

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus be yours this day. The title for today’s sermon is ‘Living in Christ’ and is based on the Old Testament reading from Genesis 9. Let us pray...Amen.

A few years ago there were a couple television shows which tried to demonstrate how to survive a disaster. One was titled just that, ‘Surviving disasters’ and another one was titled, ‘Worst-case scenario’. In both a former special forces soldier went through unthinkable situations to explain how best to survive them. There was everything from surviving major earthquakes, to plane crashes, to home invasions; natural disasters or man-made disaster, they had answers. I watched a few episodes and found them interesting. Yet they didn’t explain how to survive the most threatening and dangerous man-made disaster; sin.

Now, talking about surviving natural disasters, around 4500 years ago something huge was set in motion which rocked the foundations of the earth and had a dramatic effect on every living creature on earth: the Flood. For recorded just a couple of chapters earlier of our reading in Genesis is; **“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup> And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. <sup>13</sup> And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them.”** I will pay them for what they have earned, I will give them their just reward, or as Scripture records, God said: **“Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”** (Genesis 6:11-13)

**“For the wages of sin is death”**(Romans 6:23a) and the people who had formerly walked with God now were corrupt, violent, and evil, so God paid them what they earned, and they all died. It didn’t matter how well a person was trained or prepared, they all died.

Genesis literally records how the earth’s crust tore open to release fountains of the great deep and then it began to rain. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights and the waters rose and rose. The water covered the earth and everything on it. The water covered ground, the animals, and their idols. Scripture says the waters covered the trees, the hills, and even the mountains by 15 cubits, or a little over 22 feet. **“And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. <sup>22</sup> Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. <sup>23</sup> He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth.”**(Genesis 7:21-23)

The Book of Genesis isn’t poetry; it’s objective history. To see a book of poetry in Scripture one needs only to turn to the Book of Psalms. Genesis, on the other hand, records what really happened. Genesis chapter 7 is no different, it records how God really paid out the due reward for people’s sin, and the number of receiving their due payment through the water was staggering.

The Flood account should terrify us because there we see part of God’s anger over sin. It should scare us because our sinful world, along with each of us, is no better or more holy than the one destroyed in the Flood. It should frighten us because we cannot escape God’s judgment by our actions, our words, our training, or with the contents of our bank accounts. In the Flood we see what we deserve for our sins. Present in these verses is very clear Law. Yet in it all there is also very clearly the Gospel to comfort us.

For the mass destruction and loss of life was not the whole story, nor was it even the main theme of the Flood account in Genesis. Yes, countless people died in their corruption, violence, and rejection of God. Yes, for the wages of their sin billions of gallons of water per hour poured forth from the ground and from the sky to virtually extinguish all air breathing life. And every person who died fully earned and deserved what he or she received.

And yet, in those 40 days and 40 nights of torrential rain and flooding, and over the following year while the waters continued to cover the face of the world, something survived; or I should say, some things survived.

Those who survived were Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives, eight people in all. Also saved were seven pairs of each of the clean animals and birds, and one pair of each of the unclean animals. They were not saved because of their great action; they were saved by the grace and mercy of God. They were saved in the ark God designed and told Noah to build. For despite all the corruption and violence and sin and evil in the world, God was not willing to destroy everything He had created. God saved Noah, his family, and the animals through the waters.

The reason Scripture doesn’t focus much on the destruction is that is the work of sin. The reason Scripture focuses on the salvation for that is the work of God. The Flood is less about the destruction of the world by water and more about the salvation of a few, by the grace of God, through the water. For the Lord instructed Noah to build the ark. The Lord gave Noah the plans for the ark. The Lord told Noah to gather which animals for the ark. The Lord told Noah, his family, and the animal to get into the ark. Finally, “**the Lord shut him in**”(Genesis 7:16) the ark as an incredible sign of mercy. All who were in the ark were protected and saved by God. All who were outside of the ark had separated themselves from God and died in the Flood.

Yet the same water which destroyed the earth also lifted up the ark and saved Noah and his family. After a year and about a month in the ark the flood waters subsided enough and the land dried off enough for Noah and everything in the ark to come out. In mercy God established a covenant with Noah and with all flesh that He would never again destroy all life with a flood. The sign of this covenant is the rainbow; an amazing reminder of God’s faithfulness to His promises.

As time would soon tell and continues to tell, no amount of amazing rescues and rainbow sightings can keep humankind, including God’s own people, from falling into sin. Even though

God saved Noah and his family, soon afterwards some, including one of Noah’s own sons, turned away from God “**for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.**”(Genesis 8:21) People, as seen in Scripture and in the world around us, quickly forget about God and all He continues to do in the world and their lives daily.

For that is why God sent His son. Jesus came and said: “**For I came NOT to call the righteous, but sinners.**”(Matthew 9:13) For “**the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.**”(1 Timothy 1:15) For all the mercy God showed by saving Noah and his family, it all pointed ahead to a much greater saving done by the Messiah, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Still there are many who do not believe or who do not fully trust Christ: His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, His deliverance, or His salvation. Basically they, and sometimes we, do not trust Christ at His Word, just as Adam and Eve didn’t trust God at His Word in the Garden of Eden, just as those present at the time of Noah did trust God at His Word, just as the Israelites did trust God at His Word and miracles leaving Egypt, just as the Israelites didn’t trust God at His Word all through the Old Testament, just as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and other Jewish leaders didn’t trust Jesus at His Word in the New Testament.

So Jesus, the Word made flesh, demonstrated who He was and why He came over and over in His life, climaxing with His death, resurrection, and ascension. The same Word which was spoken to create all things spoke out in today’s Gospel to His disciples in their terror and panic to, “**Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.**”(Mark 6:50) The same Word spoke out from the cross, “**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do**”(Luke 23:34), and “**It is finished, and bowed His head and give up His spirit**”(John 19:30) for you and your salvation.

After His rest in the tomb and His resurrection, Jesus, the Word, instructed His disciples with the promise to “**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** <sup>20</sup> **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**”(Matthew 28:19-20) In Baptism God calls you, marks you with His name, numbers you among the Communion of Saints, and brings you into the eternal protection of the ark of the Holy Christian Church.

This ark is designed and built by God to protect you from the storm of the world and the assaults of the devil. Just as Noah was sealed in the ark and brought safely through the waters to a new life, you too are sealed in the ark of the Holy Christian Church and brought safely through the waters of Holy Baptism to new and eternal life. In these waters you live and float, safely in the ark Christ prepared for you. Here Christ also continues to strengthen you with His Word and forgiveness. He also feeds you with His own body and blood, crucified and resurrected, for you for the forgiveness of all your sins.

For the life you live you live in Christ, in the ark of the Holy Christian Church. Unlike Noah’s ark, the ark of the Holy Christian Church has its doors open to all sinners and God continues to call out through you and me, and with the Holy Spirit, to a drowning and dying world. Here in the ark of the Church in the midst of chaos you have peace; in the midst of sorrow; hope, in the midst of death, eternal life; in the midst of sinfulness, Christ’s forgiveness. Jesus is always present with His Word: “**Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.**”(Mark 6:50) You live in Me and I in you. Rejoice, give thanks and sing! Amen.

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