



WEEK SEVEN: Genesis 6:9-22

Sermon Outline:

Key Text(s): Genesis 6:9-22 (but extending to Genesis 9:17)

The flood narrative is the longest section in the prologue and, as such, deserves careful attention. Too often, however, we tend to give attention to things in the narrative that are somewhat secondary to the narrator's purpose. We wonder how Noah was able to build the ark and how he housed all the animals and whether there were dinosaurs on the ark and what the connection is with other ancient flood narratives and whether it was a global or localised flood or whether we can discern textual sources the lie behind the story as we have it now. While all these questions are interesting and of some value, this is not primarily a story about a flood or of surviving a flood or even about Noah. This is a story about God.

One of the clues we have to this primary purpose is God's role throughout the narrative. This is one of the primary differences between the Genesis account and those in the ancient near east. Here God is the only speaker and the primary actor; Noah hardly does anything on his own initiative!

And the flood is less about judgment and more about the unravelling of God's purposes in the created order and in his image-bearers. The flood accelerates this unravelling into a great act of uncreation. It appears that this is the end!

But Noah (as we were told at the end of the last section) found favour in the eyes of the Lord; he was righteous, blameless, and walked faithfully with God (like Enoch did and reminiscent of the Garden) and, because of this the Lord saves him, his family, and pairs of every living thing in an ark of cypress wood.

[Incidentally, the next time the Lord will give instructions to his people it is also to build something related to their salvation: the tabernacle.]

The Lord plays the primary role in the story. This is most evident in the turning point of the story. After seven days of waiting (mentioned twice), forty days of rain, one hundred and fifty days of the waters triumphing (and before we have the exact same pattern in reverse), "God remembered Noah."

Biblically speaking, when the Lord "remembers" it refers to his action on behalf of his people. In the ancient near eastern narratives the gods are absent throughout the flood (in fact, in one, they have fled to heaven due to the fury of the deluge they release!), but God is the reason the flood waters begin to recede.

Once the ground is dry Noah leaves the ark (at the command of the Lord) and offers a sacrifice of some of the clean animals he had brought (which reminds us that this is more than a story of survival, since sacrificing some of the precious survivors seems counter-intuitive!). It is in the context of this sacrifice that we come to the central truth of the story.

“The Lord... said in his heart, “Never again will I curse the ground because of humans even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.” (8:21).

Did you hear that?! The condition that led to the flood in the first place – the wickedness of the human heart – hasn’t changed! The flood waters haven’t washed away humanity’s stubborn desire for autonomy from God’s prohibitions, permission, and vocation. The only change here is God’s intention: he will not respond to human sinfulness with destruction!

This commitment to his purposes is reflected in the repetition of the creation mandate – twin blessings (9:1, 7) with considerations for their dominion over the created order (9:2-6) – and his covenant with all living things.

Covenants formalise relationships, setting the parameters within which the relationship, and its purpose, to flourish. Here, in what is often called an unconditional covenant, God takes full responsibility for his purposes (which, of course, include humanity) and promises to permanently remove total destruction off the table.

And the sign of the covenant, the rainbow, is placed in the sky to remind God of his promise! And, like earlier, when the Lord remembers, it is more than cognitive recall! And it is here that there is an invitation for us. God’s commitment to his purposes invites us to join him like we might join a close friend in an activity that they are passionate about, but which we are only partially committed. It is an invitation to walk faithfully with God as Noah did – even though most of the details about what that looks like is yet to be revealed in the biblical story – to live within his prohibitions, to enjoy his generous permission, and to lean into his purposes in our lives and in his world!

Questions to Ask

NOTE: The questions below are arranged into two sets. The first three are very open, allowing for wide exploration and discussion. The second set are more specifically tied to the sermon. Use one, both, or a mix of the two depending on your group.

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What questions do you have about this text? [If you meet prior to Wednesday, you can access the Big III question portal and ask some of these questions there.]
3. What might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to do in response?
4. List questions you have about Noah, the ark, the animals, and the flood. What do you believe is important about answering these questions? (In other words, “why” are they important?) Without discounting these things, how might our curiosity about them subtly distract us from the main theological point of the story?
5. How does reading this story as primarily about God, his plans and his purposes in the world change the kinds of questions you have about these passages?
6. ‘Noah obeyed the Lord’ is the summary of Noah’s actions. What does this tell us about what it means to be righteous, blameless, and to walk faithfully with God (seeing as the Law hadn’t yet been given)?
7. Recount a time you have noticed or did something only because a friend is passionate about that thing. What are the sorts of things we might see or do because God is committed to it? What should we be on the lookout for in our daily lives that might make us “think of God”?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray that as a community of faith we might, like Noah, take up the invitation to walk more faithfully with God, living within his prohibitions, permission, and vocation.

Readings to Read This Week

The following readings are the next five in the annotated list of readings to discover the big picture of the Bible. You can find the annotated part in the Life Group Resources page on our website.

- Nehemiah 8:1-12
- Psalm 2
- 1 Chronicles 11:1-9
- Psalm 73
- Luke 3:21-38

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

One of our strategic priorities is Community Engagement. This has a number of broad focuses, but one of them is evangelism. This series in Genesis is a broad introduction to the story that leads to Jesus. Is there someone in your life who you might invite to listen to these sermons, attend a service with you, or who might even join your Life Group?

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. September is the beginning of our focus on the work and ministry of Hopefield. We also seek to raise \$35,000 to fund a two-day a week trauma counsellor (focused on DV). You might want to pray for the work of Hopefield as a focus over the month of September.