

Humanity continues to sin and to rebel against God. So there is judgment as consequence of humanities sin but God redeems, over and over and over again. And finally, when human sin and corruption have become so great that they threaten to overwhelm the world again, it is God's self who enters into the waters -- into the waters of a woman's womb, into the waters of the Jordan, to show once and for all that God is passionately committed to God's creation in Jesus Christ.

On this Welcome Sunday we begin once again the story of God and God's people. The story of Noah is a good place to start. It is essentially not a children's story but humanities story. It is a story about death and life. It is a story about human sin and God's redemption. A story, most of all, about a God who is forevermore committed to God's people – a story of God who is committed to you. Give God the Glory, Glory Children of the Lord.

Prayers

Filled with God's abundant blessings, we pray for the world, and all those in need.

Faithful God, your scripture reminds us of your love and mercy and the importance of caring for the creation you have provided. Challenge us to be better stewards of creation. Surround those who suffer from the excesses of nature in times of flooding, fire and drought. Let us pray ...

Lord renew in all of us a commitment to teach the faith to our children and youth. May our offerings provide Bibles, curriculum and staff that help teach and guide. Guide parents as they are the primary teachers of the faith. Raise up needed volunteers across the breath of our ministries. Let us pray...

Be with all of us in times of clouds and times of rainbows. Surround all those who suffer in these days. We remember Aaron, Barb, Carrie, Jim, Todd, Fred and those in hospice Barbara, Simone and John. Let us pray...

We pray for those who grieve remembering the family of Doris Foley upon her death and Charlotte and Mason Draeger upon the death of their son-in-law Robert Rilling. Surround their daughter Janet and grandchildren with comfort and hope. Let us pray...

On this first day of Faith Development we give thanks for our children, parents, Faith Development Leaders, Helpers and our Messengers. With full confidence of your mercy, we pray these things in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.



HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

WORSHIP SERVICE FOR SEPTEMBER 11, 2022



Pr. Meredith Bedker Musaus

Reading: Noah's Ark (The Reading is from the Spark Story Bible)

A long time passed since God created the world. People forgot about God except for one man. His name was Noah. He loved and obeyed God. "I am very sad that people have forgotten about me," God said to Noah. "I am going to bring rain to flood the earth – lots and lots of rain. Build yourself a huge boat of cypress wood." Noah did just what God said and made a big, big boat with lots of rooms. Noah was 600 years old when he entered the boat with his wife, their sons and their sons' wives. God brought two of every kind of animal to the boat. Elephants and zebras, lions and tigers, pigs and giraffes, dogs and cats, deer and rhinos, bears and cows, horses and goats, lambs and monkeys all came two by two. All different kinds of animals, birds, and creepy, crawling things came to the boat. Noah took all of them into the boat. Then he shut the door. Inside the big boat the lions roared, the dogs barked, and the birds chirped. It was stuffy and stinky! It was muggy and hot! On the outside it rained and rained. It rained big, giant drops and little, baby drops for 40 days and 40 nights. The rains came down and the flood waters came up. The water splashed on the sides of the big boat and pushed it up and down for 150 days. Finally it rested on the top of a tall mountain. Noah waited and waited until God said to him, "Come out of the boat, you and your wife and your sons and their wives." Noah's family and all the animals came off the boat. They put their feet on dry land. They ran, and skipped, and jumped. They twirled and danced in the sunlight. They thanked God for the land and God blessed them. Noah's family grew and grew. The animals and birds and the creepy crawly things filled the earth again. God painted a rainbow of brilliant red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet across the sky and promised, "Never again will water flood the earth. Whenever you see the rainbow in the clouds, I will see it too, and I will remember."

Well done! It is well and good to have some fun beginning our new school year schedule. We read the story our of the Spark Bible because it is a really long one in the NRSV and think most of us are familiar with it. Two of my favorite greeting cards are about Noah's Ark. One has the ark floating away and two unicorns saying, "drat was that today?" and the other has two dinosaurs saying the same thing or words to that effect. In each case they missed the boat!

