

**Sunday October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021: Genesis 6:9-22**  
**The Flood: God's response to evil and the violation of the Earth**

**Prayer**

Loving heavenly Father, as we come to your Word this morning, may we enter into that place where deep calls to deep (Ps 42:7). Give us ears to listen and eyes to see your truth; may we understand and obey as you speak to us today. This we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

**Intro**

This morning we are continuing our series in Genesis and we come to the account of the Flood – one of the best-known Bible stories. The Genesis account of the Flood was written over 3000 years ago following an oral tradition that is much older still. What this means is that it is written for us but not to us.

Let me explain what I mean. Genesis 6 was not written to us but to its original readers. So, in the flood account, the Bible describes a real cataclysmic event but in a way that fits their ancient understanding of the cosmos. Also, it was written using pictures or symbols that they were familiar with. For example, if I talked about a snake or a serpent you would realise that I was really meaning?? – Satan. Something similar happens with the word 'Flood.' It is only found here in Genesis and in Psalm 29:10: "the LORD sits enthroned above the flood." This is a clue that what we are dealing with is something more than an ordinary flood. The original readers would recognise it as a reference back to the 'deep,' the primordial waters that covered the earth in Genesis 1. Throughout the OT 'the waters' carry a threat of a return to chaos and disorder; the undoing of creation and a return to nothingness. God had brought these waters under control, establishing order, but he had not abolished them and there was always the danger that they might return. No wonder they were afraid.

But the flood story is also written for us. It is Holy-Spirit inspired Scripture that can ; teach us about the God we serve, his plans and purposes; and what he expects of us as we live in relationship with him. That is what I want to focus on this morning and I have three broad headings in mind: ruin; rescue and righteousness.

**Recap – God's grief over sin**

But first let's remind ourselves of what Zane was speaking on last week: God's grief at sin.

When God looks down on all he has made, it is no longer 'very good' (Gen 1:31), instead he sees only wickedness creeping in everywhere. How does he react? We see something of the nature of our Creator when we read that he regretted that he had made human beings on earth but also that "it grieved him to his heart." The word used here for grief or pain is the word used in Genesis 3:16 of a woman's pain in childbirth. It is the pain any parent might feel when their child chooses a wrong path that we know will not end well. We might have thought that God's reaction to all that wickedness would be anger, but it is not, it is deep grief. John Goldingay, a well-respected OT scholar points out that God is never said to be angry in Genesis and that anger is not one of God's core emotions in the OT. I have quoted before John

Stott's definition of God's wrath and I think it helps us to understand what is going on.

It is "His steady, unrelenting, unremitting, uncompromising antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations."

God cannot allow evil to flourish. He is grieved but he cannot sit back and do nothing.

### **V11-13 I have labelled Ruin**

Doing nothing in the face of evil is not an option for God. He sees that his beautiful earth is now ruined; devastated. Not so much corrupt as the NIV translates it, but spoilt, violated, damaged. What has caused this?— v11 - the earth is full of violence. We shouldn't be surprised, should we – after all we have traced this progression from Cain through to Lamech as they chose the path of physical violence and brutality and ignored God's ways. Now God sees that violence, abuse and exploitation had spread throughout society.

But we are not just spectators here: violence is very much in evidence in our world today. And not just on our TV screens - if we are honest with ourselves, we see it in ourselves as well. Angry words, angry thoughts, that desire for retaliation that we saw in Lamech; or maybe the teeniest bit of road rage!. We are all guilty and in need of cleansing, forgiveness and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

And there is another dimension to this ruining and spoiling. Creation is also suffering as humans have failed to exercise their role of responsible care for other living creatures. So animals may not be to blame but they are caught up in the dysfunctional behaviour of their human co-inhabitants. We are all part of the community of creation so they will share the same consequences - the Flood will wipe out all living creatures.

I think that in the past we have not realised the extent to which the well-being of the land and its creatures is closely linked to the moral behaviour of humankind. OT thinking was that God had created the world in such a way that deeds (whether good or evil) will have consequences in the natural world. In Amos ((Amos 4:8-9; 5:8; 7:4 9:6), God uses particular natural disasters, including drought, earthquake and flood as his agents in warning and judging his people. Listen to Hosea the prophet.

### **Hosea 4:1-3 (NIV2011)**

<sup>1</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land.

<sup>2</sup> There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

<sup>3</sup> Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away.

Nothing has changed, and we can easily relate it to what is going on today. Our continuing misuse of the environment is already causing more extreme weather events and damaging the planet. A few nights ago I watched a news item about the launch of the new Landsat satellite and I grieved as I saw past and present images showing how much rainforest has been destroyed; how the ice sheets have shrunk; glaciers retreated; and urban areas have swallowed up productive land.

