

Give Thanks to the Lord, for He is Good!

As Florida continues cleaning up after Hurricane Ian, there are more and more amazing stories of how some people survived. One 77-year-old woman was in her mobile home and it was a good thing that she put on a lifejacket. The water came in so fast and so high that for a while there were only six inches of air between the water and her ceiling. One family climbed onto the roof of their house to avoid the surging water, but had to hold on to edge of the roof for hours to keep from getting blown away by the 155-mph wind. The refrain of all the survivors is that they are thankful to be alive.

Hurricane Ian was certainly horrific, but it is nothing compared to the flood that Noah experienced. He and his family were in the ark for a year and ten days as the entire world was flooded. Here in Genesis 8, we see Noah and his family and the animals coming out of the ark. The first thing Noah did – before he built a house or planted crops for food – was to build an altar and sacrifice some of all the clean animals and birds. It was his way of saying, “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.”

Before we take a closer look at Noah’s thanksgiving worship, I want to emphasize that this worldwide flood is real history. There are many Bible critics – including some in churches which claim to be Christian – who say that the Flood is just Jewish folklore of an exaggerated local flood, as if people talking about Hurricane Ian continued exaggerating things until they said that the whole world was covered with water. First of all, everything in the Bible is true. Also, there is a lot of evidence for a world-wide flood. Here’s just one point: fossils. There are, literally, millions of fossils throughout the world. Fossils are only formed when something is buried very quickly and is compressed by a lot of pressure, like pressure from being under water. If a racoon or whatever dies, it will either be eaten by other animals or slowly decay and disappear. In order for millions of fossils to be formed around the world, there had to be a lot of quick burials with a lot of pressure all over the world. Many fossils are even found at high mountain elevations! Fossils are scientific evidence of a worldwide flood.

The Lord told Noah that he was going to send a flood to drown people because they had become so corrupt. It seems as if Noah and his family were the only believers left. The Lord promised Adam & Eve that he would send a Savior from sin and death, but the world was so corrupt that the promise was in danger. The Lord was going to preserve that promise through Noah.

Those who turned away from the true God, were going to be apart from God forever.

When God resolved to get rid of the wicked unbelievers, he could have done that in lots of ways. He could have told Noah to hide in a cave while COVID killed everyone. Or, he could have sent lightning to zap them all. Or, given all of them a heart attack. You get the idea. Instead, the Lord chose to send a worldwide flood. Not only that, but the Holy Spirit made sure to tell us about the Flood. The Spirit could have simply guided Moses to write that everyone died except Noah and his family. Instead, the Spirit of God gave the riveting details of the Flood in Genesis 6-9. I encourage you to take 10 minutes this week to read the full story. Why did God send the Flood and make sure to share the story with us? I am not going to pretend that I know God’s thoughts. Still, there are a number of things that we can learn by studying the flood. We’ll look at five points this morning.

First, the Flood is a reminder that Judgment Day is coming. In nearly every picture I see about the Flood, especially in children’s books, everything looks sweet and happy. Noah is on the deck along with all sorts of smiling animals including two smiling giraffes as a beautiful rainbow encircles them. I am guessing that as Noah and his family left the ark they were shocked by the destruction they saw. The whole world was changed. Nothing looked familiar. Jesus said (Luke 17:26-27), “**Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.**” The Flood is a reminder that the world as we know it is going to be destroyed. There will come a time when every human being will stand before God and be judged. The Flood is a serious warning to us that Judgment Day is coming.

Second, the Flood is a reminder that even though death came through water, there is also salvation through water. The Apostle Peter referenced the Flood and noted that the water that drowned the wicked unbelievers is the same water that lifted up the ark to save Noah and his family and all the animals. The water of the Flood is reminder of baptism. He said (1 Peter 3:20), “**This water [of the flood] symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge (promise/guarantee) of a clear conscience toward God.**” When the devil nags your conscience and tells you that you are dirty sinner and do not deserve to go to heaven, you can answer, “Yes, I am a sinner. What of it? I am also a baptized child of God. He adopted me into his family of faith and promised to forgive me and take me to heaven.”

