

“The Dignity of Man and the Migration of Peoples”
 Sermon for 2 June 2019
 Text: Genesis 9:18-28

The best way to begin, I believe, is to recite an account of the preceding, the story of Noah's rescue mission. Noah survives the flood and becomes the second common ancestor of all the living—the first being Adam. Consequently the passage before us is significant as it prophetically predicts the patterns of migration and integration that unfolds for all the people groups who have ever existed in the known world. All these people groups have come from their roots in Noah's family—his three sons and their wives along with Noah's wife. The three dominant racial groups: white, black and oriental races who migrated to the four corners of the earth. What this prophetic word does is explain the dynamics, the interactions of these people groups. The descendants of Ham of whom were the Phoenicians and the Canaanites would be subjected to the Semites and Japhethites. And that “servant of servants bit” is exactly what unfolds. Of course. So, here's the recitation!

Five chapters, five I say, contain the saga of Noah.
 The saga of Noah and his wife and their three sons
 Is a story worth singing . . . noble remembrance, exalted telling
 For in height and breadth, it's epic evil frame
 Encompasses the whole of earth. All of mankind,
 Distracted and deceived, had erstwhile fallen into foul wickedness
 And God passed from disappointment full to fury.

But Noah stood out, in his generation as
 The only upright man on earth
 Such a solitary righteousness.

Of all mankind, only Noah chose to walk with God
 All others had turned, and walked apart from God
 So possessed of sin were their fallen hearts
 So deep and dark the Enemy's power,
 That this was his moment, even his very hour
 And strife and violence filled the earth,
 As never before, or from since its birth.

I do not exaggerate, for it appears that
 God himself of mankind had despaired
Great in the earth . . . down to every intention
Only evil aims, and schemes and foul intention
Man is besotted with death, his entertainments
Drink death, robbery and murder.
Harming others so captivates his mind,
Consumes his energy, his time
That he has no care for worship
Except adulation of lust, pleasure with greed.

So far beyond reach of ordinary speech

Was God's condemnation of our wretched race.
 Only Noah, who within his heart loved God, sought his face,
 He heard and was grieved that Man proved traitor:

**I will blot out man whom I have created
 From the face of the land, man and animal
 All animate life, all those complicit in this strife.**

Therefore, around 5,000 BC,
 There occurred a severe fluvial intervention—
 A world full of hurt, harm and divine judgment,
 A world lethally full of water was dumped
 Upon the whole face of the earth
 And water having no space to run to
 Rose and roiled, it surged and flooded.

Still, before the deluge, Noah and his three sons
 Spent 120 years building the ark as God had ordained,
 That God ordered by line, level and plumb.
 Every drilled and pegged thwart, every ship's beam,
 Was pitched, sealed with packing hemp in every seam—
 In the crazy preacher's big backyard project!
 Thus a city-sized ship took shape, a vessel,
 With storied decks, hatches, ladders and lifts.

Built on dry land—far from any launching site
 Awaiting the tide that would come to and uplift it.

Tight, she was, yare and trim and leak-less.
 This ship, this floating refuge, this raft of redemption,
 A work of towering amazement.
 This ship built by novices to the trade
 Who grew in wisdom and adeptness
 On the learning curve of divine direction—
 Though stiff and steep—
 A production timetable had they to keep
 Still, until they finished framing,
 God held off the doom of raining.

Noah had attained the age of 600
 When notice sent from heaven
 Alerted him, a mere seven days in advance,
 Therefore he announced and pleaded,
 Declaring mankind's last and final chance,
 "Will you not repent and turn?
 Will you not flee the fate
 That every unrepentant sinner faces
 For, lo, your doom is sure."

But no one, of record, took stock,
 Everyone jeered and mocked.
 And as the sky grew dense with cloud
 Darker growing hour by hour—
 One has to think, that their brashness
 Began to diminish and then fade,
 The unprecedented atmosphere
 Must have some provoked some, but all too late.

When the waters rose the desperate chose
 To rush the ark despite the clinging mire
 That lapped their legs and beat their terror
 Out on the sealed gate of that tall ship,
 For other refuge, there was none.
 A flash flood of divine fury
 Washed their futility and life away—
 They perished. All except Noah and his own.

This was the supreme achievement of Noah's very long life! And what an epic tale, or saga, it is! But our passage comes down from the peak and records an episode of drunken behavior—however this sordid tale is not primarily about Noah's overconsumption of wine. No, it's about the fulfillment of the vine mandate: **Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.** (9:1) This follows God's covenant promises of 8:20-22 which we covered last week.

This passage demonstrates four things: 1. a proof of biblical inspiration. The open shame of Noah testifies to the plain truth of scripture—nothing prettied up. This should speak to a generation that prefers transparency. A stronger point is the danger of excessive drinking. Scripture was **wine is a mocker**. And mocking is what Ham does of his inebriated father. His disrespect is palpable, he dishonors Noah by urging his brothers to come view his **nakedness**. The original Hebrew permits a sense of perversion but the scripture does not disclose the details—that it is serious may be deduced from the severity of the curse. The behavior of Ham, the perverted disrespect, find cultural expression in the people groups descended from Ham and accounts for their servile, or submissive position amongst the other racial groups *as prophesied*. This is not sociology, or documentary history, or even anthropology but the future as revealed in the word of God. 2. The passage clearly warns everyone about the dangers of excessive drinking (loss of inhibitions, nakedness, lewdness and sexual exploitation) through graphic details. Drunkenness is not mentioned on the sins list of the pre-Flood inhabitants of the earth. It is sinful. So much so that 3. some take this scene as the “poster child” so to speak for human depravity. This is the “best” of the surviving human race at its bestial worst. 4. And, finally, this passage pictures the atonement of Christ; it is prefigured in the action of Ham's brothers in covering up, rather than exulting in their father's sin and shame. Surely the godly actions of Noah's two other sons parallel God's own covering of Adam and Eve's nakedness, and sin shame, even **nakedness** in the garden. It provides a word picture of Christ's redeeming work.

The word for **covered** (Gen. 9:23) is identical to later usage in Psalm 32:1 and Paul translates this into the New Testament context of Romans 4:7 (where he cites this Psalm!) with the added nuance of “to conceal” complementing the earlier Hebrew for

covering. This correlation gains in significance when we study what Christ desires to do for the repentant sinner—to cover and conceal one's sin from God. This is a very basic description of the atoning effects of Christ's redemption. We could add that Christ's atonement cancels, abolishes and obliterates sin—casting it irretrievably away **(as far as the east is from the west . . . in the very depths of the sea)**. Christ doesn't deny our sin. Rather, it is dealt with through a sincere acknowledgment (confession) and that is accompanied by a thorough abandonment of said sin. Sin is not blotted out so much as it is obliterated, cast into forgetfulness and not held against us at the last judgment. Rather, our sin is *passed over* having been *put under* the blood of the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.