

June 9, 2013  
Noah, the Righteous One  
Genesis 6:5-22

To get us started, I have to share this cartoon...

Ok, a gorilla couple is about to enter the ark and the wife says to her gorilla husband, "A 40 day cruise? Just the two of us w/o the kids? Oh, Harold, this'll be the best vacation ever! I hope it doesn't rain!"

And because many of us haven't read the story lately I have a Noah's ark quiz (some from our passage, some from later on in the story)

- 1) T/F – Noah was the only righteous person on the earth.
- 2) T/F – People were so wicked in Noah's day that God wanted to wipe them out.
- 3) God told Noah to bring two of every animal (male and female) into the ark (true, but in the next ch. It says 7 of every clean animal...)
- 4) T/F – Noah's neighbors ridiculed him when he started building the ark w/ no sign of rain.
- 5) We know it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, but does anyone know how long Noah and his family lived on the ark? (At least 370 days!, and water flooded the earth 150)
- 6) What did God say would be the sign of God's promise, that God would never flood the earth again? (Rainbow)

We all agree the story is fascinating. What differs among us is perhaps concerns our convictions about what it all means. What is the significance of the story?"

Is it a children's story about animals and rainbows and God's love (and it gives us a theme by which to decorate our nurseries and kids' rooms)? (I did that!)

Or is it definitely NOT for children. Is it a hell, fire and brimstone story where God is so angry about our sin that he destroys all of us in one big fit of rage?

Neither of these versions quite captures the essence of the story.

As we look at the story today I'd like to focus on the two main characters. (Who are they?- Noah and GOD) Interesting, in this story we learn much more about God's character than Noah's.

As we look at these two characters I'd like to ask these questions. 1<sup>st</sup>, When we look at Noah's life, **what do we learn about what it means to be faithful to God against all odds? And when we read God's actions, what do we learn about our God who is faithful TO US against all odds?**

We will begin with Noah, and I have a WONDERFUL resource at my disposal from Joan Lindsay. When Christian Ed folks asked us to write down our favorite bible story, Joan wrote that hers was Noah and the ark and she gave a simple outline of his faith. I will use her outline as the basis for what we say about Noah.

**1<sup>st</sup> thing we learn about Noah is: NOAH LISTENED TO GOD.**

You might think this was easy-- after all many people in the OT heard God's voice. But we

must remember what God told Noah to do.

Can you imagine Noah... "Yes Lord? . Build what...? But what about... How am I supposed to..." Wouldn't it be easy for him to conclude, Nah, I'm sure God didn't mean that. That couldn't have been God talking to me!"

I believe Noah's ability to listen to God came from the aspects of his character described in our passage. Vs. 9 says Noah was **a righteous man** (obeyed the law, did what was right and shone evil) **blameless** (less common than righteous- can mean perfect!) and he walked with God...(Abraham, Isaac and godly Kings walked BEFORE God) But Noah walked WITH God, which expresses a tender closeness with the Father.

'So Noah knew God's voice. He had heard it before. This time, though, it must've sounded different. This time Noah listened to a grief-stricken God. A God who was sad he created humans like him. NOAH LISTENED TO GOD. (I'm sure this time like never before!)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Joan wrote, NOAH HAD COMPLETE FAITH IN GOD and acted on this faith by building the ark to God's specifications-- even when there was no sign of rain.**

Listening to God is one thing, having faith in that God is another. But acting upon it that faith even when everything you see, hear and experience goes against it, THAT IS FAITH.

(Read Hebrews 11:7 says, By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.

There was no sign of rain, folks! And there Noah was, building this 5 story high, 1 ½ football field-long ark in his back yard. Which leads to what Joan mentioned next in her outline.

**3rd- Noah withstood opposition and ridicule without losing his faith.**

I mentioned earlier that Joan and I and everyone I asked thought for sure the ridicule of neighbors was included in the Genesis account. But there is no record of that ANYWHERE. (Maybe it was from a monologue from Bill Cosby or Bob Newhart, Joan said!) The fact is, all of us hear that in the story even if we didn't read it there.

Because, Noah was THE ONLY RIGHTEOUS MAN ON THE EARTH. He was alone in his convictions. He was alone in listening to God. He was one person against the world. HAVE YOU EVER FELT THAT WAY IN YOUR FAITH?

