

“A Kind of Easter . . . Early On”  
 Sermon for 31 March 2019  
 Texts: Genesis 6:9-22

There is a great deal more to the Noah saga than we will be able to cover in one sermon. Noah was born approximately in 5,500 BC—mid-sixth millennium BC. The Flood is dated around 5,000 BC.<sup>1</sup> Noah lived for 950 years. He became a father at age 500 and at age 600, having completed the ark and with his three sons all grown and married, the Flood took place. Because he took 120 years to build the ark, he began construction at the age of 480. We are going to chronicle the Flood from February of Noah’s 600th year to February of his 601st year—the whole business encompassed a little more than a year.

God announces the Flood in Gen. 7:4. That Sunday, the tenth of February, the Sunday announcements were a little different—lots of folks were missing, or not paying attention! Noah, who had been prophesying the Flood for years, shared that the rains would begin in seven days. The next Sunday, Noah and his family, having brought all the animals on board and laid up all their provision, entered the ark. *Imagine a whole family dedicated to the preservation of life.* God shut the door behind them. There followed forty days and forty nights of torrential rain, until the twentieth of March (about this time of year!)—the fountains of the great deep burst open and the windows of heaven also. I wonder if they built a system of cisterns to catch drinking water for all the passengers?

The flood was catastrophic; and the waters would prevail for 150 days until all flesh, that was not secured in the ark, perished by drowning. We have no reason to suppose that the weather was anything but tempestuous and the waters churning black for weeks on end. For at least forty days there was lots of wind and no sunshine. All SAD sufferers would either be greatly afflicted, or dead. On Friday, July 17 of the same year, the ark ran aground on the mountains of Ararat. It would take three months for the mountains to re-emerge and the ark remained where it landed. Because the mountains were now in view, a raven was sent forth on an October Sunday, the 600th year. 40 days thereafter the mountains became visible. It didn’t return to the ark apparently. The next Sunday a dove was sent forth but it returned to the ark. The following Sunday the dove was sent out again, its second flight and it returned this time with an olive leaf! And the Sunday after that the dove was released but it did not return. That was on December 1st, in Noah’s 600th year. On Wednesday, the 17th of that month, the second 150 day period ended. The waters were fully abated.

On the following 1st of January in Noah’s 601st year, Noah removed the covering from the ark. However, it was a further two months before Noah and company would leave the ark—on the 27th of February—at the express direction of the Lord. Remember there was little food, and less care throughout the earth. All the living creatures were then released from the ark and they left spreading out, but organized **into families** (Gen. 8:19) It is hard to know how soon after disembarking, Noah was able to set up an altar—but the burnt offerings apparently were massive (**some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird**, v. 20) This process might have taken weeks to complete so much thanks and praise to express. Consequently the first activity of the post-flood time period was one of

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<sup>1</sup> By other reckoning the Flood occurs 1,656 after creation although both dates are highly contested. In the prior timeline, Noah would have been born in 4,344 BC dying in 3,394 BC.

worship, with the result that God, being pleased, re-established his covenant with Noah and his descendants. 9:1 details that divine blessing and repeats the mandate to **Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth twice!** (v.1 and again v.7) God promotes life.

Now, with the chronicle of the Flood behind us, let's address the main focus of this message: that the Flood was **a prototype of Easter** . . . only very early on in human history. There are similarities under four headings: First, we have the solitude of the saint; second, we have the universal apostasy, or general rebellion of mankind; third, we have the sternness<sup>2</sup> of divine judgment and fourth, we have the exact obedience required of us. There is a build up to judgment strung through all four similarities.. **Noah's story resembles Easter because there is a righteous man appointed to secure deliverance through divine judgment.** Noah was an early redeemer of the human race. Noah was also a type of the Christ, the model of an *international* judge and the predecessor of Moses, who served as a *national* redeemer. Without Noah's obedience, we would never have survived the Flood as a race—not to mention the rest of the earth's living creatures! We should also note that the ark, a physical entity, was God's appointed means in the deliverance of Noah just as the cross, a physical device for execution, is the means in the later, greater deliverance brought about later by our Lord Jesus Christ. *At Easter, in real time, Jesus would deliver all the repentant sinners of the world!* Of course, there is an *incomparable* difference between the two deliverances: the first delivered us from physical death to continued existence on the earth. However, the second deliverance, our salvation is exceedingly better, a deliverance from spiritual death to everlasting life. This "life" is obtained through repentance and faith in Christ.

