

April 20, 2008
Houghton Lake UMC

“Lessons from Noah”

Genesis 6:1-8

There are two major things we need to understand about God before we can grasp the significance of Genesis' flood account. 1) God's willingness to protect our freewill to choose, even though it means that sin could destroy us, and 2) God's determination to save those who seek Him and who choose to be saved.

We have been reflecting on God for these past few weeks as we observed that in Chapter 1 of Genesis God was creating. We observed that God was in complete control. Everything God did was “good”. In chapters 2-3 God made the decision to create man – “mankind”, male and female -- in the image of God. That is, possessing the capacity for moral choice. As a result, God allowed Adam and Eve to have moral autonomy and responsibility, and God voluntarily stepped back from being in complete control and gave His newly created humans room to exercise their God-given moral freedom. This choice meant that there was the possibility that not everything would be “good”.

In chapter 3 Adam and Eve were led by the serpent to rebel against God's authority. There was now a new choice introduced into paradise. They willfully disobeyed God and began to learn (the hard way) about evil. Evil was now unleashed to all of life, and death as in “the wages of sin” began to dominate the relationships of the world. They had sinned against God. Finding themselves naked, they were ashamed and hid from God because they were now afraid of God. They discovered that there were many ways to die. God held Adam and Eve accountable for their actions. He revealed to them what sin would do to them in what we now call the curse, and also taught them how their actions affected the world around them. Then God escorted them out of the garden as an act of mercy. God escorted them from the garden so that they would not eat of the

tree of life and live forever in their sins. You see, God was separating sinful humans from eternal life. So God gave mercy in the midst of justice and did not abandon Adam and Eve or Cain and Abel, for that matter, when they left the garden.

God then became the teacher of righteousness. As he taught Cain and Abel about sacrifice and moral choice, God was also teaching them the responsibility of freewill and the importance of sacrifice. But as God worked, so did sin in the human heart. Anger against God led to jealousy in Cain, and Cain turned on his brother Abel. That jealousy led Cain to murder his brother and, again, God held Cain accountable for his actions. Cain was punished for the murder of his brother and as a result, Adam and Eve lost both of their sons. God did not kill Cain. God would allow Cain to live a banished life away from God, steeped in sin, and the sins of the father were visited unto the children throughout their generations. God would allow humans the freedom to live in sin all of their lives and allow the wages of sin to dominate their fallen world. God would allow humans the freedom of moral choice, even if it meant death, idolatry, and a life of brokenness.

But God was not done. Seth was born to Adam and Eve, and the last words we hear from Eve is praise and thanksgiving to God for the birth of Seth and the blessing God had given them. We also learned that Seth was born, not in the image of God as his father Adam had been, but Seth was born in Adam's image, having moral freewill. But it was no longer innocent, free, and holy. Seth was now born with a carnal spirit, naturally self-centered and broken. However, God would continue to be active in human life as he blessed Seth and blessed those of his family who worshiped God and sought to walk with God in obedience. That is why in Genesis 5 when we study the lineage of Seth we have

the account of Enoch, who walked with God 300 years and then he was no more, because God took him away. Enoch was the first person to go to heaven.

The genealogy of Seth would continue to the end of chapter 5 where we are introduced to Noah, already 500 years old. He became the father of three boys when he was 500 years old: Shem, Ham and Japheth. When we come to chapter 6 we will discover that God will still be in control of the big picture. Just because God stepped back to allow humans free moral choice in their own lives, God did not abdicate everything to human whims and brokenness. God will find it in his heart to cry, to grieve and to repent that God had ever made mankind in the first place -- and then to plan the flood.

Chapter 6 begins with a summary paragraph that shares that males were being dominant over the females of the world and began taking harems; “they married any of them they chose.” This was another sign of sin and brokenness. God’s reaction to this activity was a lament. Verse three tells us, “The Lord said, ‘My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal and corrupt; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.’” God would shorten the life span of the human race, bringing death quicker to people, but this did not turn their hearts toward God in worship.

Our text today (verse 5) shares the reason for the flood. It was an act of God by God’s intent to erase the earth of life, and to perhaps start over again. The flood was an event that was planned for, anticipated, and occurred in human history. The Lord saw how wicked men had become on earth. “Every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.” The Lord grieved (repented) that he had made humans in the first place. God’s heart was filled with pain and so God decided to destroy all humans, animals and earth-bound creatures and birds. **“But”**, *(and how powerful that word is; that*

connective 3 letter word. “But”, brings hope and an option. God saw an exception.) “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

How important this phrase is to all of us. Without Noah we would not be here today. Without this one exception, God would have destroyed the human species and perhaps started over. “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

