

The Waters Recede with a Flood of Grace

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No doubt you noticed that we've come to the turning point in the Noah narrative today. The tides have risen and come to their highest point. All of that took approximately a half a year. And in our passage today, the waters recede. All of which occurs over another 6 months or so.

So high tide has come and gone, and the total time we have spent in the ark is approximately a year.

And along with the changing of the tide we have a change in theme. Up to this point we have been talking about the impending doom of the world. We've been talking the flood and the waters of judgment. But now, with the commencement of chapter 8, we can begin talking about a new kind of flood: The flood of God's redeeming love.

There are three lessons I want you to take from this passage. The first thing you must see is how the Lord affirms his covenant love.

I. The Lord affirms his covenant love [1]

The passage begins with those precious words, "But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark."

These words are an accommodation of course. We know that God never forgets. It is impossible for him to forget. These words have to be understood from Noah's perspective. It is likely that Noah felt like God had forgotten him.

Think about how Noah must have felt. Noah might have been a little weary of it all, couldn't he have? He was no doubt lonely. It was pitch black all around him. For 150 days he had been encompassed in the dark. You know how your loneliness is multiplied when you sit in the dark for just a while.

And the only people he was able to interact with were his family. The last contact with a person would have been months ago (and then it might have only been their screams as they clung to the edge of the ship pleading to be let in!)

Throw in the bobbing and the tossing of a ship at sea and you likely have a rather miserable state of things. It is likely that Noah was thinking that all was lost for him.

It was at this point that God remembered Noah and the covenant he had made with him.

From time to time you will hear this idea of "God remembering" repeated in Scripture. In Psalm 105 the author hearkens back to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He says that they were just a small band, roaming around from place to place. They could have easily

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been crushed by the nations around them. But it says that the Lord, “remembers his covenant forever, the oath that he swore to Abraham.” In other words, during that time when all could have been lost, God was there to preserve and keep.

In the book of Exodus, when the people of Israel were groaning under their hard labor in Egypt, Moses writes that “God remembered the covenant he made with Abraham.” When all seemed lost, when it seemed like the [Land promised](#) to Abraham would never be inherited, God acted.

It almost seems that when things are their darkest—whenever things are most dire, you hear it said, “God remembered.”

I point this out because it is something that we need to remember. We need to remember that God never forgets the covenant that he has made.

There are times in our lives when we can feel like Noah. Spiritually speaking, we can feel oh so lonely. God seems so far off. We can wonder if he is out there. All our prayers feel like they are bouncing off a ceiling made of brass.

Maybe for you moms’ it’s while all your kids are sick. It just seems to go on and on, and there doesn’t ever seem to be an end in sight. For some of you it might be because of the continual flow of news. You are still reeling because of this past election season and all you hear about from the talking heads is how our country seems to be spinning out of control.

Whatever the exact circumstances may be, it seems like you are lost. You are all by yourself far down in the depths of a dark, black tunnel.

When we come to those bleak moments of our lives, we need to remember that our God is the one who always remembers. He never forgets. His covenant is as sure today as it was when he first made it. And though we cannot see his hand or feel his presence we must rest assured that there is no reason to despair. God continues to work out his plan. He continues to remember us and so preserve and protect us in his covenant love.

The next thing I want you to think about is how the Lord provides a consoling sign. He not only affirms his covenant love, but he provides a sign that would be a reminder of his grace.

II. The Lord provides a consoling sign [6-12]

In verses 6-12 it we read about how Noah sent forth the various birds from the ark. At first he sends out a raven, and it skitters here and there. But nothing comes of it. A couple days later he sends out a dove, but it doesn’t render anything either. A little later he sends it out again. This time it brings back an olive branch. Then, on the last flight, it doesn’t come back.

