Blessed be the God of our Salvation, Jesus Christ

*No man can by any means redeem his brother
Or give to God a ransom for him—
For the redemption of his soul is costly* Psalm 49:7-8a

In these verses we see the seed of the necessity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The first line assumes the need for redemption; redemption is something everybody needs. Furthermore, we simply do not have the power to redeem anyone else. There is nothing we can offer God to make up for the sins of another. We who are Christians know that we can’t even save ourselves.

And why is it that we can’t redeem anyone for the debt owed to God? It is because the cost is too high. Even if we were to offer up our most precious possession, our very life, it would not be enough. Our own lives are stained with sin and unacceptable to God. Again, we can’t even pay the cost for ourselves; we certainly can’t pay the cost for someone else.

The cost of redemption is the life of the God-man Jesus Christ. He is the only One able to pay the price to buy us from the slavery of sin; to redeem us from the infinite debt we owe to God. Because we ourselves can’t pay the cost, that is why it becomes our job to tell our brother about Jesus, so that our brother can accept the redemption that has been paid.

How beautiful the Gospel. Jesus paid the cost on our behalf. With this, we can cease striving to pay our debts ourselves, and focus on pleasing Him with bearing fruit of thanksgiving.

In Christ’s love

John

 7-24-22

Genesis 9:18-24

After a year and ten days on the ark, Noah and his family and all the animals are finally released from the safety of God’s provision. A few animals are offered up in thanksgiving to God and the rest are released to spread out and multiply on the earth. The family of Noah is given the same mandate that was given to Adam and Eve: “*As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.*” God wants lots and lots of people; He wants the earth to teem with us.

God made a change in the very nature of the animals: He put the fear of people into them. The reason for this is because God has also now decreed those animals can be eaten as food. The one restriction is to avoid eating the blood of the animal. The blood is considered the life, and it would become very important later in the sacrifices that were prescribed to Moses. The blood had a special purpose in those sacrifices and was therefore to be treated special.

God made a beautiful covenant with Noah, his family, and even all the animals. He promised that He would never again destroy the earth with water; and the seasons would continue as long as the earth lasts. And as a sign to establish the covenant He placed the rainbow in the clouds; a beautiful sign so that we might catch a glimpse of the majesty of God.

Our verses for today are very different from what we have been studying about Noah so far. We don’t usually find this account in the children’s Bible stories. There is a lot we learn from this account. For one thing, sin is not gone. Sin came along in the ark in the hearts of the people. As God had noted back in chapter 6 verse 5, “*the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*.” And even after the flood in chapter 8 verse 21, God counseled with Himself, “*the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth*”.

Noah, a preacher of righteousness; the one about whom we read “*Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD*”; the one who steadfastly built an ark in the desert for 120 years and then cared for the animals on the ark for another year; this is the Noah who sinned. This Noah had evil intent in his heart.

This is not to condemn Noah; it is just to point out that all of us are in this same condition. If Noah can’t justify himself, none of the rest of us can either. We need a Saviour just like Noah did.

God had His sovereign purpose for bringing the flood when He did and there is probably more to it than we can figure out; but the Holy Spirit enlightens us on a few things. God wanted to have a reset of creation. As all people are descended from Adam, all people are also descended from Noah. Through Noah, we can see that in some way, the human race needs to be saved through a man. So, through the man Noah, the human race was saved from extinction. Next, it would be the God-man Jesus who saves people from eternal death.

Next, the flood shows the importance of baptism. The human race was saved in the ark, yet through water. The apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:20-21, “*God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*.” The people were saved from the flood by trusting in the ark that God provided. This is a picture of being saved from the flood of our sins by trusting in Jesus; the ark God has provided.

We’ve already considered that while Noah was righteous before God, it was because of his faith, not because of his sinlessness. And it requires faith to be saved. Noah had the faith to build the ark to God’s specifications and then to get in it when the rain started. Ultimately, it was God, not the ark, who saved Noah. In our verses from 1 Peter, it said that “*baptism now saves you*”. How do we take that since the Bible is clear that baptism is not a requirement for salvation?

As Noah demonstrated his faith by building and boarding the ark, baptism is a demonstration of our faith in Jesus; the ark God has provided for us. In baptism we associate ourselves as closely as we can with Jesus by acting out His death, burial, and resurrection. We demonstrate that we are putting our faith in Jesus. We are willing to go into Him for safety from the flood of our sins. The difference is that our ark, who is Jesus, does save us because He is God.

The thief on the cross and all the Old Testament saints show us that baptism is not an absolute necessity for salvation. But it is an ordinance and a command from Jesus. And, as James tells us in chapter 2 verse 26, “*For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead*.” Submitting to baptism is a work, but it is a work that demonstrates faith. It is an appeal to God for a good conscience because it demonstrates that our faith is real and alive.

In God’s purposes for the flood: He wanted to reset creation, He wanted to picture baptism, and thirdly, He wanted to show that sin will bring about judgement and wrath. This is so very important. God demonstrated time and again throughout the Bible that He will not tolerate evil forever. In His great mercy, He lets it pass for a long time in the hopes that people will repent and turn to Him. But when they refuse, the patience comes to an end and wrath falls.

The flood is just the first of a series of events that God brings about when His patience has reached its limit; when the measure of iniquity is complete. And once one has reached the point of complete iniquity, the physical judgment that falls is only the beginning. Consider Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:28, “*Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*.”

