

In 1841 my first ancestor, a Boatman, John Henry Elliott made footfall here in Nelson, stepping off the Will Watch - the second settler ship to these shores.

He didn't stay long. After his wife, and surviving children arrived here later they packed up and headed north to Auckland where the maritime industry was thriving. The Elliott's were a seafaring family.

That characteristic, has been passed down the generations and remains today.

{Slide 2} Elliott Marine, owned by my second cousin Greg, build some of the finest racing, and touring boats in the world.

Family traits, characteristics, are often enduring, passed down generations by design, or chance. Sometimes they are hardwired, and we couldn't leave them behind if we wanted to. {slide 3}

Today we chart the traits of Noah's three sons, Shem, Japheth and Ham, in the new order that God has established post flood. Noah's sons are important because all the people's of the earth, come from these three family lines which we'll open next week.

As we trace these family lines we'll work through the passage in three sections: {slide 4}

The shameful incident vv.20-23, A curse vv.24-25, A Blessing vv.26-27.

Now that we know where we are going, let's pray and ask God to guide us. {Slide 5}

{Slide 6 } i) *The shameful incident vv.20-23*  
a - *Noah's Folly*

After the flood, Noah, plants a vineyard. The one whose name was a prophecy, that would bring relief from the hard work and toil of scratching out an existence plants vines - which make wine, a good gift of God which brings some relief for Noah.

But Noah overdoes it, and becomes drunk. In his drunkenness he passes out in his tent, in a state of indecency.

Noah hasn't broken any prohibition from God, but he has been foolish. He has allowed his love of drink to dull his senses, cloud his judgement. He's now in a compromising and vulnerable situation. Noah has left himself exposed, quite literally v.21.

The shame that is synonymous with nakedness is something we've seen before. It takes us back to Adam and Eve, and their eyes being opened. This incident will serve as reminder for future generations, perhaps best picked up in {slide 7} Habakuk 2:16.

You will be filled with shame instead of glory.

Now it is your turn! Drink and let your nakedness be exposed!

The cup from the Lord's right hand is coming round to you,  
and disgrace will cover your glory.

Noah's folly is that he has misused something good God has given, and that has lead to shame.

That's a trap for all of us.

Misuse of alcohol speaks for itself. It's so easy to overdo it or we rely on that drink at the end of the day to take the edge off instead of seeking relief in prayer.

Social Media. Wonderful for communication, but the minutes and hours can so easily tick by. Netflix. Entertainment options are amazing. Chance to relax but it can lull us into a binge. We watch Show after show, forsaking engagement with real people. We become idle, distracted, even overwhelmed as we use this portal for connection, in ways that harm us and dull us. Paul warned Titus about idleness in Titus 2.

Family. One of the places we find our greatest joys. We are loved in family units. But Family can become such a precious idea that we put our family group before the needs of others, or we circle our wagons and make it difficult for others to engage in meaningful relationships with us. Jesus rebuked those who put family before anything else in Luke 9.

Finances. Our love of money, or lack of money can cause us to be wrapped up in knots. We can become greedy, or immobilised. Those with plenty are to cultivate generous hearts, those with little are to cultivate trusting hearts.

Sex. For those of us who are married we've been given a beautiful gift of God that is meant to represent the union between Christ and the Church. It's a way to delight in the other, to give to them. Song of Solomon gives a beautiful expression of the richness of this gift from God. It doesn't take much for this to become off-kilter, where my desires and wants set the agenda for sex.

God's good gifts to us are blessings, but they are open to misuse, which can lead to shame.

When we consider how we are called to live as Christians, and look at a list like I've just run through, it can be easy to think that we have to 'be good' and keep out of trouble to please God.

That's not the Christian life, or God's goal for his people. He wants us to know life in all its fullness as we grow in our relationship with him, and delight in him.

We should want to grow in ways that are pleasing to him as we allow the Spirit of God to make us more like Him. We should see a change in our behaviour, not under compulsion or because I've told you to from up here - if that worked we'd all be perfect! And we're not, but we love, and are loved by a Lord who is. A Lord who is committed to us being more like him.

Noah wasn't rejecting God's way - later throughout the Scriptures God would condemn drunkenness, but he was foolish.

*i)Ham's Folly b -*

Now we come to another folly, the folly of Ham. {slide 8}

Early in the passage Ham was introduced as the father of Canaan. Three times that is emphasised. It is from this Canaan that the enemies of Israel in the promised land are descended. In this account of Ham's folly, we are being pointed to the family characteristic shared in the enemies of Israel.

