

creation story, God separates the heaven and the earth. God takes the deep and separates it and creates dry land. The three-tiered universe of the Old Testament is described here. In creation there is a sense that there is a deep water, earth and heaven. Now all that was created is uncreated so that there can be a new creation. It is a reset.

Just as we witnessed last week in the story of East of Eden, there are consequences to sin but the last word is that of grace, hope and life. That is true with the flood story, as well. The last word of the flood story is Noah and his family will live and a new beginning will occur.

The only way for there to be a new creation is for there to be an uncreation. That is true for us as well. The Bible is clear that for us to be in a relationship with God we must also go an uncreation and a new creation.

Jesus said, "You cannot inherit the kingdom of God unless you are born again." You have to be born of the Spirit.

Paul describes it in harsher terms when he writes that we have been crucified with Christ. We have been buried with Jesus through our baptism. We are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come.

My friends we cannot live a life that is pleasing to God, unless we are born again. We cannot live a life that is pleasing to God unless we come to the understanding that what is essential is a dying to self and becoming alive to God. That is what Jesus is speaking of when he says if you would come after me, you must take up your cross daily and follow me.

In our lives, there must be first an uncreation. That is we must choose to say to God, I no longer want to pursue my way, but I want to follow Jesus. I realize that Jesus died for my sins and I accept the forgiveness that is offered me. Our old self, our sins are crucified with Christ. They have been put to death. We have died to an old way of life. Following Jesus is not simply doing better... it is dying to self once and for all. It is an uncreation.

It is a new creation. Then through God's grace and forgiveness we are new creations in Christ. We still struggle with sin, but God sees us in a different way. When he looks upon us, God does not see our sin but

Christ. We are hidden in Christ. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, God takes us new creations in and through Christ and daily leads us to be more and more like Christ.

When it comes to sin, what is needed for you and me is what was needed in the day of Noah. There has to be an uncreation and a new creation. There has to be a reset.

God wants to reset your life.



## VACATION SPOTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

# Noah's Sea Cruise or God's Reset

Genesis 6

TRINITY PULPIT

**W**hen I was growing up it was the chalkboard and a chalk eraser. If you made a mistake you just simply erased it away. Later for many of us there was the great product of white out. Whether it was the liquid or the paper white out, just a little dab and your mistake was soon covered up. Then, of course, there was the dry erasable marker and board. Now for most of us starting over is as simple as two steps. We hit the delete button and confirm. How many of our projects, letters, comments on social media, and comments have been deleted and sent into the mystery that is cyber space? I think one of our fears is that heaven will be a large depository of all the things we have deleted. Good to know that God is also a God with a delete button and deletes our sins from us and separates us from them as far as the east is from the west.

For many of us, starting over with a project or letter is something that is easy to do, but starting over in life is much harder. There are many in our congregation who know something of starting over. Some are starting over in employment. After years of the same company and job, where there was routine and familiarity, there is now new work where the people are new, the task is new and there is anxiety in starting over. Others started over after separation and divorce. It is not what they wanted or how they envisioned their lives as they began their marriage or even last year, but there you are starting over. Some of us are starting over in church. We are back at church for the first time in a long time or we have come to a new church and there are new people and new expectations and new traditions and we are trying to find our way and place. It is hard to start over.

Yet, we must admit as we talked about last week, there are some moments when we want to start over. If we could go back and do some things over we would change our method, our words, or our actions. Last week we talked

about where God is on this side of our regrets. However, this week we discover that God too seems to have had regret.

There is a troubling word in our text today. We are told that God relented, grieved and was pained that God had created humankind. The term there can mean relent, or regret. Does God have regrets? Well not so much in a sense that God did something wrong that He would like to get right. God does not err, and God's creation was good. Yet, because of man and woman's choices to disobey God and rebel against God, the consequence of sin had become so great that God relented in God's creation of humans.

The Bible does not give us a picture of God that is sterile like some robotic machine. God is depicted, as God is, a person in whom there is emotion. God grieves, God is pained, God loves, God is angered, God is pleased, and God is concerned just to name a few emotions. However, the difference between God and us is that God never just acts from emotion but always from Holy character.

