

[noah thyself]

:: genesis 6.5-22 ::

We're going to be taking a look at Genesis chapter 6 this morning. Putting in at verse 5 we'll see the account of a man named Noah, who we know of course for building the Ark.

It's one of the first Bible stories we learn as children and it is one of the most hotly debated issues in biology and archaeology.

But what's interesting is that the Lord has invited us to pay special attention to Noah and his story even today. When people came to Jesus and said, 'Lord, what are the signs of Your Kingdom and You coming,' He directed them to Noah. There in Matthew 24, the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him when we would know that the end of the age had come. Jesus directed them back to this passage and the time just before the flood and then He went on to describe the Great Tribulation and the end of human history. Immediately after that, He tells a series of parables that focus on the fact that the people of God should be watching intently, doing the work of the Master, readying themselves for their Bridegroom.

In Luke chapter 17 this encouragement to compare our time to Noah's is repeated and Jesus also includes the story of Lot and his removal from Sodom and Gomorrah, using them as types for us.

In our world today there is so much going on that that causes fear and concern. There are wars and rumors of wars and revolutions and natural disasters and Mayan prophecies and solar flares and all sorts of things that we love to get all worried about during our 24 hour news cycle. But on the hearts of the people of the world is this question of **what** is going to happen?

And as Christians, we too are wondering, not *what* is going to happen, but *when* it's going to happen. The Bible clearly teachings things about the end of human history, we're watching and waiting for the Rapture of the Church, but we wonder when it is going to happen.

For these times of wondering, Christ has said, 'If you want to see signs of My coming, you should look to Noah.' And not only should we look to the state of the world during that time, but we should look at the person of Noah as well so that we can understand what it is that God desires to do through us as people living in a time near the end of an age.

This morning I'd like us to focus in on 3 things by looking at this Genesis account: The Master, the Mindset and our Mission.

Now the first question that should crop up in our minds is: ***Is our time really like the time of Noah?*** That was the direction and the clue the Christ gave for the sign of His soon return. So let's take a quick look.

Genesis 6.5 - Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

As we'll see later in our text and as we discover in other references in Scripture, the time of Noah was most characterized by corruption and violence. Dr. Henry Morris catalogs the other attributes of the time. There was a preoccupation with physical appetites. Rapid advances in technology. Grossly materialistic attitudes and interests. Disregard for the sacredness of marriage. Rejection of the Word of God. An explosion in population. Deviant sexuality. Starting to sound familiar, isn't it.

The problem with the world is that human beings are wicked and evil at the core of their being. Every intent of the heart of man apart from Christ is only evil continually. Can a person who is not a Christian do a 'good thing' for their neighbors or for society? Of course. But at the core, the person of man is evil and selfish and depraved and that is what causes the wickedness and suffering we see on the earth.

And God looks down and He sees the state of the world and it is the opposite of what He desired at creation.

Take a look in verse 6:

Genesis 6.6 - And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth and He was grieved in His heart.

I think sometimes the wording of this verse startles us. But God is not emotionless. He *CREATED* emotion and, though they are distorted and corrupted within us, of course God retains emotions in His perfection. He is, after all, the God of **love**. You can't have love without emotion.

The Lord is a loving Master. He had created the world perfect and good. Yet, because His desire was to have a loving relationship with the people of earth, He had to give us a free will to choose to either reciprocate that love or rebel against it. Man rebelled. And it breaks God's heart. It grieves Him.

Later in the New Testament, Christians are instructed and commanded to not *grieve* the Holy Spirit. What we do has an emotional impact on our Master and Creator. According to the Bible we can please Him or we can grieve Him. He is a Person with feelings. And He looked down on the corruption and violence and sin in the world and it grieved His heart. The same is true today. God is grieved by sin.

The other understanding we should take away from these verses is that God is grieved about the suffering of mankind. Every day, countless times God is *blamed* for the suffering in the world. But God is not pleased with suffering. He's working round our clock to **DO** something about the suffering and the corruption of the world. He is a Redeemer who seeks to save, not an angry Zeus who seeks to torment. He has a plan.

