

**“After the Flood”**  
**Genesis 6: 9-22; 7:24; 8:14-19**  
**June 1, 2008**

The story of Noah’s Ark is one of, if not the most familiar and recognizable stories in all the Bible. And because of our love for it and fascination with it, we surround our children from even their youngest days with the stories of Noah, the animals, the ark and the flood. Right here in our church I’ll bet that somewhere in some children’s Sunday school room there is a picture or a flannel board depicting this familiar tale. Nancy and I even decorated the walls of our kids’ room with pictures of Noah, the animals and the ark.

Because of this familiarity we commonly think of Noah’s ark as a nice little children’s story. But as Donald Miller reminds us in his wonderful book *“Blue Like Jazz”* Noah’s ark is really not a children’s story at all. Miller writes, *“I associated much of Christian doctrine with children’s stories because I grew up in a church. My Sunday school teachers had turned Bible narrative into children’s fables. They talked about Noah and the ark and all of the animals. They failed to mention the part about God massacring most of humanity. It took me a while to realize that stories like the Garden of Eden and Noah and the ark, while often told to children, weren’t children’s stories at all. I think that the devil has tricked us into thinking that much of the biblical theology is a story fit for kids. How did we come to think that the story of Noah’s ark is appropriate for children? Can you imagine a book about this event, complete with pictures of people gasping and flailing as they drown? Of mothers grasping for their children while they go flying down white water rapids? Of children’s tiny heads being bashed against rocks? A children’s book like that wouldn’t sell many copies.”*

Indeed it wouldn’t. Yet while a graphic depiction of the flood story would make a lousy children’s book, the Bible remains the best selling book of all time, because, far from being a mere collection of children’s fables, the familiar and adult stories of scripture like Noah’s ark teach us a great number of very primal and powerful truths about life, and death, and what lies beyond. And among other things that we can and perhaps have learned from reading the story of Noah’s ark, one very important truth that it reveals to us is that human disobedience has profound and far reaching effects on all of creation.

As I said in the sermon last week on the creation story from the beginning of

the book of Genesis, God created the world and everything in it to be part of a very intricate and interconnected system of life. Each and every part of God's creation has a unique and specific relationship to, and dependency upon every other part of God's design.

And it all began in the Garden of Eden. We're all familiar with the story of the fall of humankind that is told in chapter 2 of the book of Genesis. In that story the serpent tempts Eve, and she ate the forbidden fruit. Eve then offered the fruit to Adam who also disobeyed God and ate fruit from the one tree in all that garden that God told them not to eat. That trail of disobedience that began in the garden of Eden eventually found its conclusion with the great flood. That single sin that had begun to unravel God's very good design at the dawn of creation had now reached its inevitable climax. The world was no longer good. *"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and the earth was filled with violence. 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."*

And if we have any doubt who is responsible for God's anger and judgement, a look back to verse 5 will offer us immediate enlightenment, *"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."*

The wickedness of humankind brought destruction to the entire earth. It's important that we note that the flood story isn't just about what happened to God's disobedient little people. It is a story of what happened to the entire earth and all its inhabitants as a result of human disobedience. It's not just the people that were corrupt. But indeed the corruption of the human race led to the corruption of the entire planet, and it was all a direct result of the disobedience of humankind.

And so God declared, *"I will destroy them with the earth" "Everything that is on the earth will die."* You see, because of the interconnectedness of God's created order, the innocent suffer with the guilty. The birds, the creeping things, the flowers the trees, the giant elephants and the tiny little bunnies alike, every living thing on the earth, except for those that Noah

took onto the ark were destroyed by the flood which was brought on as a result of human disobedience.

The situation is frighteningly similar today. The ill effects that human misbehavior is having on the planet are so obvious that they almost don't bear mentioning. I don't need to tell you the stories about all the effects that things like strip mining and deforestation are having on the world's plants and climate. And who hasn't seen the reports about the numbers of species of animals that are endangered because of the reckless and selfish disregard that human beings generally show to our co inhabitants on this planet. Like me you've all probably seen the news footage of the polar bears drowning at the north pole as a result of the melting polar ice cap. And when one considers that tornadoes, hurricanes and the like are the result of winds that are created by the ocean currents, which are regulated by the ocean's temperatures, which are directly impacted by the temperature of the air and the polar ice caps, it's not too difficult to see not only the interconnectedness of the world's ecosystem, but also the devastating effect that human behavior is having on our planet. And all this is not even to mention the violence and war that we inflict on one another in the pursuit of land, power, oil and even religion.

You see just as humankind's behavior just before the flood led to the destruction of the planet, so do our actions today have profound and long lasting effects on the world and all its inhabitants, present and future. And if you don't think that the things we do today might have a powerful impact on the lives of future generations, just ask yourself the question, "*Where would we be today if Noah hadn't obeyed God and built an ark?*" Where would we be? We wouldn't be. But Noah did obey God, Noah did build the ark, and we are here today as a result.

You see, after all of the death and destruction of the great flood, there was a happy ending. After the 150 days in which the water covered the planet, Noah, his family and all those animals disembarked the ark and life returned to the earth. God gave humankind a second chance. And this reminds us all that when God is involved, a happy ending is always possible. For as much as the flood story might teach us about the devastating effects that human misbehavior can have on the creation, it also teaches us an equal amount about what is possible when people listen to the voice of God and respond in obedience. The flood story begins with destruction, but after the flood came redemption.

And despite the overwhelming number of problems that beset our planet here at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that Noah's ark kind of global redemption is still possible today. Even as the world was redeemed through Noah's obedience once upon a time, so can things be made better today if we are willing to obey the warnings and teachings of God. For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, there are signs and signals all around us every day concerning God's will for us to begin working to heal our fractured world. After Noah's flood came redemption, may we be just as faithful to God's call to redeem the planet today. The future is counting on us. Amen.