

Sermon

Sunday, September 23, 2018

Charleston, SC

10:30 am Chapel and 6:00 pm Sermon ~ Genesis 9:8-17, Mark 1:9-13

Draining the Flood...of Sin

The Rev. Alfred Zadig, Jr.

What a great and timely story out of Genesis as we continue our Gospel Project deep dive into the Bible! The timing of Noah's ark and the flooding from Hurricane Florence is pretty amazing. In fact, this morning I want to introduce you to Tony Alsup, a modern day Noah! He's a 51-year-old guy from Tennessee who bought an old school bus and converted it into his own ark and drove into four South Carolina towns to rescue stray dogs and cats. He just piled them into his bus! Last Friday, he transported the four-legged creatures away from the storm's path to a shelter in Alabama, where they will be sent to shelters all over the country. A modern day Noah! Yet all that flooding in the upstate came from only three days of rain! Can you imagine what things would have looked like for this modern-day Noah after forty days of rain? No, a bus wouldn't do. It would require a 475-foot-long ark, because Noah wasn't dealing with 40 days of drizzle or mist, but forty days of that kind of horizontal pounding rain that hurts!

Let me back up. Why did the original Noah even have to deal with a flood? Last week we ended with Adam and Eve and the first sin of eating the forbidden apple. The problem is, that from that time on, people just kept sinning! Remember sin defined is just the absence of God. People were simply walking away from their

creator, and as people walk away from God, what walks in? Pain, violence, confusion, and death. The same thing that has caused all the chaos in our schools. We take God out, and violence walks in. God chooses to deal with this by deciding to reboot humanity, by sending a massive flood of water to start creation over. I know, I know, this causes us to say: "How could a loving God allow such a disaster?" But what we should probably be saying is, "Wow, God takes our sin seriously. He will not be mocked by our sin." So God chooses one person on earth to manage the reboot process. He chooses Noah. Why? The Bible says Noah was the last person on earth who revered God. So, Noah comes on the scene and has to deal with not one but actually two floods. Yes, the physical flood waters, but also the rampant flood of sin that caused the physical flood! God says to Noah, because of the sin on earth, I'm going to flood it. Your job is to build the ark and get your family and animals of every kind on it. And after the flood, God himself makes a covenant with Noah that declares it will never happen again. By the way, this doesn't mean the Market won't flood in the next rain. The covenant promise is that all of earth's creatures will never again be destroyed by flood waters. As proof of that promise, God sends a rainbow! Every time we see a rainbow in the sky, we should stop, and in addition to

saying, "How beautiful," we should say, "Thank you God that you keep your promises!"

But as we know, not even that covenant, not even the flood, was able to prevent people from sinning, including Noah. Remember, after the flood, Noah finally gets out of the boat, and what does he do? He has too many liquid libations and is one of the very first to sin again. Clearly something more is needed. Something better is needed. While the ark could rescue people from the waters, the ark and the covenant could not rescue people from sin. Only Jesus can rescue from the flood waters of our sins.

You see, the wooden ark that was the vehicle of rescue for Noah and his family points to the wooden cross of Christ. Jesus is the new ark that rescues us now and eternally from the penalty of sin and death. Yes, the ark was made of cypress wood and covered with tar. The cross was made from cypress wood as well. The tar which covered the ark and kept it together points to the blood of Christ Himself, which has become our covering, our seal under which we are kept safe and secure.

There is even more deeper symbolism. The olive tree branch brought back by the dove to Noah that signaled it was okay to get off the ark points to the

olive branch that is the Holy Spirit which descended on Jesus during his Baptism, which we read about in Mark's Gospel today. The olive branch is a symbol for peace, and we know that Jesus is the source of our peace. The ark, the wood, the olive branch, they all point to Jesus the true and once-and-for-all rescuer. While the ark could rescue people from the waters, the ark could not rescue people from sin. Only Jesus can drain the overflowing oceans, lakes and rivers of sin because only Jesus can change hearts. Only Jesus can change our desires. Only Jesus can give us the ability to hate the sin we so long to commit!

Isaiah predicted Jesus when he said, "There will be a time when God will put His law into our minds and write it on our hearts. He will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more." In other words, the covenant of the Cross of Jesus was to change our heart to desire not to sin! And further, that we can be forgiven of the sins we commit!

Meaning, as the rainbow represented the old covenant, Christ's Blood represents this new Covenant. The blood that sealed God's commitment was that of His own son Jesus! Jesus said at the last supper, "This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins." The ark, covenant, and rainbow are all external. Jesus, the promise of forgiveness, and the Blood of Christ are all internal that transforms the external! Jesus accomplished what the old could not, the removal of sin and cleansing the conscience.

My friends, if we really believe that Jesus is the new ark, saving us from the flood of sin, then there are essentially two responses. First, Jesus wants us to go beyond the head

knowledge of all this, and into a relationship with Him. Jesus wants a daily relationship with you to go beyond God as doctrine only, and into Jesus in relationship. If Jesus is just a doctrine, then most likely your life is littered with unforgivenesses, unreconciled relationships, and bitternesses.

Going beyond doctrine into relationship.

Secondly, the bible proves that each and every one of us matters to Jesus. As God remembered Noah, God remembers you. God does not want one life to perish! John 3:16 says God so loved the world that He gave His only Son Jesus that all that believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life! While God will judge sin, He wants everyone to get on the ark of His Son Jesus Christ. He is pro-life indeed! And there is an urgency to it. On Noah's ark, there was only one door. Likewise, Jesus tells us that He is the only door for salvation, through Christ alone! Acts 4:12 says There is no other Name under heaven by which we can be saved. Jesus as the ark wants to rescue all people from their sin before the great judgment day.

My questions is this. Do we share the same zeal and faith that Noah did to be obedient and save the lives of those God had directed him to? How zealous are we to see others saved? There is no other rescue plan for humanity. Here's the sobering news. Many years later, the Apostle Peter writes a letter to the suffering Christians to encourage them In his first letter, chapter 3, Peter writes, "Noah preached for 120 years, begging people to repent and board the ark. How many responded? Eight." That's it, eight humans. And those eight may have been just his family. This rescue plan is not easy! But the question is,

do we share the same passion, the same zeal to reach the lost of today? It's why we pray, Lord give us a heart and the strongest desire through your Holy Spirit to rescue those drowning in the flood of sin.

Two Responses. Jesus come and live in my heart as my ark. Jesus give me a zeal to reach those sinking down in the deep waters of despair.

Finally, this morning, back to our modern Noah, Tony Alsup. One witness said he pulled his animal ark up to an animal shelter at 4am last Wednesday to get all the dogs and cats nobody else wanted. You know, the leftover pets, the dogs with blocky heads, and the cats with heartworm. All in all, he saved 53 dogs and 11 cats! Can you imagine how loud that bus was! His hunger to save creatures should inspire us to save humans. May we be as hungry to live in relationship with Jesus, and to invite others into relationship with Him. If you're here this morning and Jesus is one big doctrine and not a relationship, pray this prayer with me.

Jesus thank you that you are my ark! You are my hope! Forgive me of the times like Noah I have disappointed you...help me live for you. Come into my life and change my desires, and give me the strongest desire to rescue others.