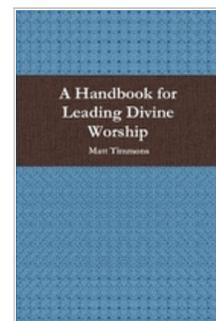
But think about that olive branch. Think about what that was. Think about how meaningful that had to have been for Noah. Noah’s ship came to rest on the mountains. So most likely, from his vantage point he couldn’t see anything below. As he sat in the ark, he might have still been wondering, “What does the future hold for me? What’s going to come of things? Is the Lord going to keep his promise?”

You have to understand that this branch would have cause him such elation. It was a sign for Noah. It is a sign, not just that the waters have abated, but it was a guarantee that life would continue. That little branch no doubt would have soothed all his worries. It would have been an assurance that the Lord had indeed been faithful to his promise.

You know, each week we have something similar laid before us. We have opportunity to grasp



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You know, each week we have something similar laid before us. We have opportunity to grasp hold of a visible sign that points to the reality God's grace in our life. The Lord's Supper is supposed to do the very same thing for you that that branch did for Noah. It is here to be a reminder to you that God will not go back on his promise.

Perhaps someone here today is even in need of this. There are times when we are like Noah. We be situated in such a way that our spiritual vision is skewed. From our perspective we can't tell if God is really going to be faithful to his promise.

Maybe it is because sin has come to cloud our vision. You've been tangling with this besetting sin for some time now and you can't seem to shake it. Since you haven't had victory over it and continually succumb to the temptation, maybe you are starting to doubt the reality of God's love.

Or maybe it is one of you young people. You've grown up in a Christian home. You've been taught the Scriptures all through. You've made a profession of faith and even been baptized. But now, you are just starting to question if you really are in a state of grace or not. You are looking back at things and you are beginning to question whether or the Lord really accepts you.

I want you to know that if you have doubts about your state, that ought not to prevent you from coming to the Table. That is exactly why it has been set for you. Here at this meal God puts in your hand a visible confirmation of his redeeming love. These elements are to be the medicine that soothes your worries. They are here for you to grasp hold of so that by handling them you may have your confidence renewed and strengthened.

Don't be one who shrinks back from the table because you wonder about love. Come to the table and find that it is real and true.

There is yet one more thing that I want you to see in this text. I want you to see that in this passage the Lord establishes a new world.

III. The Lord establishes a new world [2-5, 13-19]

You can see how this plays out in the passage. At the beginning of the passage, in verses 2-5 you have one big watery world. You remember how we talked about it being "formless and void" at the beginning? The Spirit was hovering over the waters. Here in verse 1 the Lord causes a wind to blow. It is the same word as Spirit.

Think about how all this plays out. The clouds break, and the sunlight starts to shine again. It is as if God says, "Let there be light." The waters start to recede and once again you can discern an expanse between the waters above and the waters below. Land begins to rise out of the waters. It is almost if Genesis 1 is being replayed right before our eyes. Then, in 13-19, the door to the ark is opened and all the animals begin to roam upon the earth.

What we have here is a new creation. The Lord has given us a new creation. All the taint of sin has been removed and it is almost as if paradise has been restored.

I believe though that this is to be a picture of what is in store. God has given us here a foreshadowing of what is yet to come. Yes, we've been talking a lot about the coming judgment. But we must remember that His ultimate plan is to bring redemption to the earth and restore the paradise that was lost.

I believe that what we have here foreshadows the ultimate cleansing of the earth. The one that the Promised Seed would bring in through his redemptive work.

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and promised good would bring in through the redemptive work.

In the book of Revelation, at the end of chapter 20 it tells of all people being assembled before the great white throne. The dead came up from their graves. All people were gathered there. Then the book of life was opened and everyone whose name was not written on the book of life were wisked away. They were thrown into the lake of fire.

After this we are told of the New Heaven and the New Earth. It is a place of purity and absolute beauty. The cosmic order has been completely transformed because sin and suffering have been completely banished.

This is the inheritance of those who trust Christ. In the end paradise will be regained.

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