Ham's actions are described by different commentators in different ways.

There are suggestions that his indiscretion was more than seeing his father naked. Some think he may have castrated Noah, or even slept with his mother.

It's hard to reconcile either of those suggestions with the actions of Shem and Japheth in v.23. They are described as covering their fathers nakedness.

If Noah had been castrated, there wouldn't be much they could do to cover his shame.

If Ham slept with their mother it's not the sort of thing you'd expect him to go bragging about to his siblings, likely outcome would be a death sentence! The plain reading of this text makes the most sense.

Ham saw that his father was naked, exposed, and he didn't do what he could to preserve his father's honour. He profoundly dishonoured him by finding his brothers and trying to get them to join in his snickering, and heap shame on him.

It's the opposite of how God will call his people to live as they 'honour their father and mother' in the 5th Commandment. Ham shames his father, and revels in it.

His folly is highlighted by the way his brother's respond, look at the care they take in v.23. they walk backwards, they cover their father, they turn their faces away. They take his nakedness, his honour seriously, and they do everything in their power to avoid shaming him. They preserve his honour.

After his drink wears off, Noah discovers what has happened v.24 which leads to a curse and a blessing, the only words that Noah speaks in the Bible. First he speaks words of condemnation. {slide 9}

#### *ii) A curse vv.24-25*

'Cursed be Canaan!

The lowest of slaves  
will he be to his brothers.'

Ham has caused dishonour and a tear in the family, and he will receive dishonour and be torn from the family as a result. His descendants will journey away from Noah, and his God. {slide 10}

Noah's words raise some questions for us.

Do his words have power to effect or change a future?

Noah is making an appeal to God. The way he speaks isn't a use of authority, or an invocation of witchcraft or sorcery, he is saying "let it be that you are the lowest of slaves" There is no power in his words other than a request, that God will distance them from the one who has shamed them.

In the curse Noah is expressing his faith in the justice of God, that God will judge rightly. God's arm can't be twisted, or forced. There are no special secret words, or ritual actions we can take to compel God to act.

God will only create this distance, and subservience in Ham's family line, if it is His will. He is just.

The other question which pops up is why is Canaan the subject of the curse not Ham?

Noah has seen the family characteristic. The behaviour of Ham is symptomatic of what will follow in his family line. Ham's descendants, the Canaanites won't walk in the way of God, they won't honour their heavenly father any more than Ham honoured his earthly father.

The Canaanites will abandon the way's of God, and instead worship other gods. They will sacrifice their children, and engage in cult prostitution. They will defile themselves. Listen to the warning God gives Israel about them in Leviticus: {slide 11}

3 You must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. 4 You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God. 5 Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the Lord.  
6 "No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the Lord.

The family trait of rejecting God's ways is seen, and there is a consequence. A curse. {slide 12}

### *iii) A Blessing vv.26-27*

Noah also pronounced a blessing. Did you pick up who he blessed? Noah blesses God, he praises the name of the God of Shem v.26. Noah call's God Yahweh, and makes a play on words.

God will make himself a name through Shem's descendants, Yahweh will be known as the 'God of Israel.' Shem means 'the name' Just like Noah would bring hope of relief, so too Shem would bring forth a people who were close to God. In this closeness Shem himself is blessed. Much like the elder son in the parable of the Prodigal, the one who is close to God receives innumerable blessings from that relationship. Israel will be heirs of the blessing that comes from being God's people.

v.27 sees an extension of that blessing to Japheth. From his family line the gentile nations who live in harmony with Israel develop.

Their defining family trait will be that they will assist Shem's family line, they will partner to drive out the Canaanites from the promised land, and one day

they will be welcomed back into the household. It's described to the church in Ephesus {slide}

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. (Eph 3:6)

Here we find the gospel. A future reality, a blessing that will be extended to the descendants of Japheth, the gentile nations. Those who make peace with God, through the blood spilled on the cross by the Lord Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of Sin can dwell in Shem's tent, even as gentiles.

What has Noah shown us in this bizarre family incident? {slide 14}

He has shown us that God blesses the righteous as he makes his name through them, and he curses those who reject his way by sending them out of his presence.

We are people who have received the grace of God, we have many blessings to be thankful for. Let's pray and thank God for them.