Why did he find favor? Why did God single out this one individual to first warn and then save? In the King James Version of the Bible we find these words: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” It says in verse 9, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.” Noah found “grace”, he found “favor” in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was chosen by God to be “saved” from his judgment and decision to bring the flood. All of these words are important words even for us as we again learn the words, “grace”, “favor”, and the act of being “saved”. Here Noah and the flood account demonstrates in a physical way through promise, rain, flood, and a boat, a type of salvation God wants us to understand. Noah’s salvation would be through a boat on the water and life after the flood. But you and I find God’s “grace” and “favor” through even more that God has done for us. The grace of God, the favor of God comes to us when we place our trust and faith in Jesus. We find favor in the eyes of the Lord by putting our faith in Jesus Christ, and we find real salvation in our life -- not from a flood on the earth but from eternal death. Noah provided a boat for salvation to all who would follow Noah’s preaching, but none did. In the same way Jesus has provided eternal life to us through his shed blood on the cross, and we will be saved when we put our faith in Jesus, just as the people of the pre-deluvian world could have been saved if they had believed Noah and just gotten on the boat.

Noah was blameless among the people. “he walked with God”, which was totally unique to those in Noah’s world. The Bible tells us that Noah was 500 years old when he began to build the ark and he also began to preach God’s message to the people. Noah was 600 years old when he and his family got into the ark, and no one else followed him. Noah preached for 100 years and did not have one convert. That was how fully the human race was steeped in sin. The world was so corrupt, so blinded by sin that they thought Noah was crazy and totally ignored his message. The world was full of sinful people and, therefore, full of violence. God told Noah what he was going to do... and Noah obeyed. Noah trusted God’s word, followed His directions, and he and his family were the only ones to survive.

God was going to destroy all people through a phenomenon they had never experienced before. God was going to make it rain. God told Noah, and Noah believed God, then told the world what was coming and built the ark. That was faith in action! Noah not only believed God but he changed the course of his life as a result of the news and started building the boat. My friends, it is the same with the gospel today. You have to put your faith into action. You cannot just believe in your head and agree. Confessing your sin gets you started in the right direction, but it doesn’t change a thing. You have to repent of your sin, stop doing it, and start obeying the Lord. Then your sin will be forgiven and your life will begin to change.

So, what lessons does all of this teach us?

1. We need to realize that even though the world is evil altogether, God is allowing us the choice to believe the gospel and follow him to eternal life or to sin, ignore the gospel and all that Jesus has done for you and drown in your sin.
2. God is still in control of the larger picture. He may not be visible, but God is watching and very active in our lives -- even if we do not recognize it or admit it.
3. God is broken-hearted by our sin. He watches the sin and brokenness everyday and has provided a way for us to escape the calamity that lurks ahead of us. All

- we have to do is believe the truth of the gospel, repent of our sin, trust Jesus to cleanse us from sin, and live a new life seeking God's will from this point on.
4. It is God who decides what is right or wrong. It is God who decides who goes to heaven and who will be destroyed. It is God who decides who will find favor in His eyes. Our idea of righteousness doesn't matter.
 5. Death will come to all of us within 120 years, and at that time God will be in complete control of our destiny based upon our faith in Jesus Christ.
 6. Many, many people could have been saved from the flood in Noah's day if they would have only believed the message Noah preached and gotten on the boat. But they ignored him, and when the rain came they died. God allowed them to die.
 7. God allowed the people to choose to follow or not. Those who followed Noah lived. Those who ignored his message died. It is as simple and as real and as definite as that.
 8. Through faith in God, Noah lived.
 9. The same thing is happening today with the preaching of the gospel. Jesus died and rose again! He has provided a way to find favor with God. God's grace has already chosen you; God wants you to put your faith in what Jesus has done. Jesus has already risen from the dead and is alive today. All you have to do is listen to God's word in the Bible, listen to the gospel message being preached by those whom God has called to preach, put your faith and trust in what Jesus has already done, and change your life through action, following Jesus as his disciple in righteous living.
 10. Through faith in Christ, we, too, can live!

Those are just some of the lessons we learn about God from this account of Noah. But they are the most important lessons we can learn about life. Let us pray....

Dear Lord, what an awesome thing to think about -- life or death, eternal life or eternal death. It is all too real and true. Every time someone dies -- a friend, a family member -- we are reminded of just how real the end of our life and the death of our bodies really is. You have given us the freewill to choose. You have given us the sovereignty to seek you or ignore you. The reason that you tarry and delay your judgment is so that more people can hear, believe and find your salvation. Thank you, Lord for your patience. So, I pray today, Lord, that those who hear me today will also take this message seriously, repent of their sin and begin to seek you with all of their heart and to make you the Lord of their life. Help us all to walk by faith, Lord, to hunger and thirst

after your righteousness, and to find favor in your eyes when the Day of Judgment comes. In your name we pray. Amen