**What does it mean to be faithful to God when you feel alone in your convictions? When you're the only one who defends an accused co-worker. Or you're the only one who dares confront a friend about her addiction. Or you feel like you're the only one who sees the need for change in your home or your work OR YOUR CHURCH?**

**The other question Noah's faith makes us ask of our own is, "How are we at embracing a Noah's ark sized task God has called us into? I don't believe God has asked any of us to build an ark, but sometimes the task ahead might feel that way.**

I spent the night with Bonnie Olson, who has not been able to walk for a year and has probably another ahead... I spent time with the PNC who are a bit overwhelmed at the weightiness of their task. God has called some of us to be peacemakers in very tense situations, parents, grandparents and aunts and uncles to kids who are drifting away from us. Some of us might feel like we've been in that ark for a long time and the water doesn't seem to be receding one bit!

Bonnie said, how grateful she is for the signs God gives. For Noah it was the dove that returned after the storm with an olive branch declaring- there's land! It's going to be ok! For Bonnie her sign was when the Dr. said- it's getting better, you are healing, and next month you'll get a walking cast. We all need those signs.

But how do we do it? God calls us to be WALKERS WITH GOD. (whether you can walk or not) **To have faith against all odds because God walks w/ us AND IS FAITHFUL.**

There is more we could say about Noah, but curiously enough, Noah is mentioned only briefly and sporadically throughout the flood account. The voice we hear throughout the story IS GOD'S.

Most scholars agree that Moses is the likely author of Genesis and the first five books of the Bible. We know Moses talked to God, walked before God, and in this passage it kind of catches us off guard how Moses describes God in anthropomorphic, HUMAN terms.

FOR EXAMPLE: Listen to these passages about God in Ch. 6-9

--We read that **THE LORD SAW** that the wickedness of man was great

--His **HEART WAS FILLED WITH PAIN** (So God has a heart. And it can be filled w/ pain!- wow, even God? (God?--Pain??) (NRV- It grieved him to his heart)

--The Lord **WAS SORRY** he had made man. (The Lord was sorry for something he had done?)

--God **REMEMBERED** Noah (and you wonder, does that mean God has the capacity to forget?)

--V. 8:21 "The Lord **SMELLED** the pleasing aroma of Noah's sacrifice and **SAID IN HIS HEART**, Never again will I curse the ground because of mankind."

One could think these descriptions portray a weak God. All those emotions, we think, how can God be perfect and also have such intense emotions? And so some have thought, those descriptions show us more about Moses than they do about God.

But what if... **WHAT IF** the way God is described here serves to show us that God **REALLY CARES ABOUT THE WORLD?!**

That God **REALLY CARES ABOUT HIS CREATION**,  
About You and Me and our relationship to the Lord.

That **GOD** had a plan for the world to know God and Follow and obey, and it grieves his heart. It pains him when we fall away from him because **GOD** just loves us **SO MUCH**.

As I read the newspaper this weekend, and I heard about people being blown up by suicide bombers and a drive by shooter in Los Angeles, more little children abducted and abused. Don't you read that and go, **WHY?** Lord God, how do you put up with such crazyness?

And then I read Genesis 6 and I see God's reaction. The image I have is of God (and this is completely my human anthropomorphic view) he says **HOLD ME BACK! HOLD ME BACK**, I am **THIS CLOSE** to wiping out all of creation **ALL OVER AGAIN!**

And who's going to stop him? Just who can hold God back? Angels? Humans? (um, certainly not)

(pause)No.... It has to be God's own arms that holds God back..

Which brings us to that rainbow. That sign? Who was the sign for, do you remember? We think it's a sign for us, to remind us of God's covenant. And yes, it is that, but listen to what God says.

Genesis 9:12:17

THAT RAINBOW IS WHAT HOLDS GOD BACK. (not the rainbow, but the COVENANT God has established!)

The covenant established w/ Noah and all of creation is God's message to us, "NEVER AGAIN. I won't do that EVER AGAIN."

Theologians call the flood God's great, big, cosmic RESET BUTTON. It's God saying, wait! Stop! Rewind!- what happened- I created you all good and you're about to destroy yourselves! Perhaps if God never intervened, that would've happened! The people would've destroyed each other w/ all the animals w/ them, and yet because God intervened, we have a faithful remnant to lead in a different way to Christ who is THE WAY.

Are we done, then? Did the world go on to exist happily forever after?  
No, just looked at the end of ch. 9.

GOD's ANSWER to sin, pain, death and separation from him ULTIMATELY lies UP THERE- the cross.

Jesus. Grace, forgiveness.

Talk about a reset button! And it's a button we have to push (and God pushes for us) DAY AFTER DAY AFTER DAY

The odds were against Noah. The Odds were against US, as we acknowledge the grip of sin on our own lives and upon the whole world. God is holy, and we are not. And the odds are against us

But the Good news is, God doesn't leave us there. He has given us a "cosmic reset button" through Christ who saves us. Christ died on the cross for us, and has given us new life. As the apostle Paul says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."