



WEEK SIX: Genesis 4:17-6:8

Sermon Outline:

Our text for this week provides a bridge from Cain to Noah; from the first generation outside of Eden to the eve of the flood. The primary mechanism to two genealogical records. The first is that of Cain. The narrator lists father and son until he gets to Lamech who is the seventh generation from Adam. Here we are given insight into the amplifying nature of evil in the world. We also discern another pattern. Lamech's life is marked by disordered sexuality (polygyny) and (escalating) violence. We have already encountered this in first two sins whose outcomes included disordered sexuality and in the violence of Cain. These two sins frequently appear together in Scripture (and will again in the prologue).

At this point the narrator returns to Adam and Eve, with whom the section began in 2:4, to record the birth of Seth which functions a bit like a hinge in the narrative. The next section – indicated by the title “This is the account of...” – opens with Seth's birth which introduces the second genealogy. (This is a pattern we find elsewhere in Genesis; two genealogies with the second experiencing the particular blessing of God.) Importantly, it opens with a reminder of the creation of humanity in the image of God which reminds us of the purpose/vocation the Lord had prepared for human beings: to reflect his character in the world and to further his agenda.

The narrator lists father and son (adding the ages at which they fathered their eldest son and that at which they died) from Adam to Enoch who is the seventh generation. At this point the narrator pauses to record a brief story about Enoch. The contrast with Lamech could not be starker. Enoch, we are told, walked faithfully with God (recalling the intimacy and closeness of the garden) and then was no more, for God took him away.

The narrator isn't done. Enoch's son, Methuselah, becomes the father of a second Lamech who becomes the father of Noah whose birth is marked – for the third time – by a reflection. “He will comfort us in the labour and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed.” (5:29). We would be forgiven if we wonder if this one is the fulfillment of the promise of God in 3:15!

The genealogical record ends with the record that Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth when he was 500 years old. There is just a hint – at his great age – that infertility was part of his story (possibly foreshadowing a theme that plays a critical part in the story of Genesis 12-50).

The final part of this section is, like Seth's birth, a narrative hinge. We are introduced to the reason for the flood here and in the first part of the next section. It begins with one of the strangest texts in Scripture: “the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and they married any of them they chose.” (6:2) The essence of this account, regardless of who the sons of God are, is another act of presumption. The words used to describe their action – saw, beautiful, took – are the same that is used in Genesis 3 to describe Eve's actions – she saw that the fruit was good/beautiful and took it. The serpent's primary argument was that God's prohibition wasn't for their good but was withholding good from them – they would be like God. The Lord affirms that this has indeed happened and restricts them from access to the tree of life. Much the same occurs here – the Lord's life-giving

Spirit will remain for 120 years, but no longer for they are mortal. This is also an example of disordered sexuality (and violence is described in the second part of the hinge).

There is a second description of the state of the world, and it is grim. The Lord saw (and remember, what he saw in the creation was good – fit for purpose) that what had multiplied was evil on the earth and that every inclination (a term that implies activity, not just thought) of the human heart was only evil all the time. Remember how this section opened – a reflection on the creation of humanity in the image of God. Here the image is almost utterly defaced and the purpose abandoned.

This results in the judgment to wipe them off the earth. It is important, however, to note that God is only fast-tracking what is already happening. Human presumption – the self-determination and moral autonomy – is unravelling the very purpose of creation. God brings that logical conclusion forward.

What is striking is the motivation of this judgment (and there is a hint of grace – Noah finds favour in God's eyes). There is actually a play on words with Noah's birth statement that is hard to duplicate in English, but it draws these two characters together. The key phrase is "his heart was deeply troubled". This Hebrew term is used elsewhere to describe the grief someone feels when someone they love has been harmed (see 1 Samuel 20:34; 2 Samuel 19:2). And who has been harmed here? Humanity. As they violate the Lord's good prohibitions, believing that the good life is found on the other side rather than inside them, as they pervert the Lord's wide permission, pretending it is absolute freedom to do anything and everything, and neglect his vocation, defacing the image and pursuing their own agenda, they are harmed. And the Lord is deeply troubled and grieved by this.

We too, should be troubled by the harm that has been done to the crown jewel of God's creation. It is one of the most remarkable truths in Scripture that the Lord has tied our star to his wagon – his purposes can only, in his inscrutable wisdom, be accomplished with us and so, our evil, undermines them and harms us!

The actions of God so far in the story indicate his love for his created order and provide us with hope for the future – in the context of the story, hope in the face of judgment. In the context of Scripture, hope in Jesus!

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. Lamech's family represents both the depravity of humanity and the ongoing blessing of God (the cultural impact of their children was immense). How does the unfolding narrative of Genesis provide context for this paradox?
5. A number of themes are introduced in this section that prepare us for the action that begins in Genesis 12 – the twin sins of disordered sexuality and violence, infertility, double genealogies, and God's compassion and grace. Where else have you seen these themes played out in Scripture?
6. How do we reconcile the twin truths that God is unchanging – the same yesterday, today, and forever – and that he regretted making human beings on the earth?
7. We often picture God as filled with wrath at human sin. While his wrath is not incompatible with his grace, it is not the emphasis here. How do these opening chapters of Genesis challenge our common perceptions?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray that as a community of faith we might, like Enoch, 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.

- 1 Kings 12:25-33
- 1 Kings 18:16-39
- 2 Kings 17:7-23
- Jeremiah 31:31-33
- Ezra 1:1-11

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.