Here in the story of the great flood we find that God is moved with grief and pain and relents that God has created humans.

I think that the two ways we normally approach the flood story and Noah's ark is either scientifically or with a childish naiveté. My first memories of hearing the story of Noah's ark and the flood are a child song about Noah. I think of the story almost as a child's story with animals like zebras and giraffes lined up and going into the ark two-by-two. I think of the rain coming down and of course the rainbow as the promise of God. It is a great story and it has many of the elements you would want in a children's story. Yet, the great flood and Noah's ark is no children's story. It is one of the most horrific stories of the Bible. It is not simply judgment exacted a one person, or a tribe, or nation. It is God's holy judgment upon all of creation. It is a story of ending and beginning all over again.



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Although it is not a topic that is dwelled upon in the Biblical account, the death of all things that hath breath and life with the exception of those saved in the ark is a terrible story of death, judgment and pain. This is not a children's story.

It is not a scientific endeavor. It is interesting that those who seek to prove the flood and those who seek to disprove the flood use the same scientific approach. There are geological studies that are used to show there is sediment around the time of the flood and there are those who appeal to science to disprove the concept of a worldwide flood. Of course the story of the flood is not only a Biblical story, it is also found in other ancient texts. There is a story about the great flood in Sumerian literature and Babylonian Literature.

I am afraid that in our attempt to prove or disprove the flood we again misunderstand the enormity of the event and the depth of theological meaning of the flood. As long as the flood is something that we study, measure and approach objectively we miss the point as well. This story is the story of humanity's sin, God's grief and God's grace.

The story's setting is humanity's sin. Chapter 5 of Genesis is a genealogy of Noah who would be the one who God would use in God's reset. Chapter 5 describes many people who have many sons and daughters. Essentially it is the answer to the question where did all these people come from. When we come to Noah we are told that when the men began to increase daughters were born to them and the sons of God saw that the daughters were beautiful and they married any of them they chose. God's response to this statement is to limit the life of man. No more long life, but a limit to man's years. In someway this might be seen as a first response to man's sin. God intervenes. We are also told that there were Nephilim on the earth in those days as well. Nephilim were known to be a tribe or people of giants. The children that were born to the daughters and the sons of God had become the heroes of old men of renown.

This setting we are told is what God noticed as man's great wickedness. What are we to make of this setting?

There are three explanations to exactly who were these sons of God and what was the issue.

1. The oldest explanation was that this was the union of fallen angels and mortal women. The suggestion is that angelic or heavenly beings had union with earthly women and their offspring were "god like and possessed beyond human powers. They were men our renown. They were essentially super human.

2. A second explanation is that the sons of God were those who were part of the ruling family known for their polygamy and their tyranny. In this explanation, there rose a ruling group of warriors who took what they wanted and did what they wanted. They treated people as their possessions and their offspring became the Nephilim or the men of great renown. Many point to the genealogy of Cain as proof to this. In Lamech we have the establishment of a city organization, polygamy and tyranny. Thus, the sons of God were the Cainites who had become evil in their desires and actions. Violence was a dominant theme of their city.

3. The third explanation, which was shared by church fathers like Augustine, Luther and Calvin, was that the sons of God were Sethites. These were men who were part of Seth's line and they were intermarrying with those of Cain's line. Thus, what was happening was that God's people were intermarrying with those who did not worship God. Thus, the righteous line of Seth was become unrighteous with this intermarriage. The problem was that Seth, who would be the child of the promise and grace from Adam and Eve's line, is now turning to the same sinful ways of Adam and Eve.

Whichever explanation you choose here is the theme they share in common. They all describe a humanity that has thrown off God's instructions and are following their own desires and wants. If it is the angels they have transgressed their heavenly boundaries or heavenly bodies and had union with mortal women. If it is the Cainites, they have thrown off God's desires and all they do is seek what they want and what they can take. If it is the sons of Seth, they have transgressed God's intent of a Holy people and the righteous one's of God were becoming like everyone else.

