

“Noah: Ready for Judgment”

Liturgical Date: Commemoration of Noah (November 29); Part One of Advent Series, Ready: Advent with the Saints

Primary Texts: Genesis 6:9-22, 7:11-12, 17-21; 2 Peter 2:1-9, St. Matthew 24:36-44

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Today we begin our Advent Series called Ready: Advent with the Saints, as this year a commemoration of a faithful servant of the Lord falls on each Sunday of Advent. During Advent we focus on preparation and readiness. We not only prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth every year during Christmas, but are also reminded to be ready for Jesus' Second Advent on the Last Day. Today we focus on being ready for the Lord's coming again for the Final Judgment through examining Noah and how he believed and was prepared for the judgment that God brought in the flood. Noah: Ready for Judgment.

There is so much that can be spoken of relating to Noah, the ark, and the flood that it could be a sermon series in itself. But here is a brief biography of Noah. Noah was born of the 10th generation after Adam and Eve, 1,656 years after Adam's creation. His father was Lamech and his name means “bring us rest or relief” as his father would speak prophetically over Noah in Genesis 5:29, “*Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed this one shall bring relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.*” These words also looked toward the Messiah that would come to ultimately bring salvation. Noah is a “second father” to all humankind as all other life would perish in the flood and the command to “be fruitful and multiply” would be repeated to his family after the flood. Remember that before the

flood people lived a very long time. The Bible tells us that Noah and his wife had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, born to him beginning when he was 500 years old! Noah was 600 years old when the flood began (Genesis 7:16) so he was overseeing a construction project in his 500s. After the flood God would make a covenant with Noah, with the visible sign of the rainbow. Another interesting note about Noah is that after the flood he became a vinedresser and is the first recorded maker of wine in history (which did get him into a little trouble). Noah lived to the ripe old age of 950.

The world that Noah lived in was very wicked. Since the fall in the Garden of Eden, man had continued to descend into debauchery, wickedness, rebellion, and violence. But Noah remained faithful. Our Old Testament Reading began with Genesis 6:9 saying, *“Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation, Noah walked with God.”* While not without sin, as we know all have sinned except Jesus, he stood out as a faithful servant of the Lord in his wicked generation. Verses 11-13 described the sad situation and what God told Noah He was going to do about it. *“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, ‘I have determined to make an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.’”*

But God in His mercy had not given up on His creation. He would remain faithful to His promise to send a Savior. Noah, his wife, their three sons, their wives, and 2 of each kind of animal (7 of the clean animals) would be preserved. God instructed Noah to build a giant ship, an ark, on which life would be preserved.

Now it is important to know that the story of Noah's ark is no fairy tale-it is real history. There really was an ark and a global flood just as the Bible tells us. A few summers ago Shashana and I were privileged to take a group from Christ the King and Trinity to visit the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter. This is all made very clear at these attractions, including grasping the massive actual size of the ark with the life size replica. God gave very specific instructions to Noah in building this ark. This ark did not resemble the cartoon-like drawings we see in children's books that is shaped like a top-heavy vessel with giraffe heads poking out. The vessel the Bible describes was very large and sea-worthy. It gives the dimensions in cubits. A cubit is the length of a man's forearm, from the fingertips to the elbow-about 17.5-22 inches. Using a conservative length of 18 inches per cubit, the ark was 450 long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. It contained 3 decks with close to 100,000 sq. feet of space-which again you get a grasp for visiting the Ark Encounter. This would be the size of a modern oil tanker with the capacity to hold as much as well over 500 railroad cars. In fact, no ship in recorded history would be this big until the 669 foot *Great Eastern* in 1858. There was plenty of room for Noah and his family, the animals, and provisions for the year that they would be in the ark. Genesis uses the word "kinds" to describe God's creation of the animals in Genesis 1-2 and uses it here as well. Put simply, Noah did not need 2 of every breed of dog on the ark, only 2 dogs, as they would contain the genetic information for each type of dog breed.

And just as God promised, the judgment upon the sinful world came. When Noah was 600 years old the flood arrived. For forty days and nights it rained. Verse 11 of Chapter 7 tells us that the waters that would cover the earth also came from below as "the fountains of the great deep burst forth".

