forty days on the earth, and the waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; Then God said to Noah, "Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."*

*God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth." (Genesis 6:5-8,13-14,17-22; 7:11-16,17; 8:1,15-17; 9:1,8-17 NRSV\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

So, This week in our "Back to School" series we come to Noah and the flood. This is a story that many people remember from their childhood. The story we remember is usually one about how Noah was a good person who was put on the ark to survive the flood and ends with a rainbow. But as a children's story we don't often get very far in the actual meaning behind the flood story. I think it is because the flood story makes for wonderful coloring sheets without ever having to get into the deeper questions that come with the flood. The flood comes from the early parts of Genesis with parables that explain the world and why things are the way they are. Noah helps in preparing us for understanding Abraham, Moses, the nation of Israel, and eventually Christ. We can see the way that those different stories relate to each other with common threads running through them. With Noah's flood we have a story about creation and uncreation. When we compare the flood narrative to the creation narrative, we see that things are inverted. When we read about creation, God calls everything good. Now, just before the flood everything is bad. God is not pleased with the direction things have gone. One thing to note is that God is anthropomorphized in this narrative, which means that God is given human emotions and behavior. This is often a way to make God more relatable but can confuse us if we don't stop to recognize it. We see God full of regret and needing physical reminders of things.

So, we take a closer look at the flood. The readings I chose walk us through the story of Noah and the flood. Of course, I strongly encourage you to read through Genesis 6 through 9 to read the entire story. But when we start our reading we see that God regrets putting mankind on earth because of their wickedness. The decision is to reset the earth. Everything is going to be wiped out except for Noah. This is again a reverse of the creation narrative. God created everything and things were good, and God was pleased. Now, God is displeased that things are not good, and everything is to be destroyed. Noah is to carry a remnant of all creation with him. God tells him to build a very box-like boat. God calls out to Noah and says

build it like this. Make a big waterproof box to float in the water when the flood comes. Noah is God's chosen, and this is paralleled with Abraham who also receives a covenant, a promise from God. We can see this play out again with Moses who is the representative to make a covenant with God. And we see it play out again with a new covenant made through Christ.

I call the flood story a parable because it's part of an epic story meant to inform us as to how God is and why things are the way they are. It would not have been understood the way that we understand modern history and scientific literature. I say this not to downplay the importance of the flood story but for proper understanding of the flood narrative. Just as we talked about Job being there for us to gain wisdom, much of the early parts of Genesis are there for us to understand why the world is the way it is. It also reveals God's character. The character of God that is revealed in this story is one of redemption because it's not about what has happened but about God's promise today. And with the flood that promise is one in which we will never be wiped out. That no matter what kind of evil inclinations humankind be drawn to, God will show us love and grace. And God will call us to him. We can see Christ as a direct result of that promise. Now in the uncreation that we see in the beginning of this narrative that one person is chosen to survive and that the human race shall be born again from this act. Through the waters humanity is to be cleansed. We can see the way in which baptism is mirrored here. God is redeeming the world through the water, and it is being symbolically washed clean. Sin is being washed away in order to fully receive God's mercy. All the animals have to be taken in with Noah because everything else is to be wiped out and reset. So, when the flood comes God seals Noah, his family, and all the animals into the ark. Now, they wait.

You may have noticed that some of the details you might remember from the childhood story have been glossed over. Part of that was needing to fit the whole story in just one sermon. The other is that there's a lot about those details that I would want to explain today. I actually do a larger study of the flood and I plan on doing that as part of the new morning Bible study group that will be starting up soon. If you are interested, please let me know. For today, we note that God has sealed all the animals and Noah with his family into the ark after the flood begins. We then shift our focus to how God remembers Noah. This is the center point of the story. There is a building up of the destruction and disappointment that leads to the flood. Noah is chosen and all that is being saved goes into the ark and is sealed in. Now that Noah is remembered, the boat is unsealed, and a window is opened. After a time, dry land appears where the flood recedes. Then they go out and are reconciled to God. And God makes a promise to all of creation. Never again will there be a reset of the world. And God makes this promise without anything being required on the part of Noah. This covenant is made between God and Noah with God making the promise. And we hear God once again command humanity to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth. And that no matter what God will be with us. Part of what this tells us is something that we might not at first understand. That we may never have understood this from the children's version. The children's version has the promise of the rainbow without fully understanding what that promise is. The rainbow that we see in this

narrative is a sign of the opposite of how the flood begins. It is actually a promise that no matter how terrible humans get, God refuses to wipe out all humanity. That God refuses to answer sin with complete annihilation of mankind. In our narrative, Noah's deliverance is seen as all deliverance of all humanity. The promise made is with all creation. Creation is under God's grace. God's grace is further shown through Abraham with God's chosen people. The fullness of God's grace is finally understood on the cross.

One of the ways that we can read the flood narrative today helps us in understanding why evil exists. And that's something that is very difficult to put in a children's Bible lesson. Because one of the things that we see in this accounting is that wiping out humanity would only destroy evil if it were complete. We see the cracks form within a few verses, and that sin is never far from humanity. What that tells me is that humanity is prone to sin. That it is a reflection of our human condition. That we all fall short of the glory of God. We are flawed. We are all too easily tempted to turn away from what is good. The way that I view this parable is as one of God's grace. I don't really see this as a story about how God wipes out humanity, but about how God chooses to address humanity with grace instead of destruction. Because I see that promise as the true message of the story. That God chooses a path of grace instead of retribution. That it is a story of forgiveness. Because what it says to me is that the promise we should understand is that God will always deal with us in mercy. That grace is the promise to all creation. That God's love comes into focus for us here. That God's plan isn't one of destruction but one of redemption. And that we see everything that follows through that love and redemption. This sets the tone for all of Scripture to be about God guiding humanity by love and grace. We see that love and grace taking its ultimate form on the cross so that we might finally understand how deep God's love is for us. That we might understand just how much God will forgive. And just how far God is willing to go to get the message to us. That the flood sets the tone for understanding God as a God of grace, mercy, and love throughout the entirety of the Bible. And so, I ask that you go and read the story of Noah's flood. I want you to read it with God's grace and love in mind and see if it is different for you. And I pray that we may all look at scripture a new every time that we pick it up. And I pray we are always able to gain a better understanding of God's love for us and the way that we may share grace with each other. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Our Current Series – Back to School**

Our current series is going to be taking a look at lessons we may have learned in a children's Sunday School or Vacation Bible School. But did we learn everything about the story that we need to know? What more can we learn now as adults? Each week we take on a new lesson as we go back to school!

Next Week: Furnace of Fire.

For this message, we will be looking at the way that we can be blinded by anger and the problem with forcing others to share faith.

### **Prayer List**

Rev Angie Lee	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup	Ambulance Crew	Eric Veach	Ed & Verna Titus
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Tricia Adkins
Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart	Tom Finley
Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan	Brittany Gilbert
Phil Hawickhorst	Ray Carr	Alice Sherwood	Richard Durham
Kathy Hanks	Steve Carlen	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz
Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot	Stanley Kiser
Corine Howard	Don Gilmore	Shirley Jester	Connie Brown
Marsha Overton	Linda Carlen	Michael Nichols	Paul Cox
Taylor Waldorf	Harriet Tucker	Becky McGuinness	Janet Yokum
Donna Farley	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser
Larry Thompson	Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Greg Williams	Martha Roberts
Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Lavon Figgins	Kara Newton

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