There is an interesting term in our passage and that is the term chose. The term means to take. Here we have a return to the desire of original sin. They chose or took who they wanted and what they wanted. There is imagery here from the Garden of Eden. God created all that there is and called it good. Man and woman in their choice of disobedience defiled it. Here the daughters of men are called beautiful, but the word is good and the sons of God took them and defiled them. Procreation, which was part of God's good and beautiful blessing, had not become a blessing but a curse. As men increased so did sin, until God's conclusion is that every thought, every act, every inclination of man was evil all the time.

Here is our first important thought for us and that is our sin diminishes the blessing of God. God had created man and woman and blessed them and yet their sin, which was continuing from one generation to another,

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had diminished God's intent to the point that God was now relenting that God had created humans.

We live in a time when we are told that what we desire is good. If we desire it, if we want it, then there is no reason not to have it or possess it. If we have a desire for pleasure then we should pursue it. If we have a desire for more and more we should chase it. That is good, says our culture. If we have a sexual desire that is outside marriage as God intends, we are told to pursue it. If we have the desire to exact revenge on someone who has hurt us, then go and do it. Our hearts are always filled with desires that are not Godly.

The hard part of this is that we can easily convince our self that whatever our desire might be is good and beautiful. Those are the exact words of the Garden of Eden and the setting of the flood. Their desires did not appear evil and ugly. They appeared good, beautiful and appealing. Thus, they did what they desired and not what God desired for them. The result was the blessing of God is diminished and would have been completely lost had God simply turned us over completely to our desires and our sin.

Yet, out of love God does not turn a blind eye to our destructive ways. In fact, we are told that God is grieved and pained. The picture here is of a creator whose creation has gone bad. It was good, but now it is destructive. We might ask why did God just not create us with the inability to choose disobedience? God could have done that. God could have created us without the ability of moral choice, but do so would have been to create us as less beings. Yet, God wanted relationship and so God created us in God's own image and gave to us choice. God longs to be loved out of choice. Love that is not a choice is not love. Thus, God created us to choose to love or choose to reject God's love.

The closest we might come to understanding God's grief and pain is that pain and grief of a parent or a good friend who watches one they love continually make a bad choice. As a parent, we never regret or grieve that we had the child, but we do grieve the choices and consequences a choice might bring. Here is a picture of one who grieves watching one you love choose wrong over and over again. It is the pain that comes from one we love not learning from the past. It is the pain of not

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understanding how they cannot see the consequences of their actions.

God is grieved and pained from the choice of humanity. The conclusion is that there must be judgment. There must be a restart. God has to hit the delete button and start again with creation. God's actions are not the result of unbridled anger, but instead it is the action of Holy character that cannot continue to allow sin and its destructive nature to go unchecked.

So it is with us. Our sin does not anger God as much as it grieves God because of God's great love for us. When we read of God's judgment in the Bible, we must always be reminded that God has wrath but God is love. God's wrath and judgment is always upon the sin that destroys God's good creation and us.

So much is this the case that out of love God sent Jesus to suffer God's judgment on sin once and for all of us, that we might not suffer for our sins. Here is how Paul writes it in 2 Corinthians 5:17. God made Him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Later Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 "God did not appoint us for wrath but for salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The plan of God toward our sin was not wrath upon us, but upon God's son. He who had no sin became sin. Jesus took it all upon Him. In the story of the flood, we catch a glimpse of God's reaction to sin. It is judgment, but is it is judgment that originates from grief and pain. If we want to know God's response to our sin we look to the cross.

So God's response is judgment, but it is also grace. God chose Noah who was righteous in his generation. When others were turning from God, Noah was turning to God. He is not perfect, but God knows his heart. He chooses Noah to be the one with whom He will start over. We know the story. God instructs Noah to build the ark and to gather animals of every kind to ensure their survival. Then, the family of Noah gets in the ark and God shuts them in so we know this is God's doing. Then, the rain begins and not only the rain fell from heaven, but the floodgates of the deep burst forth. Thus, the water came from above and below and the earth was flooded and all that had breath, except for Noah and his family was destroyed.

The words of the flood are words of uncreation. In the

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