Peter also pointed out that there were 8 people saved in the ark. Have you noticed how many sides are on our baptismal font? Eight. Throughout church history, eight has been a symbol of new life. Think of it this way: God created the whole world in one week – seven days. Adam & Eve enjoyed perfection, but they ruined it all when they rebelled against God and sinned. When someone is brought to faith they become – St. Paul tells us – (2 Cor 5:17), “**a new creation.**” Through faith, the perfection that was lost through sin is restored to us. It’s a new start – day 8. During the Flood, every believer in the world was on that ark, all eight of them. And when you were baptized, you joined them. Every time we come into church, the eight-sided font is a reminder that you are a baptized child of God. You are a new creation. You are saved. Alleluia!

Third, the Flood reminds us that the Lord is controlling the seasons. It seems that before the Flood, there were not any seasons. You could grow crops anytime of the year. But now, we are entering fall. Then comes winter. Then spring. Then summer. God promised Noah that he will keep the cycle of the seasons going. Because of God’s promise, farmers can spend their life savings on seeds and bury them all in the ground every spring, knowing that summer is going to come next and the seeds will grow. Many people think that the cycle of the seasons is just what “nature” does, that it just some sort of good luck that the earth just happens to be the right distance from the sun and just happens to be tilted the right way so that seasons keep following one after the other. Christians know that God keeps the seasons cycling so that crops grow and we can survive. But notice the first phrase of God’s promise in verse 27, “**As long as the earth endures.**” The implication is that there will be an end to those days. That brings us to our next point.

Fourthly, the Flood is a reminder that God is graciously giving people time to repent. God told Noah his plans to flood the world 120 years before the Flood began. It seems that it took 120 years for Noah to build the ark. God told Noah to make the ark 450 feet long (a football field and a half long), 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high (the height of our church doubled). It was a colossal building project! How many trees had to be cut down, moved to the building site and shaped? How many scaffolds had to be built in order to get the lumber into place? There is no way that Noah and his three sons could move those huge pieces of lumber by themselves? For 120 years, Noah’s hired help knew that he was preparing for a worldwide flood. For 120 years, word spread throughout the world that Noah was expecting a worldwide flood. For 120 years, Noah warned people that Judgment was coming. God used those 120 years of warning to give people time to turn from their wicked ways and find their salvation in the God who promised to send a Savior from sin and death. It was 120 years of grace from God. How tragic that, instead of listening to Noah, they laughed at him.

Just like God gave people at the time of Noah years of grace to repent, the Lord is giving the world today time to repent. We already have had 2000 years to hear the good news of salvation through Jesus. How much time is left for this world? As I look at our world today with crimes and COVID, crooked politicians and cruel people, crass sexual perversions and selfishness, it seems to me that we are past due for Judgment Day. Peter also referenced the Flood in his second letter. Peter explained (2 Peter 3:9), “**The Lord ... is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**” Each day is a day of grace. Each day is a day to recognize your sinfulness and turn away from it as you rejoice in Jesus as your Savior. Each day is a day to share the saving message of Jesus with others. Each day is a day to give thanks to the Lord for all of your blessings. And that brings us to our final point.

Fifthly, the Flood is a reminder of how God’s people respond to being saved. It was more than obvious to Noah and his family that the Lord had been good to them. They were completely dependent on the Lord for survival and he did not disappoint. Their lives had been spared. God kept his promise and preserved the line of the Savior. The first thing Noah did when he came off of the ark was to build an altar and sacrifice animals on it. When they came off the ark, there were not very many animals to fill the world again. The point is that every animal was precious. Sacrificing some of them was Noah’s way of saying, “Lord, you are more precious to us than even our precious animals. Lord, we thank you for saving us. Lord, we trust that you will provide for us in the future as you have in the past.”

Noah and his family were still sinful. God was referring to them and to us, their descendants, when he said (:21), “**Every inclination of the human heart is evil.**” Like Noah and his family, we are sinful to the core. Sin is the default setting of our hearts. Like Noah and his family, we realize that we are completely dependent on the Lord for survival, not only for life on earth, but also for life in heaven. Just as Noah completely handed over those animals to the Lord, Jesus was completely handed over as the once and for all sacrifice for all sin. Because of Jesus who lived, died and rose for you, you do not need to fear God’s Judgment Day. You will survive Judgment Day just as Noah and his family survived through the Flood. We can show our thanks to God by giving up a precious offering to him to support his kingdom work. We can show our gratitude by the way we live our lives, helping others and sharing God’s love. For the countless blessings we enjoy every day and for the eternal blessings of heaven, we join Noah and believers of all ages as we say, “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.” Alleluia and Amen.