

05/15/22 @ BUCYRUS UMC

TITLE: THE ARK CARRIED HOPE

TEXT: MATTHEW 28:16-20

GOD'S WORD: GENESIS 7:1-14

I – THE FLOOD:

In this third installment of our examination of Noah and the Ark we come to the flood. The reading this morning told you that when Noah was 600 years old God had him enter the Ark with all the provisions he spelled out, with all the animals, and with his wife, children, and their wives. God closed the door on the ark and then it began.

It tells us that God released all the water from the earth, which had sustained all life to this point, and for the first time in the Creation he opened the heavens and released all the water there. It had never rained before this time. But rain it did now! The underground water “Erupted” and the rain came in “Mighty torrents.” It did this for forty days and forty nights. It didn’t quit and there was no letup. Imagine the reports from Marshall McPeak on this one! It tells us that it steady lifted the ark above the earth and when the forty days were over the water covered the whole earth at a depth 22 feet above the highest mountain peak.

That’s not the main part of the story. I find that in verse 23 of this morning’s reading:

.²³ God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat.

I know PETA would probably protest against GOD for all the dead animals, but let’s talk about the human loss this morning. The best estimate I could find was that based on various calculations covering the

1656 years between Creation and Noah, 9 billion people died in that flood.

II – FLOATING BODIES:

How do we put a positive spin, a smiley face, on the fact that one of the greatest stories in the Bible involved a bunch of dead bodies bobbing in the water? You just heard me tell you that the mathematical estimate was that 9 billion people died in that flood.

It would be in our human nature to sit back and ask how God, the God of love, could do such a thing. That it's all God's fault that all those people died. Yeah, that's the human way...blame it all on God. It's a lot easier to do that than to point out that God had created a perfect world. Had given us everything we needed to survive. Had tried to have an up close and personal relationship with us. Had walked in the garden with us at night and spoke to us. Then we brought disobedience and sin into being. That we broke the covenant with God. We ushered in things like murder and all the other sins that were disgusting to God. We began the story pointing out that it got to the point that human wickedness was wide spread and totally evil. How disgusting did people have to be for God to decide he was sorry he had ever created us and that it was time to wipe us off the face of the earth?

There is no smiley face to proclaim. There is only deep sadness that God stepped in and did what a just and Holy God felt compelled to do. It wasn't a whim, it was based on the actions of the children he had created.

But the Ark carried hope. God found favor with Noah and through him preserved the lives of animals and humans to try again. The Ark carried hope.

III – MORE BODIES:

This fact of death in the story should bring us deep sadness for another reason. People are still dying because they have chosen not to know Jesus or have never met him for one reason or another. The Bible tells us the large loss of life for evil and wickedness is not over. We've talked about how it appears the world is in the same mess it was in at the time of Noah...full of wickedness and evil. That should worry us as we hear Jesus himself say...

Matthew 24:37-39

³⁷ “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. ³⁸ In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. ³⁹ People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

It would certainly appear to me that a vast number of people are more engaged in the things of the world as opposed to having a relationship with God. The statistics for those who have a faith or proclaim an affiliation with a faith falls every year. I do a lot of funerals during the year and most of them aren’t our members. They are people who have no church or pastor to officiate the service. I am saddened by these as I have to question if they had a faith or believed in Jesus before that final moment of their life came. Unfortunately a lot of people die today and don’t make the transition to an eternal life in heaven, but an eternal doom as Jesus tells us about in this passage...

Matthew 13:47-50

⁴⁷ “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that was thrown into the water and caught fish of every kind. ⁴⁸ When the net was full, they dragged it up onto the shore, sat down, and sorted the good fish into crates, but threw the bad ones away. ⁴⁹ That is the way it will be at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked people from the righteous, ⁵⁰ throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Passages such as this one tell us that the numbers claimed by the flood at the time of Noah could be small compared to the numbers who are lost for eternity when Jesus comes back again. I hope this upsets you as much as it does me.

IV – TEXT:

Unfortunately this is caused partially by the Church of Jesus Christ. We are partly to blame because down through the centuries, since the day Jesus launched the church, we have been too busy fighting to do the work of the Church. Too busy doing church business instead of doing the business of the church. Too busy arguing and making rules about how to do church things like baptism and communion instead of how to shed the love of God and proclaim the saving grace of Jesus Christ to the world.

As Jesus ascended into heaven to be with God he gave us our orders. He said...

Matthew 28:16-20 (NLT)

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Churches spend inordinate amounts of time developing mission statements and I don't know why because Jesus gave it to us himself! Evidently we think we can say it better than Jesus. It's pretty simply:

- Go – not stay locked inside a stone castle you call a church
- Tell everyone about Jesus
- Teach them about Jesus and make them mature disciples
- Do it with the power and authority of Jesus

When we do this people find life not death. When we do this the Kingdom of God grows and evil and wickedness shrink.

V – NEW ARK:

There are people drowning all around us:

- Drowning in sin
- Drowning in violence
- Drowning in evil
- Drowning in poverty
- Drowning in illness
- Drowning in all the other problems people face today

And the church is the Ark as we talked about last week. Just as God gave Noah the instructions to build the boat to save the remnant of Creation so it could go on, he has given us the directions on how to build and grow the church, the Ark of today. And where there is hopelessness outside the church, there is hope inside the church. There is always safety and hope in the Ark...we call him Jesus!

The problem is that we have to listen to the orders Jesus gave us as he was taken in to heaven. We have to fill the Ark. We have to bring people to the safety of salvation before Jesus returns to set everything right and put the Kingdom fully in to place.

If we don't...there will be more bodies floating around because the church did not do its job. I don't want to be saddened any more than I have to be. I don't want to just fill the Ark...I want to have to expand it because of all the souls who have been brought on the boat. I hope you do too!

AMEN