

## Sermon: Genesis 6-8. The flood. “A story of destruction?”

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- **The pattern of history**

How many of each animal did Moses take onto the ark? How many of each animal? (None – it was Noah!)

I remember being taught this story in Sunday school – it was all about Noah obeying God. Noah was told to build an ark and everyone laughed at him and said he was silly. And Noah tried to warn everyone to get on the ark, but they wouldn't listen. But that's not actually what we read here, is it? There's no laughing. No invitations. And there is no geological referencing, no mention of kangaroos or volcanos or seismic activities or ice age. Because it's not a story about science. It's not even a story about Noah!

This story is about the relationship between God and sinful humanity. This is a story about 4 things: **evil, judgement, grace and salvation**. And it's easy to focus so much on the details of a story like this, that we can miss the *purpose* – that this is a story about 4 things: **evil, judgement, grace and salvation**.

Genesis 6-8 sets up the pattern of human relationships with God. Mankind is evil and sins. God judges. God shows grace. God saves. This is a pattern that repeats throughout Biblical history. So rather than be distracted by the cyprus wood, let's have a look at the key verses for this recurring pattern:

### 1. Evil – Genesis 6:5-6

*<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*

Evil all the time. This is how God describes us. It's not nice, is it? But it's true. And it grieves God. His heart is filled with pain because of our evil. As we heard last week – sin is ... serious. It grieves God. It causes him pain. And how does God respond to this evil? With...

### 2. Judgement. Genesis 6:7

*<sup>7</sup> So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created... for I regret that I have made them"*

God acts upon evil. Because sin is... serious. And as early as Genesis 6, we see that the consequence of sin is death.

We expect consequences in our world? Don't we? We've had a royal commission into child abuse in the church and other institutions. Who wants to see CONSEQUENCES?

Judgement?

We've had a royal commission into financial institutions. Who wants to see CONSEQUENCES? Judgement?

Well, as much as WE want to see judgment and justice, God wants it even more.

But for humans, sometimes, that's **all** we want. Vengeance. Justice. Payback. We want to see evil get punished. But God is **beyond** that. He wants to see judgement, but it needs to line up with the rest of his character. And his character is one of grace.

### 3. Grace – Genesis 6:12-14

***“God saw how corrupt the earth had become... so God said to Noah... ‘make yourself an ark.’”***

God saves Noah. When people sin, God brings judgement. BUT... he also shows grace. Right from the beginning of Genesis we see this.

**Adam and Eve** – they sin. Thrown out of the Garden of Eden. But First, God prevents them from eating from the tree of life, so they won't live forever in sin. He also clothes them. THEN he throws them out of Eden.

Then there's **Cain**. He throws him out into the land of Nod. But he marks him so no one can kill him in vengeance. And he provides for him a family line.

And then there's Noah. Humanity was evil all the time. But Noah found favour. And God showed grace. And so what starts to look like a story of **destruction** actually turns out to be a story of **salvation**. The flood is not about the destruction of humanity as much as it is about the salvation of humanity.

We need to hear this. God judges because he is righteous. And good. And fair. He brings punishment because this is his justice for evil. Even humans do that and expect that to be done in our legal system. But God also, in the midst of judgment, shows grace and brings salvation.

What looked to be the destruction of all humanity, ends up being a story about the salvation of humanity through one man. Does that sound familiar?

Because THAT is the pattern God is establishing here. Sin brings judgment. But God shows grace and brings salvation.

### 4. Salvation – Genesis 6:18

***“But I will establish my covenant with you...”***

God establishes his covenant with humanity.

It's no accident, I think, that Noah is born just as Adam dies. And Noah is given a name with meaning in 5:29 – “He named him Noah and said ‘he will comfort us...”

God always raises up a saviour. After Adam, Noah. After Noah, Abraham. After Abraham, Moses. Then judges. Then Kings. Then prophets. Until finally, one man, prophet, priest and King, arrives. Jesus. The second Adam. The one who not only brings salvation, but also brings an end to the curse of sin – and an end to death. And this is what this flood is all leading up to. This is what it's about. The pattern of sin and salvation is established. A covenant between God and man.