Perhaps the most shocking thing about the first judgment is the appalling lack of repentance—none of the millions that perished in the flood repented, that entire generation went down in divine wrath! They rejected the offer of deliverance almost to the man, mocked the preacher and scoffed at his saving work—the very idea of judgment was repugnant to that wicked generation. *They didn't even believe in rain!* Forty days and nights of rain might have changed, dampened their unbelief but then it was too late! Their sin and their unbelief brought death and destruction—not repentance and salvation.

Solitude. In the build up to judgment in Noah's time, we are struck by the solitary condition of Noah. God is as kind and generous in his surmise of Noah as he is damning of the wicked for moral corruption and violence. Noah was like Jesus in standing out on the crowd—Noah as faithful *and counted righteous*, Jesus as faithful, holy, righteous and sinless all together. Noah was not sinless, but he was judged to be righteous. He discharged all the obligations of the Law relatively well, humanly speaking—Jesus did them all perfectly! But Noah's less than perfect obedience earned him the ungrudging commendation of God. Why? Because **he walked with God!**

Noah was, I might say, a beautiful man. I am speaking to his moral character, not to his physical appearance. I have little idea what he looked like—no body cams in those days!—but I do know that he succeeded at being true, pure and really, fundamentally *human*. Corruption had not distorted him, he kept his integrity in the ***Faith brings that out in a man, in each of us*** even in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation. (Proverbs

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<sup>2</sup> Storm, watery chaos and death with Noah . . . earthquake, darkness and panic expressed the severity, or sternness of divine displeasure around the death of Jesus.

25:26: Holman Christian Standard Bible supplies a contrast to Noah. **A righteous person who yields to the wicked is like a muddied spring or a polluted well.**) Goodness shines in the midst of badness, or darkness. Be encouraged that this much can be done! There was a wholesomeness to Noah, a moral symmetry, graceful, with spiritual proportions. When we see that in another person, and we do, that is what we can call beautiful. Noah demonstrates that it is possible, yea, *necessary* to practice **solitary goodness** in this life. It's different. Some say odd. But God, *commending* our potential—seeing in germ what we can attain in full bloom—commends us to each other and Noah<sup>3</sup> to us as “perfect.” Not absolutely, and not as we see perfection in Jesus, the Christ.

**Walking with God**, maintaining communion with God in continual congeniality, or habitual access to God effectually keeps sin at bay. **Walking with God** is like knowing where to find pure water in a POW swamp. It is found in the coconut where it is filtered, free of filth . . . pure, safe and life enhancing. One medical doctor saved the lives of dehydrated prisoners that way by remembering where to find pure water and gave to them intravenously. A close walk with God is antiseptic, it doesn't allow sin to break in and work its death and destruction by killing the sin. Here's what the Christian knows for sure. Christ is the fountain of all life, and the foundation of all righteousness—Noah proves “just” and “perfect” **by spiritual assimilation**<sup>4</sup>. And that is because he is immersed in God, absorbed in God's presence, he is figuratively in the Holy of Holies by virtue of his **walk with God**. Remember that walking with God could save your life.

This walk with God begins with faith. It is a matter of trust in fact . . . and this walk continues in purity. Purity is secured by continued separation from sin. Now we know this by contrast. Noah is surrounded by universal apostasy—by moral corruption and by violence. The motivation of man's heart was continually evil. Wickedness prevailed. God saw this. He took in the whole mad riot of pollution and violence *and he was totally displeased*. He determined to bring an end to the wicked carnival of lust and blood.

Universal rebellion: our second similarity. From Noah we learn that even though everyone else around us may be corrupt, widespread corruption is no license for us to cave and become corrupt ourselves. Rather, a more *determined* and rigorous abstinence from sinful deeds and the works of darkness is expected of each believer. If we take our eyes off the torrent of godlessness around us, if we let others prove traitors to God, usurpers of divine authority, murderers and thieves, and hold back ourselves, we shall receive our reward in due season. Solitary goodness is possible and admirable. It is hard, but doable; rare, but real; however, everyone has an equal shot at living above reproach.