If you’ve been in my office you know I have a pretty extensive Noah’s Ark collection. Some are cute others are very artistic but almost all are whimsical. When people think of a Bible Story suitable for children – Noah’s Ark is usually the one that comes to mind. It is also a popular baby nursery theme – from night light covers to mobiles to crib sets.

About five years ago the movie Noah came out starring Russell Crowe ----- many people were offended because of its dark theme. I was like ... Russell Crowe ... he is never in warm fuzzy movies is he? Despite our intent – Noah’s Ark is not a cute story – oh maybe the two by two part is but the reason for the story is about destruction and death.

The Flood Story is part of Genesis we refer to as Pre History – stories that tell the story of God and humanity and in our understanding not to be taken literally but pack a punch in understanding God and God’s way with humanity. Adam and Eve – Cain and Abel – Tower of Babel and Noah. All of them are stories that seek to answer the question of how sin came into the world and God’s reaction to it. Because we have tamed the story of Noah we kind of lose sight of the fact that the need for an ark was because God was ticked with human sin so God decided to send a flood and start all over. However God saves a remnant of his perfect creation. Noah, his family and the animals two by two.

What do we do with this story that really is not cute but filled with death and destruction. In Hebrew the same root word is used to describe the “corruption” that human beings bring on the earth before the Flood (Genesis 6:11-12 [3x]) and the “destruction” that the Flood itself brings (Genesis 6:13).

In other words, the destruction of the earth is the direct result of the violence and corruption of human beings. This use of the same word describes both sin and the punishment for sin is not uncommon in the Hebrew Bible. Human evil results in punishment or better, consequences for that evil. We are punished not so much “*for* our sins as *by* our sins.”

In the Flood, human corruption leads to the corruption of the earth itself. Human nature hasn’t changed much because this certainly rings true regarding our concerns for climate crisis today. It’s also not the only flood story in ancient cultures.

Think for a minute if you were an ancient human being and experienced something like they are experiencing in Pakistan today – news reports say 1/3 of the country is inundated with flood waters – wouldn’t you think the whole world was flooded?? But those ancient cultures have a different purpose and outcome – their gods are set on destruction and payback and just wreak havoc punishing humanity. But NOT SO the flood story in Genesis.

This flood story is not just about destruction but also the mercy of God. The Good News is that the story of Noah is not just about human sin but about a God’s commitment to all living things even though God is grieved at the sin of humanity. God still makes provision for saving a remnant from the Flood. God harbors Noah and his family and the animals and saves them from the consuming, chaotic waters.

The pivotal point of the story, is God “remembers” them (Genesis 8:1). God hasn’t forgotten Noah, Mrs. Noah and the animals in the ark. But when God remembers God is moved to act on their behalf and in an act of new creation that mirrors the first creation ... The Flood Subsides.

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; Genesis 1:2. The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. God sends a *ruach*, a wind, to dry up the waters and bring forth life out of death (Genesis 8:1; compare with Genesis 1:2). Then God makes a covenant with Noah and his family, and with every living creature on earth, animals domestic and wild, cows and koala bears, jaguars and jellyfish, blue whales and bumblebees (Genesis 9:8-17).

God makes a covenant, an unequivocal promise, never to destroy the earth with a flood again. And this is the REALLY GOOD NEWS. God makes this promise not because humanity was changed.

We as God’s people have made a mess of many things. We don’t have to look far in scripture that humanity continues to blow it. Human beings are not changed by the flood, but God is changed. God commits Godself to this broken, corrupt, and sinful world. God’s mercy wins the day – God is faithful even when those he created in his image are not.

Here these beautiful words from Isaiah 54: 9-10. This is like the days of Noah to me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

More steadfast than the mountains and hills is God’s faithfulness and covenant love. God will be faithful, not because of anything that human beings do, but because God is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6).