These are present consequences but God warns us of a future judgment. In Revelation 11:18 we read:

“The time has come ... for destroying those who destroy the earth”

When we look more closely at both Genesis 6:13 and Revelation 11:18 we can see the same thing going on. Both the Hebrew and Greek words for destroy can mean to destroy in the sense of causing to perish, and also to ruin in the sense of corrupting or spoiling. So rather than an angry response, God, decision to “destroy the destroyers of the earth” is an example of God’s justice in action: the *jus talionis* or punishment which matches the sin. God is using the Flood to destroy those whose violence and corruption were damaging the earth.

But God is also committed to the continuance of his creation and he has not given up on humanity either. His heart is for us. Some of you may remember the verses in **Hosea 11:8-9)**

<sup>8</sup> “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ... My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused.

<sup>9</sup> I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you.

Or think about the potter in Jeremiah (18:4) But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.”

Here we have a glimmer of hope and the possibility of a new beginning and that is what we see in the flood story. The possibility of rescue.

### **Rescue:**

**In Genesis 14-21** God acts in judgment but it is a judgment deferred. So often in Genesis we have seen God’s mercy and grace towards individuals and in v8 we read: “But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.”.: or . as one commentator puts it: “Grace found Noah.” God chooses an individual through whom others will be saved – his wife and family as well as two of all living creatures. God takes the initiative and tells Noah to build an ark (v14). He gives him detailed instructions how to do this – after all it is unlikely that Noah has done this before. The ark is huge – bigger than any wooden boat ever made; in fact it isn’t a boat – the Hebrew means box or chest – so it is more like a giant wooden shipping container. It is interesting that the only other use of this word is for the basket of bulrushes in which the baby Moses was hidden. Both are places of refuge and safety – God is ensuring the continuity of humanity, and indeed all living creatures. In the ark there are rooms - or the word could be translated as nests ( I like that idea, don’t you) - to accommodate them all. Also, Noah is told to store up food for them all (v21). And “Noah did everything just as God had commanded him’ (v22)

Perhaps it is time now to take a look at Noah, a righteous man.

### **Righteousness: Genesis 6:9, 22**

Noah is a good example of the strong silent type. He doesn’t get to say anything in this story – he just gets on with it! He is actually a pretty amazing guy. He is righteous – that is someone who keeps God’s moral law, even in a violent and unjust

culture. Elsewhere in the OT 'righteous' is applied to someone who not only avoids sin, he does good to his neighbours. In fact for us the nearest equivalent would probably be when we say: "He's a good man." He is also blameless or blemish-free and Psalm 15:1-2 tells us that only the blameless may dwell on God's holy hill – it is the prerequisite for close fellowship with God. Indeed, we are told that Noah "walked with God," just like his great-grandfather Enoch.

Noah was a man of faith: he listened to God and did what God told him to do – even if it seemed pretty ridiculous like building a great ark; even when it must have seemed beyond his capabilities; even when he must have had to put up with the sneers and laughs of his contemporaries. This is what the NT has to say about Noah: "<sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. (Heb 11:7).

But Noah's righteousness that enabled him to draw close to God was not something he earned, it was a gift of grace. And this is a gift that God offers to all of us. Paul writes: "<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast." (Eph 2:8-9)

By God's grace, Noah and his family were given a place of safety and rescued from the Flood and we who, if we are honest, find within ourselves that same tendency to choose for ourselves rather than to go God's way, can by God's grace, be rescued and saved from the judgment that the Bible tell us is surely coming.

Instead of an ark, our place of safety is Christ himself. As Paul tells the jailor in Philippi: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31). Remember our sentence for today: "<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17)

God's good news begins in Genesis. Our God is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Heb 13:8)

## **Conclusions**

So, what can we learn from this ancient story of the Flood? What does it tell us about our God, ourselves and our world, and how then should we live?

We see the pain that God feels when he looks on his spoiled creation and on the violence and evil perpetrated by mankind.

We see that his justice will not allow evil to go unpunished: he puts the breaks on and acts to destroy the destroyers; spoil the spoilers; and ruin the ruiners. For us, we are already reaping the consequences of global warming but there is a final judgment yet to come.

But God is committed to the continuance of his creation, and to humanity and our relationship with him. So, the Flood is a judgement but it is a judgment deferred. Peter tells us that “the Lord is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.” (2 Peter 3:9). The Gospels use the Flood story to warn us about being so caught up in life and everyday affairs that we become complacent about our accountability to God and the reality of the future judgment. (Matt 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27). How are we doing as individuals and as a church to reach out to those who do not yet know Christ?

What does it tell us about ourselves?

I hope the story of the Flood reminds of the grace and mercy of God who has made himself known to each one of us and invited us in to the ark that is Christ.

How then should we live?

Obviously we have in front of us the example of Noah; someone who ignored the ways of those around him and remained righteous and blameless; someone who lived a life of faithful obedience and trusted himself and his future to his God. Often we ask ourselves the question: What is God saying to you; and what are you going to do about it?

“Noah did everything just as God commanded him.” May that be true of us too. Amen.