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<sup>3</sup> Did I mention that his name means “rest?” Lamech uttered this blessing over his son Noah: **Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work, from the painful toil of our hands.** (Gen. 5:29) A huge blessing, but Noah's more spiritual work was to deliver the righteous *from out of among the wicked*.

<sup>4</sup> Here's an analogy from Scripture. Remember the anointing at Bethany when a flask of pure nard is poured over Jesus—anointing him for his burial. Everyone who was present left that house thoroughly scented with nard. It carried the fragrance of table fellowship into Jerusalem because it can linger for days—especially in one's clothing. We can track that through our olfactory sense; others can smell Christ in us, as well as on us, permeating our very selves! Much as one experiences that tasty morsel of a fine dessert . . . a flavor that lingers in the mouth, and on our lips. Remarkable.

The opportunity to sin, or to not sin is very democratic. *Anyone can sin! And everyone knows they shouldn't!* Integrity is always there to lose, and temptation is there to be refused. It may be easier to stoop lower, but rising higher, choosing not to sin every time, is the only truly ennobling course of action, our only “perfect” obedience. Noah took that higher course and saved himself and his family from out that wicked generation—and even us from extinction..

The sternness of divine rebuke<sup>5</sup>. Sin transforms men into wild beasts, worse than ferocious tigers. And that was the state of the world! Those who do such things tend to think they are not observed by God; that God has forgotten them. However, he has not. He awaits the fullness of time, for sin to reach the brim, and then he brings judgment. **I have determined to make an end to all flesh, for the world is filled with violence through them. Behold I will destroy them with the earth.** (6:13) In Jesus' day John the Baptist came preaching:

Luke 3:7 **Then John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance.**

The same rebellion, the same need for repentance. Are we improved from that?

Then, God declares that, from those I save out of the Flood, I will restart the whole business. This is great news for Noah and his family, but a disaster for everyone else. The catastrophe is just because God is just but it is hard to imagine how Noah and his family coped with the vast stillness, the emptiness of the world once God had washed it clean. Swift end, terrible silence.

The exactitude of our obedience: follows the stern rebuke, the general rebellion and the solitary condition of the righteous. **So corruption is destruction and sin is death and every sinner is a suicide.** Sinners who do not repent rain justice down upon themselves and so die in their sin. They will be resurrected at the Last Judgment. But one hardly expects they will fare better in the Last Judgment than they did in the Flood. Here are the words used to describe the obedience of which I speak: cheerful, swift, exact and complete. Obedience lacking in any one of these categories will not do. If our obedience is not cheerful it must be insincere. *Let your actions follow your devotions in all sincerity!* Swift obedience—indolence, laziness and sloth display a degree of rebellion, a level of willfulness indistinguishable from rebellion. Nothing declares spiritual defiance more subtly than carelessness, or, let's face it, procrastination. Never mind, that God sees the heart and that a heartfelt, swift obedience is excellent. Exact means to the point, to every detail—without revision, or improvisation. In this obedience appears to differ from jazz! And finally, complete, there is the dotting of every “i” and the crossing of every “t” **Noah did everything that God commanded him.** (v.22) Everything covered the construction of the ark, the gathering of living creatures, the provisioning of the ark and being on time for departure!

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<sup>5</sup> We don't need to be reminded that bad men do shameful things any more than we need to recall that bad men are cruel men also. *Selfishness soon devolves to fury.* Those caught up in lust forcibly seize what they desire and ignore the rights of others.

Jesus' life and, in particular, his behavior surrounding his arrest, trial and execution, was characterized by cheerful, swift, exact and complete. God accomplished Easter through His Son, the One who came to do his Father's will. Those who know that eternal life is their inheritance will hear these words and rejoice. They will renounce themselves, pick up their cross and follow their Master. That is **walking with Christ**. *Disciples are those who do just that: listen to Christ's commandments and cheerfully, quickly, exactly and completely do as he says.* So we live by faith, walk by grace and succeed through the Holy Spirit—that is eternal life.

**Amen**