

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: Noah
Sermon: Flood

Genesis 8:15-17; 20-21; 9:12-16; 20-29

Then God said to Noah, "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you - the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground - so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it." Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers." He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave."

After the flood Noah lived 350 years. Altogether, Noah lived 950 years, and then he died.

Noah - Postflood

It was a while back that we finally decided to clean the garage. It was a deep clean. We would call it spring cleaning, but it was already August. You know the kind of cleaning - where everything goes out into the yard. It looked like we were having a yard sale. Everything out. Swept. Crickets everywhere had to find a new home in our lawn. Once it was clean, we brought everything back in with such organization that had not been seen before in that garage. We have a one car garage, and now we can park one car in there. But there was an issue. We have a can crusher by the door that goes into the house. And we have a railing on a landing before some stairs to the basement floor. Upon this railing, there were about 40 pop cans that needed to be crushed. We had been lazy in the last few weeks, and just started a collection of cans, ready to be crushed when we got around to it. Half-way through our clean sweep, a bee came in, and found the cans. One bee. Not a problem. But the bee left, went back to his hive, and did his little behind dance and told the others where there was a gold mine of sugar. Pretty soon, we had twenty to thirty bees in our garage. I had managed to take out the three full bags of crushed cans and a bag of uncrushed cans into the yard before it got out of control. But for three days, we had sacks of cans in our side yard with a plethora of bees guarding their new found treasure. The third morning, when there was not much activity around the bags, I was able to take a long stick and put the sacks of cans into the back of my vehicle. Whatever bees were in the bags would either find their way out or not be a problem when I got

around to taking them in for recycling. But the next day as I was driving I heard the sound. BZZZZ. I look back and saw, not one bee, but four bees flying around. I rolled down the windows. One had brains enough to leave, the others looked slightly perturbed. And I did what any other sane person would do - I gunned that car to the nearest parking lot - speed limits don't apply when there are bees involved, jumped out opened up the doors and waited for them to leave. Now, why did I tell that involved little story this morning? Number one, to tell you to never put a bag full of bees in your trunk. You probably already knew that. But number two, I want to use that story as a springboard and metaphor into our third look at Noah. These past two weeks, we have explored the life and times of Noah to discover little truths that we could use in our faith journey. Two weeks ago, we looked at how God grieved at humankind, how we have the capability to affect God. And as any proud parent, He is proud of us when we do good, and he grieves for us when we do not so good. Last week we explored how Noah was remembered by God in the dark churning waters and how rescued him from the chaos - just as God remembers us in our dark times and loneliest valleys. This week, I want to look at three quick facts about Noah and the flood.

It was time for God to clean the garage. Do you remember why God sent the flood in the first place? We like to think of this story as a children's fable. It is definitely not a children's story. This is a story of death and destruction. When we had Christian 11 years ago, some well-meaning folk asked if we were going to have a Noah theme room. Noah and the animals. No, we were not going to have a Noah theme room. God destroys the earth - 99.9% of the world's population dies. "Good night, son! You see that boat on the wall, yeah, you're not on it! Sweet dreams!" This is God's attempt to wipe out sin from the earth. Everything out of the garage, and let's get this place back to it's original shape. Is there sin in your life? If you're breathing, the answer is yes. Is there something that you need to wipe away from who you are? Is there a character trait, is there an addiction, is there an element about who you are that you need to fix? Find something that you don't like about yourself and see if you can't work on it between now and Christmas. I don't care what it is. It's time to clean the garage. I went to the doctor about allergies. The doctor looked at my file and said, "You need to lose weight". I asked, "Will that help my allergies?" "Not at all, you just need to lose weight." Apparently I drink too much pop, hence the bees. Time to give it up for Lent. Is there something you need to eradicate in your life? I knew someone who gave up complaining during lent. During those forty days, not one complaint. They couldn't even complain about it! It's time to clean the garage - is there something in there that has to go?

The second thing I learn from Noah is patience. It is a virtue, so I've heard. But God's timing is different than my timing. We said last week that the whole flood episode took over a year. And Noah started building the ark a year before that, and had to take time to rebuild the earth and repopulate the planet after the flood. Now, how long would that take? In our story today we have a vineyard. Noah built a vineyard after the ark. Where did he get the seeds? How long does it take to plant a vineyard from scratch? The things of God take time. After a year in the ark, the flood waters still deep enough to cover the mountains, I would imagine Noah praying, "OK God, I think that should do it. Let's finish this thing, OK?" But God's patience is better than our impatience. The things of God take time. I wanted to drive as fast as I could to get to a place where I could let the bees out. Sometimes I wish God would fast forward those times of suffering and trial. Just get them over with. It takes nine-months to create a human life. 266 days. I wouldn't know, I've only heard that by month 7, it's done being cute and some would sell their soul to have that thing out. Only ten other animals have a longer gestation period! The Indian Elephant is at 2 years of pregnancy. Good things take time. It takes us 18 years to raise kids. We have the record in the animal kingdom for length of time it takes to prepare kids for the outside world. Education. It takes time. Do you want to see a doctor who has had years of training or someone who got their medical GED? Once we decided to get out of debt completely, it took my wife and I three years to get rid of student loans, credit card, car notes and the like. We spent 7 years to get 30 K in debt, 3 years to get out. It is possible. But good things take time. Our timing is not God's timing. And God's timing wins. If we would have taken the time to smash cans, we wouldn't have had the bees. Patience. If we only had patience with whatever. If we could only see this through God's perspective.

The last thing I learn from Noah is that it didn't work. The flood didn't work. Oh, the flood was designed to kill and wipe out, which it did, but ultimately, it failed. Noah, although he is credited with being righteous, still kept sin in the world. That was the whole point of the flood, wasn't it? To get rid of man's wickedness? And within the very Noah story itself, it gives an indication that it didn't work. Noah built a vineyard, got plowed and laid in his tent buck-naked. And Ham, one of Noah's sons who was on the ark came in, saw his father. Now the respectful thing to do would be to cover him up, but he goes outside and gets his brothers. "Guys, come here, you've got to see this! HAHAHAAA!" He broadcasted his father's immodesty. And Noah cursed Ham's descendants. Two chapters later we get the story of the Tower of Babel, human pride and arrogance, a few chapters after that we get Sodom and Gomorrah - the towering examples of depravity. Sin is alive and well right after the flood. The flood didn't work. So we cleaned out the garage. Can I park in the garage now? No, it's getting back to the way it was. Filled with tools, kid's toys and whatever.. The flood didn't change sin, it just tempered it for a while. Cleaning the garage didn't change my gift of sloppiness, it just tempered it for a while. We can change our behaviors, but only God can change the heart. The flood didn't save humankind from itself. It would take something else. God would have to clean us from the inside out. And that's how God fixes sin in our lives. From the inside out. It would take His son, Jesus Christ, to change a person's heart. Only He can save a soul. Only He can make the foulest person clean again. We didn't become clean because of a flood. We are clean because of Jesus' blood. And the People of God said, AMEN.