

**Prayer of the Day:**

Grant, O Merciful Lord, to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Verse of the Day:**

Alleluia! Give praise to the Lord, proclaim His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Alleluia! (Psalm 105:1)

**Text: Genesis 8:15-22**

<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup> “Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. <sup>17</sup> Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it.” <sup>18</sup> So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. <sup>19</sup> All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on the earth—came out of the ark, one kind after another. <sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. <sup>21</sup> The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. <sup>22</sup> “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.” (NIV84)

**Sermon Text:**

Noah and his ark. What comes to mind? I had a relatively peaceful envisionment in my mind as a child of the entire event. I honestly wonder why I did. Maybe it was all the cartoon character animals with smiles on their faces that I remember seeing as Noah loaded the boat and set sail as the waters miraculously rose upon the earth between scene changes. The more I contemplate this section of scripture though, the more I begin to wonder how peaceful any of it really was.

Roll back the history for a moment. Noah lives in a day and age that can only be described as completely wicked and depraved. Genesis 6:5-6 tell us, “*The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*” <sup>6</sup> *The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*” It cannot have been easy for a follower of God to live in such a time as this. Especially since we can safely assume that Noah and his immediate family were among the few believers left, if not the only believers left, as the flood waters began to rise on a world that verse 11 tells us was “*full of violence*”.

Add to that then that the task given to Noah is nothing short of monumental. A watertight vessel that measured 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high encapsulating three decks for the housing of 2 of every unclean animal and 7 of every clean animal with enough food for all on board to be sustained for one year. He does all this work in the time mentioned above, so no doubt with the unending scoffing and derision of that wicked and depraved people, full of hatred and violence. It couldn’t have been easy for these reasons alone.

Now add to it that he knows. He knows what all of this building and activity is for. He knows what is coming. He knows that even though this is all a massive preaching of repentance to an unbelieving world, it will largely go unheeded or God would have him build a bigger rescue vessel. And so when the waters rise and the rain begins to fall there will be a commotion and a clamoring outside of the ark that will likely haunt Noah and his family in the year’s worth of nights they spend on the floating zoo God has designed for them as they float alone, absolutely alone in a vast and expansive world laid waste by water.

It honestly kinda makes my own selfish sniveling about the state of our current world seem pretty petty. Gas prices and inflation are kinda hard to compare to a world-changing, even erasing, flood but then most of what I deal with in 2022 really amounts to very little in face of such comparison. Even the emotional struggle of my heart and soul which often leaves me feeling alone and out of control seems tiny in comparison to actually being alone and at the mercy of the wind and the waves of Noah’s day. But then they are still

troubles nonetheless and they still bear real psychological repercussions in my life whether I want them to or not. How did Noah do it?

It always helps when God speaks to you. In what I can only imagine was an absolutely nightmarish situation, Noah and his family held firmly to the God who had rescued them from the wickedness and the water which had surrounded them. No doubt they had needed to remind each other of His love and mercy throughout. No doubt they had struggled in the turmoil and the labors involved. No doubt there may have even been times when they wondered if they would ever leave the ship, at least alive.

In our lesson, God says it's time. It's time to leave the ark and step out on the firm ground of the Mountains of Ararat. And as they leave, what does Noah do? He offers up a sacrifice of praise. He takes some of those clean animals, the ones brought in sevens, which are now more precious than gold or diamonds as life-sustaining, life-regenerating critters and he offers them up to the God who has sustained them throughout this terrible ordeal. He takes what they very well may need to sustain them in the future and burns it up in the knowledge and the trust that a God who has saved them from all of this, will certainly be with them and protect them into the future as they rebuild in this fallen world around them. Yes, the trial has only strengthened Noah's faith, even though it probably often tried it to very limits. It has only cemented his love and resolve, his thanks and praise for the God who has loved him and his family, protected them in a wicked and depraved generation, blessed them not only with earthly salvation now and the promise that God will never do this again but the eternal promise that they carry, the offspring of Eve, now of Noah, who will one day crush the serpent's head.

So what is this lesson good for? That's the question we ultimately ask whenever we prepare to step up here and dare to say, "Thus saith the Lord." We are not now preparing to empty the boat onto dry land and start all over again are we? Well, certainly not as in Noah's day to be sure. God has not boomed from the sky, or however He did it with Noah, and told us that He plans on destroying it all in a world-altering flood. But here we are gathered together in the Ark of the church, seeking respite from our own heartaches and troubles. Wondering when the storms of life will pass, when the wickedness of our world will be dealt with. We gather because we need the reminder in the struggle against sin (yeah, that's what causes all that whether my own or as I get caught up the consequences of a world groaning underneath the weight of it). We need to hear again of a God who will not destroy us all, but who has saved us. We need to hear about our Savior Jesus and that cross of His which brought the full weight of the sin of the world to bear upon Him as He hung upon it, affixed by a few nails, smeared with blood and agony. We need to hear of the Holy Spirit, who has connected us to it all, even as He works through this Word, through our Baptisms, through His holy Supper. Repeatedly giving through them all the forgiveness I need for the doubts, the fears, the sin I struggle with more than Noah and because of far less. Forgiveness that brings with it strength to hold on to God's promises in the storms of life knowing that regardless of the outcome of the worldly struggles, forgiveness brings with it the promise that I will never be destroyed not even by death for salvation, an eternal home in heaven, belongs to me. Made certain by the same God who secured it, not on Ararat's summit, but on Calvary's.

And though we may not always think of it as such. I'm willing to bet that among God's people, that inspires a sacrifice of praise. No, you probably don't burn up a few clean animals in thanks to God. But then you probably do take that which is more precious than Gold, even diamonds and offer it to God. We've been talking a lot about it lately in sermons. Perhaps its dollars and cents dropped into the plate, offered back to the God who gave it. Maybe it's a bit of time spent at church working on various projects or programs or at home, with family or friends discussing the truths learned here and applying them to your lives out there. Yes, our talents used and lived for God speak volumes to the world around us. Sometimes even as loudly as a giant ark built for a flood everyone thought would never come, but offered up nonetheless in love, in thanks, in gratitude for all the love our God has shone, for the promise that He has given: Sin, Satan, Death itself shall never overcome us.

Noah and His ark, what all comes to mind: a flood, a rainbow, a promise? What about a Sacrifice of Praise, a life lived underneath the shadow of the cross, overcoming the struggles of this life by God's grace and to God's glory? May it be so for us all. Amen!