

Noah and the Flood

Genesis 6: 9-22

Good morning everyone. Now, I promise that you're going to really enjoy this talk and I promise that today is going to be a great day and that we'll have lovely weather for the rest of the week. Now before you switch off and mutter to yourselves "who does she think she is promising these things" I am reminded that one of the key messages when I undertake my safeguarding training every three years is "never make promises you can't keep" - a very sensible message, and of course those promises I started with were just to make an example of that message. I certainly can't promise those things and it's probably true that quite often when we use those words "I promise" no matter how much we mean it at the time, we are not really in a position to make the promises at all, but we can all pray that our hopes for ourselves and others will be realised and trust God with the choices he makes for us. It is God that is in control and it is therefore to him we must turn. Much better, then, that we offer to pray for one other in different situations than making empty promises that we can't keep because it's out of our control, just to make us all feel better. So, let us pray.

Our Father. Thank you for all that you do for us and that we can trust in your faithfulness and the promises you have made. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to worship you and look at your word even when we can't be physically together. Help us to remember that you are in control and that you are ever faithful. In our saviour Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

Well as a nation one of the things we seem to do continually is complain and talk about the weather. So, in today's passage we look at a promise that can be relied upon because it's a promise or a covenant made by God and probably the worst weather forecast in history! One theologian actually suggests that the story of Noah and the flood is, apart from the creation story, about the most dramatic event of the Old Testament. We'd better take a look at it then!

Our passage starts in verse 9 of the sixth chapter of Genesis but let's just look back at verse 8 which I've heard described as "the bedrock of the continued existence of civilisation". In other words, if Noah and his family hadn't been chosen by God to enter the Ark and had instead been killed along with everyone and everything else, there would simply have been no civilization left. The verse says, "But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord". Then at the beginning of our passage we see Noah being described as a righteous man who walks with God. Now, that doesn't mean that he was a blameless, sinless man but it does mean that he had faith in God and was therefore seen as righteous in the eyes of his Lord God through that faith, just as we are seen righteous in the eyes of God through our faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

In verse 11 we're told that God sees the earth as corrupt and filled with violence and God tells Noah in verse 13 "I have determined to make an end of all flesh for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth". Now before we consider the enormity of what God is saying, we should

note that God had in fact warned Noah much earlier that he would bring his wrath upon the earth if the corruption continued and he gave Noah 120 years to preach to the people about God's impending wrath but also his redeeming ways and so gives them the chance to repent and renew their faith in God. God in his grace always gives us a chance, doesn't he? His patience, grace and mercy are ever present but as sinful beings the people back in Noah's day and we today keep forgetting that and let other temptations get in the way. God always has a plan though - a plan that has been playing out from before he first spoke the world into existence, a plan in spite of which our ancestors and we waste many chances, get-outs and try better next time cards. But of course, we will only be truly "out of the woods" when we come face to face with our saviour when his kingdom is fully revealed as a new heaven and a new earth that is described in the book of Revelation right at the other end of the Bible.

Getting back to our passage, in verse 14 God tells Noah to build an ark and then gives Noah detailed instructions of how he is to build that ark. Then comes that weather forecast I was talking about - God tells Noah in verse 17 that he is going to bring a flood of water upon the earth to destroy all flesh and that everything upon the earth will die. Now this isn't just a case of a burst water main causing disruption on a few local roads during rush hour, or the flooding that we often see after a heavy snowstorm or even the Rivers Smite, Trent or even the Thames bursting their bank. No. This is a flood of global proportions, it's huge, it's going to kill everything - nothing and no-one will survive. Except of course from Noah and his family who God has chosen to enter the Ark along with a pair of every living thing and a supply of every food. In this way they will be safe, will be nourished and will be rescued. We are told in verse 22, the last verse of our passage and again in chapter 7 verse 5 that "Noah did all that God commanded him" and are therefore reminded of Noah's faith in God and we also see in Chapter 7 verse 16 that God "shut them in" to the Ark to ensure their safety and ultimate rescue.

We first hear the promise that God makes when in chapter 6 verse 18 he says to Noah "But I will establish my covenant with you" and then skipping on to chapter 8 verse 21, after the flood has receded, God continues his promise when he says "I will never again curse ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done" and then again in Chapter 9 verse 11 he says, "I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth".

So, God, according to his plan of salvation, gives man a second chance in a restoration of the created order on earth after the flood but this time the creation comes with a binding promise or covenant that the created order will never again be completely destroyed by a global and creation-destroying flood.

We are so blessed, as post-cross Gentiles to be able to see the truth of this quote from Charles Spurgeon when he says that "from every town and every village and

every hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London. So, from every text of scripture there is a road to Christ”.

You see, our Ark that we can enter into through faith is of course our Saviour Jesus Christ and our flood or water of cleanliness is our baptism. Our forefathers lived under the law but we as brothers and sisters of Christ need live only by faith in him if we are to have our sins forgiven and be granted an eternal life in his eternal kingdom. Noah didn't earn a place on that ark for him and his family but through his faith in God and the grace of God, he was saved by taking his place on that ark, as God commanded. We can be saved by that same grace of God by taking our place in the loving arms of God's only son, Jesus.

Listen to what the apostle Peter says in chapter 3 verses 20 -21 of his first letter “when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”.

Isn't it reassuring, comforting and humbling when we realise that our God is patient, loving and gracious; that we can see with our New Testament eyes that the scriptures of the Old Testament point in so many ways to that early promised seed that is our own Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ or as Gary Millar in his book Saving Eutychus says “If we ignore the Old Testament completely just because we're gentile readers, we'll miss a significant part of the message of the gospel, the good news which God begins to reveal in Genesis. Because although it happened to them, it has huge significance for us”.

So in conclusion, it is my prayer that you have enjoyed this talk, that God will grant us a blessed, healthy, safe and productive week, and that we will all resolve to trust in God always and take our concerns to him, knowing that we can trust him and the promises he has made, and that we can all tune in again next week to hear Jon exploring further into the Book of Genesis and the covenant that God made with Abraham.

Amen