

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity, October 20, 2019

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 320, 396:1-2, 369, 446, 394.

Lessons: Genesis 7:6-23, 1 Peter 2:1-9, Luke 17:20-35.

Sermon Text: Genesis 6:1-14 and 7:1-5.

. Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I think that you all are familiar with the general history of Noah and the great flood. God told Noah to build an ark, a huge boat about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high.

After the animals came to Noah and he led them into the ark, the entire earth was flooded, higher than the highest mountains at the time. It rained for 40 days and nights and water surged up from under the ground in massive amounts.

There was tremendous disruption of the world, which led to the creation of river valleys like the Grand Canyon. Because water came from deep within the earth, there would have been tremendous volcanic activity, and even a time when glaciers covered a great part of the earth and then melted. We don't know all these details from Holy Scripture, but we can see them in the world.

Today let's talk about

NOAH'S LIFE AND WORK

1. **The world was very wicked, and God planned to destroy mankind.**
2. **God blessed Noah and used him.**
3. **In Noah we find a role model and a warning.**

We read ***"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."***

The sons of God married any of the daughters of men they chose, without regard to their unbelief or faith in God. Scripture says that this led to increasing wickedness. ***"Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.'"*** God here sets a limit on the normal lifespan of mankind of 120 years, compared to Noah and previous generations named in the Bible. Adam lived 930 years, Noah himself lived to 950 years.

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days--and also afterward--when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown." These men would have been "heroes" as we think of the word in the eyes of the unbelieving world, and a better translation would be "mighty", or "strong". The word translated in the NIV as "Nephilim" means "giants". The word "Nephilim" is a transliteration of the Hebrew word, changing its letters into English sounds. The word is used only a few times in Scripture. When Joshua, Caleb, and the other spies returned from Canaan to Moses, they said ***"We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."*** Numbers 13:33 (NIV) Such men would have been the size of "giants", although they would not have been descended from the Nephilim who perished in the flood.

Wickedness increased. ***"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."*** Every inclination! Every thought! Everything humans wanted to do! This is the way of sin, the sins of mankind in the world that we are living in even today.

Then we read that ***“The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, ‘I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them.’”*** God was pained, troubled, even “grieved”.

This is the world Noah lived in. ***“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. So God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.’”***

But God promises a solution to the destruction of all mankind and provides for the salvation of Noah and his believing family. He tells Noah: ***“So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high”*** and God goes on to give more details.

This is not the last time that God speaks of the corruption of mankind. For example, on a plain at a place called Babel the wickedness and arrogance of mankind again needed to be rebuked, admonished and slapped down by God.

But God blessed Noah and used him. Scripture does not say that he was sinless. But the grace of God was with him, and God led him to be a ***“preacher of righteousness”*** as Peter writes, that God ***“did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others.”*** 2 Peter 2:5 (NIV)

When Scripture says that ***“Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God”*** Genesis 6:9 (NIV) we even find the suggestion that at least some people thought of him as a “good” man. Scripture doesn’t say he was sinless. We know, of course, that only Jesus Christ was sinless.

Through his life and his words, his preaching and being a good example to the world around him, Noah spoke to the world and lived as a man of God. For 120 years he and his sons were building the ark and witnessing to the wicked people of the world. The book of Hebrews tells us ***“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”*** Hebrews 11:7 (NIV) No doubt many mocked him and ridiculed him because of his building a huge boat. But he trusted in God for salvation from the destruction that was to come upon the world.

With the same kind of trust and confidence in God, we must trust in Jesus Christ for salvation from destruction in hell.

God led Noah to build this ark. It was a monstrous undertaking. The Creation Museum has built a full-sized ark in Kentucky, an amazing construction project, probably even larger than the ark described in the Bible. This ark has representations and examples of how men today think Noah might have stored food and water for the animals, removed the manure, and lived in this ark for a year and ten days.

In all of this, God was with Noah as a preacher of righteousness, a builder, and after the flood a patriarch of mankind. He is a model of one who trusted in God, followed his commands, and was blessed even on earth. Through it all, Noah and his seven relatives were certainly not sinless, but struggled to follow God.

“By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry.” Genesis 8:13 (NIV) After the waters receded enough so they could exit the ark, we read: ***“So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. 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. 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. 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.’”*** Genesis 8:18-21 (NIV)

Realize that this was long before God told Moses about clean and unclean animals at Mount Sinai, so Noah obviously received instruction from the Lord. In fact, he’d taken seven pairs of every animal God designated as “clean” on the ark so that at this time he could sacrifice them to God.

As we talk in this way about Noah, it is not really about Noah, but about God's love. Isaiah wrote to God's people in his time just after he promised the Savior in chapter 53 who would suffer for the sins of all mankind: ***“For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD your Redeemer. ‘To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again.’*** Isaiah 54:7-9 (NIV)

Noah is still a role model. Scripture says, comparing Baptism to the flood; that ***“God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.”*** 1 Peter 3:20 (NIV) So today we have seen a glimpse of God's command to Noah and how he obeyed and fulfilled it. Salvation came to Noah and the other believers through water, a great flood, and it comes to people today through baptism and the same kind of faith. In baptism we use a small amount of water but it is a great flood in its impact. Baptism is a washing through which God graciously forgives our sin and grants us rebirth and a new life through the Holy Spirit. Paul writes to Titus – and to us – that ***“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”*** Titus 3:5-8 (NIV)

After the flood was over, God created a rainbow and ***“said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.’ So God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.’”*** Genesis 9:12-17 (NIV) For the genuine Christian, the rainbow has special significance. It is not a flag of diversity, as wicked people have made it today. It is a reminder of God's love and grace, seen in the sky to assure us that God will never again destroy the earth with a flood. It is a reminder of God's grace to Noah and to all who believe in Jesus for their salvation.

Scripture also makes reference to the last day, the day of eternal judgment, when Christ will come in all his glory to judge the living and the dead. Luke quotes Jesus: ***“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.”*** Luke 17:26-27 (NIV) In Matthew we read Jesus saying: ***“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”*** Matthew 24:36-39 (NIV) Judgment day will come suddenly. There have been many years – several millennia of warning! But when the last day comes like a thief in the night there will be no second chance!

So after the flood, we read ***“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”*** Genesis 9:1 (KJV) We thank God for the warnings he gives us, even today, this very day, to repent and rely only on Jesus for eternal salvation.

The letter to the Hebrews tells of Noah's faith: ***“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”*** Hebrews 11:7 (NIV) God, give each of us such faith! Amen.