

He's our rescuer – Noah

Have you ever needed rescuing? From getting on the wrong train, locking your child in the car. A good friend of mine (Mark) needed rescuing urgently a month or so ago from a life.

Like Mark today we are going to see the story of a man who needed rescuing from a life or death situation and that in turn is going to show us that we all need a rescuer.

Grab your bibles and turn to genesis 6 which was read for us earlier.

Today we're going to look at the story of Noah and the flood narrative. In many ways the account of Noah and the flood has over the years kind of been hijacked because if like me you went to Sunday school, here we call it young church, you probably heard the good old Bible story about Noah and the flood. Often an easel and flannelgraph was used and there was Noah and all the animals, like a dog but also a tiger but also a turtle just all right there.

Just all different kinds of animals everyone smiling - even the animals are smiling and animals can't smile and that's really wonderful and they're all going to get on the ark together, and it's so wonderful, Noah is going to save all the animals. The world will be changed forever but Noah, his family and the animals will all be safe.

But that message is a very sterilised one! It's the PG version to make it a safe one for kids. You see the Sunday school version of Noah and the ark leaves out that all the rest of the animals were killed and that all the rest of the people that were not on the ark were also killed.

It is a heavy story, it's a heavy account and it's a true one. As you get older people stop focussing on the nice animals and instead the historical accuracy of the flood narrative becomes more and more important. I found teachers that were just desperate to prove that the flood actually happened, that Noah was a real person that everything that was going on in the flood narrative was true that everything that was written down was exactly as it happened.

Whilst it's crucially important to defend the historical accuracy of the text it's not the main point. If the main point of the story about Noah and the flood is just to prove that it happened, then I think that we miss the main point of the narrative.

Biblical narrative is never just about what happened, it's always about what is God doing and the flood narrative and God's covenant (promise) with Noah which we're going to look at today is all about God's redemptive intention for God's creation, not just you and me but all of it the world - the animals everything in it.

God created the world, and He loves the world, and He will not let it be destroyed by man, His purposes will not be thwarted by sin.

So now Genesis 6 let's look at genesis 6 verses 5-7 and then we're going to jump to 11 and 12 just to give you a picture of what was happening and what was going on during Noah's day.

We open then with the world in a very sorry state. God's creation is in a bad way, things are not going the way that God intended them. Sin has affected all of creation and the coming flood is going to address all of creation not just you and me but the whole world, because no part of the world has been untouched by the corrupting power of sin so gods judgement will be total in its execution.

I think that as we read these verses, I think that we can see many parallels between Noah's world and are world.

In fact, Jesus says in the gospel of Matthew that the days when the son of man returns are going to be like the days of Noah.

So Noah's world does look a lot like ours. Our world is broken as well and it's very easy to prove that or learn about that. Open any news app on your smart phone or if your old school and you like the newspaper you can do that and you can learn all about the brokenness of the world. You can learn about the violence and sickness and death and poverty and racism and sexism that is rampant in our culture and around the world.

I think we would all agree the world is a broken place perhaps more broken in some ways than Noah's world and this corruption is easily traced back to the very beginning of all things. It started in the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve turn their back on God and want to rule the world themselves and the whole world ends up cursed and straight away we see the effects of sin. Adam passes the blame for the apple to Eve and you only need to flick through the chapters around this story to see other examples.

Sin has wrecked the world since the fall, and it continues to do so. It was not God's intention, not the way that things were supposed to be, and God hates sin, He wants nothing to do with it. Gods' intention was for man to steward creation, to care for it and to cultivate it and to multiply not destroy and kill and corrupt so God is forced to act in judgement.

What God says Genesis 6:7 can be confusing for us sometimes. You read a phrase like God regrets or God was sorry, or God had sorrow and a hasty reading of those verses might make us think that God made a mistake and is somehow not in control of his creation, that God has no hand in what's going on or that God is oblivious to what's happening.

But here's the thing about Gods regret it's not the same thing as the way that we regret. When we regret something it's like I shouldn't have eaten that or I wish I didn't think that. Our regret is a sort of wishy washy I should have done different or been better or tried harder kind of feeling. That regret is from a very inconsistent place in our hearts.

But God's regret is different he does not regret in the same way that we might. God's ways are not our ways. It's a theme we're going to see all throughout this flood narrative. God does not feel as if he's made a mistake.

God's regret means that action must be taken his hatred for sin demands justice it is precisely God's regret that reveals to us that he must act on a world that is fallen and broken something must change. God must preserve his creation and he will do whatever it takes to do so. God will not allow his intent for creation to be spoiled and so he reorders everything.

This paints a pretty bleak picture so far. But the flood narrative is not even primarily about the hopelessness of the world it is about the hope that Noah had a trustworthy, loving, merciful, kind God.