Genesis 6.7 - So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them"

God is a God of love and emotion, but He is also a God of justice. He can't just overlook the wickedness of mankind. If He did, He would be unfair and unjust and evil Himself. He must set right what mankind has set wrong through our rebellion against Him. He must destroy sin.

Now there's a problem. If God is perfect and man is evil, if our core being is wicked and in contradiction to this glorious, perfect God, then what hope is there for us? Why haven't we been eradicated? Because our Master has not only made a plan, but He's also made a provision.

Genesis 6.8 - But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

These 10 words are such a message of hope. This is what God has done for us. This is the reality of our world. That there is a God of power and of emotion and perfection. He is omnipotent and omnipresent and omniscient. He looks down on the world and He sees us for who we are, wicked, selfish, evil. He must, in His justice, deal with sin and corruption. Yet, He extends to us loving grace, freely, for those who would accept it. This passage is the first time the word grace is used in the Bible, the first time this idea is presented and demonstrated for us.

Noah didn't *earn* God's grace. He found it. It was waiting for him, presented to him by God out of love and mercy.

This story chronicles the end of an age. An incredible judgment was coming for the people of earth. Yet there was something different about this man Noah. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He found favor with the One who has power over life and death.

So, obviously, if we're making a comparison to the time of Noah and the time we're in today, we want to place ourselves into this text and be in the position that Noah was in. We want that grace that God extended to him, that favor that God showed him.

Our passage continues and says:

Genesis 6.9 - This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.

Elsewhere, in Hebrews chapter 11, we're given a little more detail about this man, where he is called a man of faith.

Noah found grace with God because he was living the way that God intended all the way back in the Garden of Eden. We remember that there the Lord had made this creation and planted a Garden, He placed the first man and the first woman there to live and to tend the earth. And then, the Bible says, that God would come and walk with them in the Garden in the cool of the day. And the Bible reveals that God's desire is to have an actual, personal relationship with the people of earth. God's grace is extended to anyone who is willing to accept it. Noah believed,

he had faith in God, and therefore he was justified by God and able to walk with Him through life, personally and powerfully.

And so we've seen that the Master is a God of love and justice and grace. This incredible Person who cares for the people of earth and has a plan for this world and who must judge the evil that is taking place here. But He's also looking for those who would accept His invitation to have a personal relationship with Him. That's who He is. 1 Peter says that God looked down and knew what He had to do in order to deal with the corruption of the earth in Noah's time, yet He purposefully waited so that the message of salvation and hope could go out to the people of the earth. That is our God. That's what He's doing in this time as well.

He has clearly indicated that a judgment is coming on this world. Yet, the Bible says, His longsuffering waits, not because He wants the people of the world to suffer, but because His desire is that none should perish but that all should come to repentance. And He sends out the call of His grace to the people of the earth, so that they might have a chance to be saved from the judgment that He must pour out on our sin.

Noah heard the call of grace, he had faith in God, which was what made him a 'just man'. And he walked with God during his life on the earth. He devoted himself to the Lord and consecrated his life to the service of the Master.

Think of how difficult this would've been. Of the millions or billions of people that had filled the earth, there were 8 righteous. Just 8. In the genealogy of Noah, in all of his predecessors, only one was listed as walking with God, and that was Enoch. Now, the only believers left in the entire earth was Noah and his family.

Here they are in verse 10:

Genesis 6.10 - And Noah begot three sons; Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Noah is given to us as an example, not just a story. He was a regular guy, a family man. And his situation should be a huge encouragement to us. Because Noah didn't have Christian friends that could encourage him. He didn't have a Bible to detail to him who God is and what He wants for our lives. He didn't have a Church he could go to or a favorite Christian musician he could listen to. He didn't have the permanent indwelling Holy Spirit to guide and direct and fill him. Yet, God was able to sustain him as one Christian among countless millions of unbelievers. Think of what He does for us! Think of what God wants to do in and through *our* lives!

I think sometimes we detach Noah from everybody else, like he was just in a field somewhere. But he had to live among these people. He saw them and knew them, just like you know people. The Bible says in the New Testament that he preached to them faithfully. This is an incredible situation. And it shows us that we **ARE** able to live the Christian life in the midst of a perverse and corrupted generation. We can do it. It's not out of our grasp. It's not impossible to accomplish. It can be done because we have a God who walks *WITH* us through this and has the power to accomplish His will in and through our lives. But we must be willing to walk with God.

