

The Second Sunday in Advent – Pr. Faugstad sermon  
Genesis 6:9-22: “In the Ark of the Church, We Have Life and Hope.”  
December 7/8, 2024 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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O God, who established Your Son as the Righteous Branch by which You would save Your people, grant that we who have been grafted into Christ through the waters of Holy Baptism may be preserved from every sin and evil and be borne secure in the ark of Your Church until we join the angels and the whole company of heaven to sing eternal praises to You, who with Jesus Christ, our Lord, and the Holy Spirit, is one God, now and forever. Amen. (*Treasury of Daily Prayer*, CPH 2008, p. 985)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is taken from the sixth chapter of the Book of Genesis. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:*

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. / Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. / "But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. (ESV)

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, whom we will see “coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luk. 21:27) on the day of judgment, dear fellow redeemed:

When things are not going so well in the nation or in the church, we might find ourselves dreaming about how it would be if certain individuals were still with us. What would George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln say and do about our current challenges on the local and national levels? And in the church, what difference would Martin Luther, C. F. W. Walther, and U. V. Koren make if they were still here preaching and teaching?

For us, these men have been gone a long time. But if we lived in Noah's day, presumably all these men would still be with us. Genesis 5 gives the ages of Adam and his descendants. Adam lived to be 930 years old. His son Seth lived 912 years. Methuselah, the oldest man named in the Bible and Noah's grandfather, lived 969 years. So when you overlap the lifetimes of these men, you find that Adam and Methuselah lived concurrently for 243 years.<sup>1</sup> Methuselah's son Lamech overlapped 56 years with Adam. Now Lamech was Noah's father! So even though Noah was unable to speak directly with Adam about what happened in the Garden of Eden and the promise God made to crush Satan's head, Noah's father certainly could have.

This makes it all the more surprising that the behavior of mankind had degenerated to the point that it had. The reason this had happened is because the people of the promise, the believers, began to intermarry with unbelievers. Why did the believing men do this? We are told it was because the unbelieving women were attractive (Gen. 6:2). Examples like this are why we teach our children to seek out spouses who share the same faith in Christ. A believing spouse can have a beneficial effect on an unbelieving spouse. But the opposite can also be true and often happens, that the faith of a believer is weakened or lost when the unbelieving spouse does not encourage it.

Because of these intermarriages in that early period of history, the community of believers got smaller and smaller, until *"the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (v. 5). The first man and first preacher Adam had only recently died, and yet so few cared about God's promise of salvation. In Genesis 6 just before today's reading, we are told that *"the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth"* (v. 6). He decided that He would destroy mankind and all the land animals. Only one man found favor in God's sight—only Noah.

Noah was described in glowing terms—he was *"a righteous man, blameless in his generation"*; he *"walked with God."* In short, Noah was a believer. He knew that he deserved nothing but damnation for his sins, but he believed God's promise that a Savior was coming. It broke Noah's heart to see all the ungodliness around him. How could so many have forgotten their Creator? How could he alone be left? No doubt, the devil attacked Noah with terrible trials and persecutions. Noah was an outcast, despised by everyone. Did he think he was so perfect? What made him so sure that his truth was the right one?

Then God gave Noah an even harder task: build a boat, a great big ark, out in the middle of a field. The ark had to be big enough to hold Noah and his family and two of every kind of animal on the earth with seven pairs of all clean animals. God told him what the dimensions of the ark needed to be: 300 cubits long or about the length of a football field and a half, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits tall which would be all of the height of our church steeple. In Iowa, we have the nice story of the Field of Dreams, but making a baseball field in the country does not seem quite as crazy as building a massive boat! And yet Noah did not question God; *"he did all that God commanded him."*

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<sup>1</sup> For more details about this, see "From Creation to Jacob: Communicating the Promise" by Pr. Joseph Abrahamson: <https://steadfastlutherans.org/blog/2016/06/from-creation-to-jacob-communicating-the-promise/>.

