

First Advent service

Text: Genesis 6:11-22 (NIV)

¹¹Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. ¹²God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. ¹³So 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. ¹⁴So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. ¹⁵This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. ¹⁶Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. ¹⁷I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them." ²²Noah did everything just as God commanded him

Theme: God's Gift of a Savior to Sinners

A few weeks ago, I went to an event at Milwaukee Lutheran, which was a lot of fun. It was the annual cardboard boat race. The kids in the physics classes make boats out of cardboard and duck tape. Then 1-4 people sit in the boats, and they paddle them 25 yards across the pool. As you can imagine, many of the boats sink as soon as the kids get in them. Some of them make it about half way across the pool before they sink, and some of them actually do make it all the way across the pool.

When you first hear about this, you think that it's impossible. How will a boat made out of cardboard and duct tape float? That must be what people thought about Noah's ark. If I were to ask you what an ark is, you would probably have trouble defining the word. The Hebrew word doesn't mean boat or ship. It means a box. It is only used in two places in the Bible. In this story and in next week's story, the basket into which the baby Moses was placed. God told Moses to build a big box that would hold all of the people and animals that would survive the great flood. It would be a big box that would hold the whole world.

I. Why did God decide to destroy the world?

Verse 11 gives the answer. It says that the world was corrupt and full of violence.

It was corrupt. This word refers to idolatry in the Bible, such as when Israel worshiped the golden calf when Moses was on Mount Sinai or when Israel worshiped the Baals of the Canaanites. (Ex 32:7; Jgs 2:19). The corruption of the world describes the relationship toward God. The world no longer gave God praise for His blessings and His mercy that He had given to mankind. We might say that the world became godless.

In addition the world was full of violence. The relationship with God influenced the way that people treated each other. They were cruel and heartless to each other. God created Adam and Eve to love

and honor each other, but sin ruined their perfect relationship, and soon their firstborn son killed his brother. Things continued to get worse until God was grieved that he even created man. It was so bad that it says in verse 5 that every thought of the hearts of the people was only evil all of the time. The people of this world had replaced the goodness with evil toward each other.

We still see that today. Those people took God out of their world, and the result was violence. We have taken God out of our schools, and there is violence. We have taken Christ out of Christmas, and there is greed and commercialism. Think of all of the places where we have removed God, and we will find that violence and evil have taken His place.

II. But Noah and the world would be saved through a big box.

What was the ark like? It says that it was 450 feet long. This is about a football field and a half. It was 45 feet high and had three floors. It was as high as a 4 story building. It was 75 feet wide, which is only about half as wide as a football field. It was a long, narrow rectangle. I have been told that it is the perfect size for floating. I have also read that the volume was as big as eight 65 car freight trains. The ark was so big that it took Noah and his family 120 years to build it.

Can you imagine what Noah's neighbors must have said? They must have mocked him for building this big box. What did he think that he was going to put in there? Did he really think that there would be a flood that would destroy the whole world? Did he really think that two of every animal would really come to him? The people of that day were probably as skeptical as many people today that this box could really contain animals from the whole world, and that if there was enough water, that it would float.

But this box would be the salvation of the whole world. Two of every land animal came to Noah. When God commanded, Noah, his family, and all the animals entered the ark. When everyone was inside, it says in verse 17 that the Lord shut the door. It rained for 40 days and nights. The floodgates of heaven and of the deep opened. (8:2) It took 150 days until the waters began to recede and almost a year until Noah was able to leave the ark. The flood was so massive that every creature that breaths air died, including every person. The only beings that survived were those in the ark. If it were not for the ark, mankind and all the land animals would have been destroyed. It was that ark that saved the whole world.

That ark has often been a picture of the Christian Church. Many churches have a shape similar to the ark. They are long, narrow buildings. In our church the balcony has the shape of a ship. In tonight's epistle lesson Peter writes that as God saved Noah and his family through water, He saved us through baptism. Our sins are washed away. Our sinful nature is drowned, and God raises us to a new life in Christ. He makes us a part of His people. Outside of His church, there is no salvation. As Noah's family went through the door to be saved from the flood, we go through Christ to be saved from God's wrath.

III. By Noah's faith the whole world would be saved.

These verses speak of his faith both before and after God called him. It says in verse 9 that he was righteous and blameless, and that he walked with God. Noah was not righteous and blameless because he was perfect. After the flood we see that he enjoyed too much wine at times. But He trusted in God, and his sin was forgiven. But that forgiveness didn't give him a license to sin more. His life became a living contrast with the lives of the other people. He lived a life of goodness and mercy toward others. He was a beacon of God's love and forgiveness to the world.

Then when God did call him, it says that he did everything that God told him to do. He obeyed God's Word, even when it might have seemed silly to him. 120 years was a long test of his faith. It would have been easy to say, "I give up." "I'm not doing this anymore." But Noah believed God and followed the Lord's Word. It was that faith in God, that saved him from disaster.

It is also our faith in God that saves us. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul often writes how we as Christians walk with God. We were dead in sin, but God raised us to a new life through faith in Jesus Christ our Savior. As we go through this life, we walk with God as we trust in Him and confess Jesus Christ as our Savior. We also walk with Him in our conduct. In Ephesians 5 Paul writes, *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.* ² *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* ³ *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.* ⁴ *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.* As Christians we walk with God as we trust in His grace and follow His gracious ways in our conduct with each other.

Do you really think that thing can float? I had my doubts about many of those boxes in the great cardboard boat regatta a couple of weeks ago, but many of them did float. Many people have their doubts about Noah's big box, but it was that box that saved the whole world because contained all the people and animals that would survive the great flood.

May God give each one of us that same faith as Noah, that in a world of unbelief and sin, we may be protected from God's wrath, and receive the salvation that He has prepared for all who trust in Him through our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

***Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
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