This was a global, not a local flood. Genesis 7:19 told us that the floodwater rose to cover the highest mountains by 15 cubits (about 22 feet) and that all flesh that was not on the ark perished. This global flood had huge geological impacts on the earth and explains much of what we see geologically in the world today. Fossils are formed by things suddenly dying and being encased in mud and rock under water. What do we find all over the world? Fossils everywhere, even on mountains.

We know that God is a God of justice and wrath against sin. We also know that He is merciful. Ancient Jewish writing speak of Noah passionately warning other people that God was not pleased with their sin and judgment was coming. The Bible also confirms that Noah was a preacher or herald of righteousness in our Epistle from 2 Peter 2: God spared Noah, but the unrepentant ungodly would perish. They scoffed and ignored these warnings. Can you imagine Noah's frustration as a faithful preacher, warning of the wrath to come but not one single convert! When the flood came they were not ready. They had thought Noah a fool and God's Law as foolishness. They paid dearly for it.

In our Gospel Lesson for today from St. Matthew 24, Jesus draws a clear parallel between the judgment of the flood and the coming judgment when He returns on the Last Day. Verses 37-39, *"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."* Jesus speaks about people being unprepared often. What were people doing? They were marrying, eating and drinking, and working. You see, before the flood and in our time before Jesus returns

people are going about the daily tasks of life, making preparations for their physical existence, but foolishly ignoring the more important spiritual preparations. How many are tempted by and consumed by the things of the world? How easy is it to be sucked into the lure of mammon? We don't want to go through life thinking "everything is awesome", when it is really not. The false prophets are out there with their damnable heresies that lead to swift destruction. The lusts of the flesh and greed lurk about, deceiving many. We must follow the faithful example of Noah, ready for the time when judgment comes.

When we remember Noah we must be careful not to think that he was saved simply by constructing the ark. Noah is called "faithful Noah" for a reason-because he had faith. Without faith in what God had revealed to him he would have never built the ark. Hebrews 12:7, "*By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household, By this he condemned the world and became an heir of righteousness that comes by faith."* Noah was saved by the same thing that we are, faith. And this faith, of Noah and us, is a faith that acts in obedience. As Genesis 6:22 told us, "*Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.*" Obedience does not create saving faith, saving faith creates obedience.

Noah and the ark is a picture of our ark of salvation, Jesus Christ. The New Testament makes this clear in 1 Peter 3. There it speaks of 8 people (Noah and his family) being saved through water, and says "Baptism now saves you" as in Baptism we are given the gift of faith in Jesus Christ. We prayed a portion of Luther's flood prayer in the Collect of the Day earlier, the prayer that is prayed prior to Baptism as the

Church has seen the clear connection between the flood, water, and Baptism. The Bible tells us that in Baptism the old sinful man is drown and the new man emerges to new life. And the grace of God is applied to far more than 8 people in the New Covenant!

In Genesis 6:16 God instructed Noah to build the ark with a door. Note that this was “a door” not “doors”. There was only one way into the ark that brought salvation from the death that the flood would bring (again this is powerfully depicted at the Ark Encounter). Only the animals and people that entered through this door were saved. When the floodwaters came, the Bible tells us that God Himself shut the door. Hear the words of Jesus from St. John 10:9, *“I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”* There was only one door into the safety of the ark. There is only one door to eternal life-Jesus.

So as we sang earlier, “Are you ready?” There’s a great day coming by and by. Are you ready for that day to come? That day is great and bright. It is also sad for those that have rejected Christ, as the clock has expired on their time to repent. We should learn from the example of Noah and be “preachers of righteousness” calling the erring to repentance and faith in Jesus, warning them of the coming judgment. We should be obedient as Noah was. And most of all, we should have faith-even faith in the things not yet seen. I’m ready. I pray that you are too. Not just in Advent, but everyday as Jesus says in the Gospel, *“Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”* We are only ready in Christ. Through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross we have forgiveness of sins. Ready for judgment.

Ready as at the Final Judgment we receive our reward through faith in Christ. Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.