Noah is one of the great fathers in the faith. He is an excellent example for us who are also surrounded by all sorts of violence and godlessness. Noah believed God's warning even when everyone else ridiculed it. They attacked his family and probably tried to sabotage his work, but Noah kept building. Day after day, he encouraged his family by the Word of God and led them in prayer. Day after day, he did the work God gave him to do. And after a period of perhaps 100 years, the massive ark was ready.

Noah's neighbors spent no time reflecting on their actions. They felt no remorse. Jesus said that *"in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark"* (Mat. 24:38). They cared nothing about crazy Noah and his boat, and even less about Noah's preaching of repentance. But what about when animals started climbing into the ark two by two? "Must be some kind of coincidence" or "witchcraft," they thought. Then the rain started to fall, and Noah was nowhere to be seen. Then they noticed that the door in the side of the ark was shut....

What happened next is almost too terrible to imagine. The waters rose higher and higher. People desperately looked for higher ground, young and old, rich and poor, but age, health, and position meant nothing. Could Noah and his family hear the screaming? Did anyone try to pry open the door from the outside? The rain poured down, the boat came free of its scaffolding, and then there was no sound but rain on the roof.

The same waters that destroyed all living people and land animals outside the ark saved the people and animals inside the ark. They were waters of destruction and salvation. That's the same way we think about the waters of Baptism—they are waters of destruction and salvation. Baptism drowned your old Adam and washed away the filth of your sin—everything in you that rebelled against your Creator and separated you from Him. At the same time, Baptism gave you a living faith and raised you up to new life in Christ.

1 Peter 3 ties the Flood and Baptism together: *"God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (20-21). You were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection and made a member of His holy body. Your Baptism is when you stepped out of the world of darkness and destruction and into the ark of the Church.

You might think of the time we are in as the time when the ark was nearly finished and the rain was about to fall. Jesus tells us to stay ready. The day of judgment is fast approaching. But then we wonder, "How soon?" Perhaps we can eat and drink with the attractive people of the world a little longer, or at least avoid some uncomfortable interactions by keeping our beliefs quiet. And besides, being in the ark of the Church is not always the most pleasant thing. We may grow tired of the personalities around us, the little annoyances and disagreements, the criticisms and occasional coldness we feel from others. Being cooped up in the Church makes the air seem a little stale. We want to be outside! We want to breathe deeply and live fully!

Some say they don't need the Church at all because they can worship God just fine on their own. That may be so, but when the wind blows and the waves roll, would you rather be in the

large ark in good company or alone in a little fishing boat? God calls us as Christians to hear His Word together, to confess our faith together, to kneel together at His Table, to encourage one another. If we remove ourselves from all Christian fellowship, we can't do these things.

Being together helps to keep us accountable. In love, your fellow Christians can call you to repentance when you have faltered and fallen into sin. In love, they can also point you to your forgiveness and salvation through Jesus who has redeemed you from sin and death. In love, they can help you stay alert and prepared for the Lord's return. Jesus says that just as the people in Noah's day paid no attention to the preaching of the truth and were caught unprepared when the Flood came, *"so will be the coming of the Son of Man"* (Mat. 24:37,39).

In the ark of Christ's Church, you are kept ready for His coming on the last day. Here in this ark, there are ample supplies—His Word of absolution that frees you from your guilt and comforts you, and the rich food of His body and blood that nourishes and strengthens you and draws you closer together with your fellow believers. With these good supplies, you can weather the storms of temptation and persecution in this world. You can endure suffering because you know that your Lord Jesus Christ is with you, increasing your faith, hope, and love.

You cannot see Him now, and you cannot see how it will be for you on the other side of the storm, but you know He will carry you to safety. That is your certainty. That is your hope. Noah and his family faithfully followed the Word of the Lord and were preserved from the perils of the Flood until they set foot again on a renewed earth. You have the same promise, that your Lord will preserve you until the day of His glorious return when the heavens and the earth will be made new. When that day comes, says Jesus, *"straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near"* (Luk. 21:28).

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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