So, let's look at genesis 6:8. Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord or rather grace finds Noah. Right amid all this corruption God remembers Noah.

One thing that I think that we get twisted when it comes to the story about Noah is that we somehow think that God singled out Noah because he was a 'good' man and decides the world is messed up I'm going to start over with Noah, we're going to get everything right this time, Noah don't screw it up.

We'll figure it out as we go so just build the ark, save the animals, were just going to start over. Noah, I trust you, you're going to get it right this time.

That can't be the case because if you know anything about Noah and you know anything about his life you know that shortly after the world is reordered Noah falls into some serious sin. Noah is human and Noah is sinful. The first instance of recorded drunkenness in all scripture happens to Noah.

So it's not as if God looks at Noah and says Noah hope you get it right, hope you get a right for us this time buddy, it's all on you.

No God knows Noah and Noah knows himself. The Old Testament speaks of Noah's blamelessness and righteousness. But that was not because of anything that Noah did or anything or anyway that he behaved or acted it was because Noah agreed with God about the state of his heart. Noah knew who he was and he knew that he was sinful, he knew that there was nothing in him that was good or able to please God apart from his faith.

The author Hebrews will later report. Noah agreed with God and turned his life over to him and sometimes again I think we get it twisted on the story about the ark we think that God saved Noah because Noah was obedient, but we see here that before Noah ever builds an ark, before God ever tells Noah to build an ark, that God saves Noah.

God saves Noah and then Noah obeys. And that also is how God saves us. True believers don't white knuckle change or behaviour modification or good behaviour to look better on the outside to appear better to other people. When we obey just like Noah obeyed and built

the ark it comes out of a heart that has been changed by the grace of Jesus Christ. If you've placed your trust in Jesus there is no more need for you to prove yourself to God. Jesus proved it.

It wasn't as if God was saying okay Noah, I've given grace to you now prove it to me. God gives grace and Noah obeys out of gratitude from a heart that was changed.

God was not pleased with Noah's ark building, he was not pleased with his craftsmanship, he was not pleased with the fact that he it took him 100 years to build the ark. God was pleased with Noah's faith and those things all came as a result of his faith.

It is faith that enables us to accept what doesn't always make sense. The flood is a hard concept to accept. The destruction, the judgement, all of it I think is hard for us to understand how the God that we know, and love, and worship can allow this to happen but again it's not our ways but God's ways.

John Piper says 'history is Gods highway to an appointed future'. God is working out all of history from the end destination. In a very real way God is standing at the end of history looking at us, working things out the way that he as planned. Planned from the very beginning, the flood included. All of these things God saw from the very beginning.

At the beginning of history God saw the end of history God's counsel stands and his purpose of reconciling all things that are broken by sin to himself through Jesus Christ will not be stopped by man's efforts even if it means reordering creation at this point in time to accomplish his purpose God will redeem creation.

God makes a covenant with Noah that still stands for us today in Genesis 8:20 - 9:17 – we don't have time to read it.

The covenant with Noah reveals the expansive and all encompassing nature of God's provision. Just as God judged all of creation with the flood so God embraces all of his creation in the covenant with Noah. God promises to never judge the earth by flood again and never to strike down any living creature and to uphold creation. This covenant is exceedingly generous to a creation that is completely undeserving. The flood did not solve mans sin problem and God knows that the intention of man's heart is only evil from its youth.

If you read it you'll note that there is never any indication in this covenant that God is making some sort of contingency plan with Noah to obey in a certain way, yes Noah is charged with stewarding creation yes God calls Noah to obey but out of a heart that has been changed by God but all of the covenant is contingent on what God can do and God can do anything and everything.

This covenant re-established God's intentions for mankind but it was not able to deal with the sin of man. God knew and had an even better rescue plan in his Son. Noah needed rescuing from a flood which was the judgement of God. God provided that rescue in the form of a command to build an ark. We need rescuing from God's judgement upon our sin.

God is even more gracious to us. We don't need to build an 'ark'. The right judgement upon us has been dealt with by the death and resurrection of Jesus. All we need is faith.

Do you have a rescuer this morning?

If not, then come to Jesus.

If you do, then are you like Noah living a life of obedience?

Just as Noah turned his back on the world and boarded the ark for rescue so we turn our back on the world follow Jesus. Noah built an ark in the middle of a desert over 100 years whilst being laughed at, but it didn't stop Noah. What excuse do you have for not obeying God?

God established a promise to never destroy life in the same way again and he gave a sign of that promise – a bow in the sky. A bow is a weapon of war and that bow points up to heaven. God has provided a means of salvation through His son. Will you accept it?