

Series: Noah

Sermon: Pre-Flood

Genesis 5:5-9; 11-22

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth - men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air - for I am grieved that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. I am going to bring flood waters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark - you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them." Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

Sermon

It was a few years ago, in another church parsonage, we were doing just a little bit of touch up in a basement living space, when from behind the drywall we noticed a little black area on the wood and cement block. We opened up the wall just a little bit more and discovered that there was mold growing in that area behind the wall. We explored some more, and lo and behold discovered that our entire basement's outer walls, drywall and wooden framework was just caked in mold. This was not a house we purchased, or owned, thank goodness, but we were the ones living in it. What we had hoped would be a simple clean-up and repair turned into something more severe. We had to gut the basement out and start all fresh. Tear out drywall. Tear out ceiling. Tear out 2 by 4's, treat the area and build again. I had the OK from the Trustees to do that. Maybe some of you have had that kind of experience. Where it was just easier to write off everything that happened in the past and start fresh. That kind of creating, destroying, and recreating process is inherently present within our Bible text this morning. For the next three weeks, we will be looking at the Bible character of Noah. Noah and the Flood. This week, we are looking at Noah, pre-flood. Next week we will swim in the flood waters with Noah, and the day after Valentine's Day, we will finish out with the aftermath of the flood - The rainbow and the wine. But first, I need to spend a little bit of time in discovering who Noah was.

We read the account of Noah in the Genesis stories early on. It is apart of what we call the "pre-history", accounts and stories that take place before historical record. The first 11 Chapters of Genesis are within that pre-historical period. Now, in Chapter 12 we begin the story of Abraham and Sarah, and their four generations that follow - the story of the patriarchs and matriarchs in the history of Israel. Everything before Abraham is the

account of how the world came to be and stories that explained our beginnings. Some of you might believe that Noah and the flood are historical facts and that they did happen. I'm fine with that. Some of you might believe that Noah and the flood are nice stories that are meant to convey a deeper truth. I'm fine with that. There are more important truths to believe in, regardless of whether or not you believe in an actual flood. There are certainly reasons to doubt the story. There is not enough water on the planet to flood the earth as mentioned. It wasn't possible. A localized flood, yes, but not enough to make the story plausible. The discovery channel did a program on Noah that looked at the plausibility of the story, and ran into the same issues. If the water was so high to cover the mountains, the physics would mean that there would also be much more water vapor in the atmosphere that Noah and family would drown just by breathing. Also, a boat made of cypress or any type of wood made in those dimensions would collapse upon itself. It wouldn't float. The bible is very specific on the dimensions of the boat, but it doesn't answer how Noah got all the animals on board. And how did Noah get all the animals on board? Not a clue. And all the animals in the earth wouldn't have fit anyway. Not unless you believe in evolution where some of those animals changed over time, allowing more species to exist. I love the old Far Side cartoon that has Noah and the animals on the boat waving goodbye to the dinosaurs who didn't have a boarding pass. Indeed, there are many reasons to question the authenticity of the story of Noah. And I'm fine questioning the Bible. But I am reminded of a story told by one of my heroes, William Jennings Bryan about a watermelon seed. Someone asked Bryan about how he could believe in the Bible when it seemed utterly ridiculous. And Bryan asked the gentleman if he believed in watermelon seeds. Do they exist? And of course they do, and then Bryan said this: "I have observed the power of the watermelon seed. It has the power of drawing from the ground and through itself 200,000 times its weight. When you can tell me how it takes this material (dirt) and out of it colors an outside surface beyond the imitation of art, and then forms inside of it a white rind and within that again a red heart, thickly inlaid with black seeds, each one of which in turn is capable of drawing through itself 200,000 times its weight — when you can explain to me the mystery of a watermelon, you can ask me to explain the mystery of God." In short, don't let the impossibility of the Noah story take away its power. God is going to do what God is going to do, He's the one who made Physics to begin with, he can bend the rules if he wants. But like I said, the importance of the Flood is not whether it is historical or not, but there are deeper truths in the life and times of Noah.

Noah is the first important story after the account of Adam and Eve, Cain and Able. If you remember, that story ends with Cain killing his brother Able, and Cain going off to build a great city. From them, the world starts to populate. Don't ask me how or with who, but they begin to multiply. The Bible is very vague on some issues we'd like answers on. Just go with it for now. And we pick up the story in the sixth chapter of Genesis, right after Cain and Able's account. The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts in his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord looked down and saw mankind's depravity. And he called it evil. Now remember with me, just a while back in Genesis 1 and 2, you fill in the words for me, In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth, and he called it GOOD. He made the stars and the moon and the sun and the land and the seas and the plants and the animals and He called them GOOD. He made humankind in his image, male and female he created them and He called them GOOD. And from that moment to just a couple of chapters later, we read, And God looked down and called them EVIL. Not good. And God makes an executive decision. The world does not need any more humans. Matter of fact, the world would be better off if they weren't in the picture. And he chooses to destroy them. If anyone brought a Bible today it might be fascinating to look at the very first chapter of Genesis, right at the beginning. From the NIV version, we read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Other bibles call it chaos or crashing waves, but in the beginning, before creation, was water. The deep. And when God decides to destroy the earth, to reverse creation, if you will, he decides that he will go back to the beginning. The deep. The crashing waters. God is gutting out the basement and starting over because it has mold in it - and the mold is the sinfulness of mankind. And what I want to share with you this morning is this

idea: does it say that God is angry at mankind? Does it say that God is enraged? Furious? Seething? No. It says that the Lord was GRIEVED. Humankind's sinfulness broke God's heart. It's almost unreal to think, but we have the capacity to make God cry. We do. He is a good father. And a good father cries for his children. My own father once said "I can have a good day or a bad day, and it has nothing to do with me. If my kids have a good day, I have a good day. If they have a bad day, I have a bad day." And when God sees us going down a pathway that is not good for us, he grieves. And when He sees us going down the straight and narrow, he rejoices. The scriptures say that Jesus wept on occasion. The two times that it is recorded he cries about other people. When he was crucified, the Bible doesn't share that he shed tears. He might have, I know I would, but it doesn't say. The old song Away in a Manger gives us the idea that at his birth, "The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, NO CRYING HE MAKES". It might be worth having the savior as your baby! Mary didn't have to get up at all in those first couple of months! Of course, he probably cried as a baby, it's just in the song. But the Bible shares two stories of when Jesus did cry. When his friend Lazarus died and he came to raise him from the dead and no one believed he could. He cried at their unbelief. He didn't cry because his friend had died, but he cried when they didn't believe in Jesus. And he also wept over Jerusalem. He was outside the town on a hill looking at the city and realizing their fate should they continue in their sinful ways, they were going to be destroyed. He wept.

How much does God care for you? He wants only the best for you. He cries when we destroy ourselves with sin. He grieves when we mistreat our friends and family. We have the capacity to hurt God. We do. And we have that power because God loves us. And when you love, you open up the possibility to be hurt. Everyone of us has loved and been hurt before. Some more than others. But know this: God loves you so much, that he put his heart on the line for you - and later on, he put his only Son on the cross for you as well. That's how much you mean to God.

Maybe it's time for us to examine our lives once again, and see if we have any moldy spots to clear up. Maybe it's time for us to gut out our basements and start fresh, clean.

<COMMUNION>