We can be Noahs in our generation, right where God has placed us. What we need to do is get into his mindset so that we can be walking with God faithfully.

The first practical thing I take note of is the fact that Noah was a devoted family man. He was committed to raising up his children in the faith and serving God in his home. What people knew about God had been handed down generation by generation and he was faithfully handing it down as well. He had made the difficult decision to not give into the world around him when it came to his family and his lifestyle.

But second, Noah was an incredible man of faith. He believed what God had said about Himself and what He was going to do in the future. He believed that the instructions and promises of God were of more value than the pleasures and selfishness of the current world. He determined to seek after God, no matter the fact that it didn't seem profitable to the world around him. No matter that he would've been mocked by his friends and neighbors. He believed and took God at His word and trusted that the future the Lord wanted for him was better than one he could make himself. And so he consecrated his life to the Lord. He chose fellowship with God over anything else.

We have to get into the mindset of Godliness. That's what Noah successfully did in possibly the worst circumstances any believer has ever had to face. And what we sometimes do is try to bring *some* godlessness into our Godliness. *Some* of the world and our natural rebellion against the plan of God into our faith and our behavior. Sinful or selfish things that may seem innocent at first, yet will bear in our lives corruption and wickedness and death. We see it all over the Scriptures. Look at Lot. Look at Samson. Look even at King David or Solomon. Men who loved the Lord, yet were, at some points, willing to be a part of the godlessness of the world, enjoying the fleeting pleasures of rebellion. The results were and are tragic when a Christian tries to live that way. It's a broken double-life.

Godliness is the mindset that sustains us through this world and brings us into fellowship with the Master. A life that is devoted to faith and holiness, not one that is trying to double-date God and the world at the same time. We can't want *some* godlessness in our lives.

Now we're not just to be holy and hide away with our heads in the ground. As we see with Noah, we also have a mission given to us by God as the time of reckoning comes closer and closer. Let's take the rest of the chapter and then make a few comments on it.

Genesis 6.11-21 -The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you;

and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather it to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them.”

God had a plan for the world. He had a provision to save. Then He had a project for Noah.

Now, remember, Noah was a guy like us. This story is so familiar to us, but really think about what it would've been like if it was you in this situation. God comes to you and says, “I love you and I have a day of judgment coming. I want you to be a witness to the people of the earth, warning them, oh, and I need you to accomplish the building of a 450 foot long ship that is waterproof and I need you to gather up, like, 10 or 20 thousand animals and food to feed them for a years time.”

I mean, this is an immense undertaking. We're not sure how long he was in building the ark, but it could've been upwards of 100 years!

And, again, this is an encouragement to me. If Noah was called to live a righteous life for hundreds of years and spend maybe a hundred years building this monstrous boat and preaching the Gospel to the world with absolutely no converts in all those years other than his own wife and sons and their wives, and if he was *able* to do this, then I am able to fulfill the calling that God has placed on my life. As the Spirit directs and works in my life, as He says, “I want you over here to serve in this way,” or, “I want you to reach out to that person and share the Gospel with them,” I know that it is possible to carry out my mission. Look what God can do! God was with Noah and empowered him to fulfill this task. The text says Noah had to bring all the animals into the ark, but a few verses after that assignment, God says, “I will bring them to you. You just have to put them in. I'll set it up, you knock it down.”

Was there an incredible amount of work involved? Absolutely! Immense. But what that speaks to me is that God desires to do an incredible work through my life and your life as well. His desire is that our lives have weight and meaning. He comes to each of His people and says, “Let's do something together! Let's build something together! Let's plow this field together! Let's carry the message of salvation to people! Let's make a difference in time and eternity!” Your life is the ark. This word gopherwood, I understand, is used only once in the Bible. Your life is a specific, unique work that God wants to accomplish. One that serves real purposes and stands as a testimony to others of who God is, what He has done and what is going to happen one day in the future. You are the avenue that God is using to share salvation to this world.

And, on the one hand, we look at this ship, a little more than half the size of the Titanic, being built by one old man and his sons, and it seems like this immense undertaking. Yet, God set it before him, supplied Noah with what he needed, brought in the animals by His power and partnered with him in the work. God didn't leave Noah alone to do this.