There is something we need to note that was not God’s purpose in the flood. He did not intend to get rid of sin. To entirely get rid of sin, He would have had to destroy everyone and everything and start over. As we mentioned earlier, our story today shows us that sin made it through the flood. Now, although God has promised that He will not destroy the earth by water, that does not mean that the earth will not be destroyed. It will.

2 Peter 3:10 says, “*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up*.” There is debate as to where in the scheme of Jesus’ return this will take place, but the point is that this time, the earth will be destroyed and recreated, and there will be no sin. This time sin and evil will be gone.

The good news is that we who are in Christ will be protected from this. I assume we get to watch from a safe distance. But then we will get to live forever in the new heavens and new earth that God will then create. An existence that will be even better than if we had stayed in the Garden of Eden.

All people have come directly from Noah. But then the population comes from one of the three lines of Noah: Shem, Ham, or Japheth. Verse 19 says that from these three the whole earth was populated. In the future we will look into how the different nations and people groups came about and how they spread throughout the world. The grandson Canaan is mentioned here by way of introduction.

Time has passed and Noah has taken up farming. This would be necessary to grow food since there are no other farmers around and they no longer live in the Garden of Eden; the curse is still on the ground from the sin of Adam. Enough time has passed for Noah to plant grapes, grow them to maturity, and then to make wine.

There is a very practical lesson that applies to us even now. There are times in our life where we go through something very difficult. We go through a struggle that consumes our thoughts and energies; it may drag on for years. With these struggles temptation always comes: the temptation to quit, to be angry with God, or to try to take some easy way out. Through perseverance, we come through it, and things ease up. Finally, we made it through and can breathe.

That is one of the most dangerous times there is to fall into temptation. It is natural for us to relax and let our guard down. We think we are clear, at least until the next big thing happens. The problem is that satan never rests; he doesn’t stop; he is always looking for the next opportunity; and he knows that right after a great victory you are vulnerable. It is part of our sanctification to learn to watch for this.

Noah had just gotten relief from over 120 years of stress; of dealing with constant temptation to stop what he was doing. He was experiencing relief from all he had just successfully been through. Noah gets himself drunk. He passes out in his tent. And at some point in the process, he leaves his most private parts exposed. This always raises the question of whether or not it is acceptable, according to the Bible, to drink alcohol. That debate goes on and it’s not the purpose of this sermon to go into it. Regardless of your convictions, one thing is clear for everyone: drunkenness is a sin.

Drunkenness alters the way your mind works and God gave us our minds to work well, to guide us in life, and to keep Him always before us. Messing with our minds in this way is messing with God’s established order. The big problem is that it makes us susceptible to other sins or creates opportunity for others to sin. Satan is always quick to take advantage of one sin to perpetrate another.

Noah’s sin led to his nakedness. While nakedness is not shameful in certain human relationships; it is something we want to avoid in public once we have some level of maturity and understanding. The first thing Adam and Eve realized after disobeying God was that they were naked. The first thing they did was try to cover themselves. The first action God performed after the fall was to make them proper clothing. Noah sinned and displayed shameful behavior.

For some reason, Ham entered Noah’s tent. Notice how satan worked it out that it was Ham and not one of the two more noble brothers. If Ham would have had proper respect for his father, he would have quietly covered him up and left the tent; and then he would have kept his mouth shut. There was no reason to have ever said anything to anyone else. At the most, it may have been appropriate to speak with his father later, to make sure that there was not some deeper problem. But to all appearances, Noah just messed up.

The obvious problem here is Ham’s lack of honor for his father. While not yet written in the law of Moses, respect for the people who gave you life, brought you into the world, and cared for you as you grew up should go without saying.

Ham not only neglected to help his father, but he went out and told his brothers. The tone is that he thought it was funny and told them in order to further degrade his father. The two older brothers acted in proper respect for their dad. They took great pains to avoid looking upon him and covered him up.

*Noah awoke from his wine*. In other words, Noah hadn’t just had a little too much and then took a nap; Noah had passed out. After he awoke, he knew what Ham had done to him. So, what had Ham done to him? Ham had disrespected him. He left his father in a position of shame when he could have done something about it. Then, Ham went and told others; he spread the knowledge of his father’s shame to his other sons. Ham’s actions were mocking.

The text is clear that this is all that happened. There are some who will try to sensationalize this account by saying that Ham did something more to Noah: some sort of sex act or physical damage. There is no basis for any of these claims and they take away from the reality of how important it is to honor one’s father and mother. Noah knew what Ham had done to him either because he asked someone how he got covered or one of his sons simply told him.

Obviously, Noah wasn’t happy; none of us would be. Next Lord’s Day, if the Lord is willing, we will look at the interrelationship between the sons of Noah and the effects of sin that can be carried through generations.

Prayer

Almighty Lord, it is so very easy for each of us to stumble into sin. Even though it is our desire to be pleasing to You, we are weak against the sin nature we carry in our hearts. We don’t do the good that we desire to do; and we do the wrong that we wish to avoid. Our hearts are cold, our thoughts are evil, we tend toward the darkness rather than the light.

But glory to You Lord, You bring us through all our failings. By Your strength, we are able to do good. By Your guidance, we are able to be pleasing to You and do Your will. By the intersession of the Holy Spirit, our prayers reach Your throne, purified and acceptable.

Thank You that You do not look upon our own sorry righteousness, but upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ imparted to us by Your grace. Thank You for calling us; thank You for knocking on the door of our heart. If not for Jesus, we would be eternally lost.

It is in His blessed name we pray

Amen