It's so easy to get lost in the details of the flood that we forget to see the pattern of sin and salvation that God is showing. God wants us to see that we NEED a saviour. We need to see the **need**.

If your dentist tells you that you need 10 fillings, you want to see the X-ray before they start drilling, don't you? Show me why I need this!

When your mechanic says you need a new engine, you want to see the problem with the old one before you spend \$5,000 on a new one, don't you?

God wants to SHOW US the problem. He wants to SHOW US the pattern of unbending sinful human behaviour, and the pattern of his unbending grace and salvation. He wants to show us, even here in chapter 6, the need for Jesus.

This is the trajectory of the covenant. Covenant is a word that has to do with faithfulness. It's a word we use with marriage. A covenant – a binding agreement of faith between two people. But with God, all of his covenants, even this first one, is one-sided. Why is that? Because he is dealing with evil humans. Every covenant God makes with mankind is to care for them despite the way they treat him.

Imagine a one-sided marriage covenant. Imagine one person says to the other, "I will commit to being faithful to you for the rest of my life, even though I know you will be unfaithful. Even though I know you will lie to me, and cheat on me, and treat me badly. Even though you won't love, honour and respect me, I will love, honour and respect you."

Now that wouldn't be fair, would it?

But this is what God does. This is his character. With every covenant God makes, he is saying to humanity "I KNOW you will be unfaithful. That is your **nature**! But I PROMISE to love you."

This is the salvation story of the Bible.

**6:5 "every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.**

**6:18 "I will establish my covenant with you.**

Then the flood happens. And Noah makes a burnt offering to God – a sacrifice –

**8:21 “The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: ‘Never again will I curse the ground because of humans...”**

and we think: finally, Noah gets it right. But then the rest of that verse says this:

***“even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.***

NOTHING has changed!

Humanity is evil. God judges. God shows grace. God saves humanity through Noah. And humanity is still evil. Every inclination. God establishes his covenant, **EVEN THOUGH** the human heart is **STILL** completely evil. This is the pattern of salvation history:

**Evil. Judgment. Grace. Salvation.**

But did you pick up right at the end, the human response? What is the one thing that turns God’s heart around from being grieved and troubled?

In 8:20. Noah sacrificed and the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma.

Noah’s sacrifice pleased God. Only the sacrifice of Jesus could **actually deal** with sin and death. Only the sacrifice of Jesus could bring an end to the cycle of sin and judgment.

But the sacrifice of God’s people every day is still pleasing to God. This is how we are to respond. Romans 12:1-2 puts it into **new covenant** words for us **new covenant** people:

**“Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy - do you see that?! - ... in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a LIVING sacrifice, holy and PLEASING to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the patterns of the world, but be transformed.”**

The sacrifice that is pleasing to God is our lives. Living for him. Transformed by Him. No longer following the pattern of the sinful world.

Our response to God, **in view of his mercy**, is to live a sacrificial life.

And that’s what we need to ask ourselves isn’t it? In what ways is my life, as a Christian, sacrificial to God?

What is your next step in sacrificially living for God? Will it be time? An extra hour a week in serving, or in prayer? Will it be money? Will you finally make the step of giving 10% of your income and only keeping 90%? How long will you put off that first step in generosity? Will it be the sacrifice of pride, or power or status for the sake of the gospel? Will it be sacrificing some of your worldly hopes and dreams in order to go after kingdom hopes and dreams?

What will be your next step... of daily sacrifice to our faithful God?

Outline:

A story about evil, judgment, grace and salvation

### 1. Evil

*<sup>6</sup> The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain." 6:5-6*

### 2. Judgement

*<sup>7</sup> So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created... for I regret that I have made them" 6:7*

### 3. Grace

*"God saw how corrupt the earth had become... so God said to Noah... 'make yourself an ark.'" 6:12-14*

### 4. Salvation

*"But I will establish my covenant with you..." 6:18*

## Our response to God

8:21 "The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: 'Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, ... *even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.*

"... offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship." Romans 12:1