We are not alone in this life. And our lives are meant to have purpose. They're meant to be built by God into something magnificent and meaningful.

Along the way, God gave very specific commands to Noah. Not because He is a power hungry control freak, but because those commands had very real benefits to Noah and his family. Things like *how to waterproof this bad boy!* Pretty important when a global flood is coming.

And as we open God's word we find that He has laid before us a wonderful relationship, a wonderful calling, but also specific commands to follow. Those who love the Lord obey His commands. We must be willing to carry out the mission God has given us in the way He's asked us to do it. Not half-hearted, not using worldly methods. Not mostly *godly* with a little *godless*. And as we're carrying out the mission God has placed on each of our lives, because He does desire to use each and every one of His people, we must not grow weary in well doing. Sometimes the things the Lord has for us to do take a long time. But, if we're walking with God then we'll receive the supply and the direction that we need in order to accomplish what it is He's placed before us to do.

The text ends with the remarkable verse:

Genesis 6.22 - Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

We know what happens in chapter 7. The flood did come. The people of earth were judged. For our part, we know that a global judgment is coming again. We're called to testify of the future reckoning that God must place on sin. We're called to preach to the world about the salvation of Christ and the forgiveness of sins to all who are willing to walk with God. Just as it was for Noah, so it is for us a life and death situation. People are facing an eternity apart from Jesus in hell. People are facing destruction and judgment. People are dying all around us, drowning in their sin.

As a Christian, the question I have to ask myself is: **Do I care?**

Think about it this way: What if Noah hadn't obeyed the Lord? I think that and my immediate reaction is, 'Of course he's going to do it...it was the flood. He's Noah!' But this was a regular guy like you and me and the other believers we read about in the Biblical text. Noah had the ability to choose to not obey or partially obey.

What if Noah hadn't obeyed the Lord? What would the consequences have been?

Look at Adam and Eve. God allowed them to disobey. The consequences are unfathomable. Or look at Abraham. He chose to go his own way and fathered a son named Ishmael in contradiction to what God wanted. God allowed it and since then there has been contention between the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac. Can you imagine how many people have died, in one sense, as a result of the disobedience and doubt of Abraham?

I don't say that to scare us or condemn us, but to open our eyes to the fact that our lives here on the earth and incredible worth and impact on the world. And whether we're walking with God or not actually matters. It's a life and death situation. When we're obedient to God and understand that His desire is to do something immense and glorious with our lives, then we will be used by Him to save and to minister and show grace to this world which is suffering.

But if we check out from the fact that a judgment is coming and the people around us are a few breaths away from an eternity in hell, then something is wrong. If we stop caring about living out our Christianity and walking with God in this life, something is wrong. That places us in the Lot category, not the Noah category. If you're a Christian here this morning, your life is serious and it's important. But God has made a covenant with us as His people. He's constructed a relationship that is unlike anything we could ever imagine. It's meant to be full of Jesus and the joy that He brings.

What we need to do is live day by day in that relationship. Walking with God, not hiding from Him. Embracing God, not ignoring Him. Seeing what's going on in the world around us, understanding what is going to happen in the very near future and preparing our lives for it. Watching for the coming of the Lord, preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who are in desperate need of it and not following God or obeying Him *partially*. Can you imagine partial obedience in this situation? Of course not.

Yet the Days of Noah are what we see around us. And we are called to a mindset and a mission so that the people around us can hear that there is hope for them and grace for them.

Maybe you're not a Christian here this morning. You've never surrendered your life to God, believed He is who He says He is and turned from your sin to walk with Him.

If that's you, then you are like one of the other people on the earth in Noah's time, and you are a very short time away from a coming judgment from which you cannot save yourself. But if you call out to God, if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Christians, we have a life to live and a mission to accomplish on this earth.

Your Master is a God of love and grace who wants to do an incredible and unique work in your life.

The mindset we are to have is detailed for us on the pages of Scripture, summarized in Philippians chapter 2:

Philippians 2.5 - Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

And the mission we're called to is to walk with God, to preach His Gospel and to obey the tasks He's partnered with us to accomplish.