

March 3, 2024
The Third Sunday in Lent
Pastor Matt Duerr

“God’s Narrative-‘Noah & Evil Hearts’”

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God, our Father and from our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. As we continue through God's narrative, the Bible, His deposition, (eyewitness deposition) of creation, how sin came into creation and as we saw last week, sin growing following its inception, we are also reminded of what God said to Cain, that sin crouches at the door, and its desire is contrary to you. Sin, it might look good, it might sound good, but it isn't good for you.

And as we saw, sin begins to manifest itself through jealousy, through taking from others. From blaming others to, well, trying to justify our poor sinful behavior. And this week, we're gonna pick up where we left off. Seeing that sin was growing from Cain to a some Lamech who boasted about killing someone to today. Our scripture sin has grown to the point of, well, let's see what the Lord records. “Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every intention of his heart was only evil continually.”

Now let's just break that down quickly. The heart, that's your innermost being, thae innermost thought, your desire, your purpose of life. That's the very essence of who you are. It could also be called the spirit of man; was what? Evil. Let's talk about evil for a moment. There's three Greek words that are used or can be translated as evil. One is because kakos, it literally means worthless, depraved, a lack of good character. This evil is-you're missing something. The second is sapos. What does it mean? It means rotten, bad, I like this definition-degenerate from the original state. It's usually used when talking about fruit or food that has gone bad. It was once good, now it's rotten. The other word, and this is the word that is used here, is ponaros. What does it mean? Hurtful, calamitous, culpable, or I quote, “an active form.”

And what is sin? Well, if we go to our gospel reading this morning, Jesus tells us what's evil. He tells us man's heart is evil and that that

shows up as first evil thoughts. These are thoughts to intentionally hurt, destroy, lead astray or take away from someone else. Secondly, he speaks of murder, which takes us back to Cain and Abel. What came from Cain's jealousy, his sin? A desire to take, to take away life and to try to take away the pain that he had that God did not have regard for his sacrifice.

Jesus continues. It's adultery. What is adultery? This might sound just a little familiar, you might see a little theme growing here. Adultery to take another's spouse. Then, he says, there is sexual immorality. What is sexual immorality? to take away from the original right or moral intent of something. Then he speaks of theft, which is to take another's possessions. Then there's false witness, which is to take away the truth and replace it with a lie. And finally, there is slander; to take away the good name or reputation of another. And how many are there? Seven, the number of perfection.

And so, Jesus speaks here as the heart being a perfectly defiled heart in sinful mankind. So, we have heart, the very being or essence of a person, their spirit, what they are all about; is only evil. Wow! We just saw what evil is. It's truly hurtful, glamorous, culpable. And it's inaction. But we skipped a little word there. It was only. Only means no exception. I'd like to just do a little contrast with the heart of man, only evil continually. (meaning always) and Jude 1:25 "To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever. Amen." There is only one God, and evil is only, always, wrong. And man was only evil continually.

So, in a nutshell. The people at the time of Noah, let's not get too upset with them and point too many fingers here, because I think you're going to see something in a moment. The people were totally focused on self. And taking what they desired. 'I need this. I want this. I take what I want.' There was no desire to build up others, just to take advantage and tear down. There was no value or respect for life beyond that which you saw in the mirror. Instead take life when it is advantageous to my life. There was no value, no respect for marriage or for the marriage vows as they took one another's spouses and cheated on each other. There was no value, no respect for God's created order. They no longer cared about

male and female and the fit that is described in Genesis. Now they threw Bible gender ideology out the window. There was no value. There was no respect for the possessions of others. You take what you want and you do it because everybody does and there is no Fear of reprisal. There was no value, no respect for the truth. You lie. You lie to your advantage, and if someone challenges you with the truth, well, you lie more and you take away from them even their life, their well-being if necessary. And finally, there was no value, no respect for the good of others. And again, their minds were only on this continually. Which means this is what they were always about. And I think there's some that right now are probably saying, gosh, this sounds familiar to today. I think you're right.

So, let's see what happens next. And the Lord that would be Yahweh the Great, I AM, was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. It has been said, I quote, "man's sin is God's sorrow." But that falls very short. I'd like you to think about what God wrote about Himself. He was grieved. And when do we think of grief? Usually, we tie grief together with death. And God grieved that he had made man. It grieved Him to His heart, to His very being. Why? Because He loves the creation He made. And He grieved what was coming. They were going to die. And He grieved that one day His son would come and die for us. And I want you to think about that for a moment.

Paul writes in Romans 5 verse 7, for one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would even die. Do you think that would apply to someone who is described as every intention of his heart was only able continually? No! No! I don't think there's anybody here that if we said, 'hey, we need someone who'd be willing to pay the price of a convicted murderer, mass murderer. We need you to go to the gas chamber for them so they can be released and go free.' I think there's anybody here that would stand up to hear my send me. And yet that's exactly what God has done through Jesus Christ for us! It grieves Him that we sin because His son had to die for our sin because that's how much He loves us.

And yet is Jesus Himself who it says in Luke 9:23. "And He said to all, 'if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his

cross and follow me.” You only pick up a cross if you're going to die. Jesus is calling on us, on all of us, to die to self, which is the antithesis of ‘every intention of his heart was only evil continually.’

We are to die to self and live for Christ. And that means our heart, our heart is saying. ‘I want to be in church on Sunday. I want to be with the family of Christ. I want to worship my God and Savior. I want to begin every day in prayer. I want to take the time to have a biblical devotion like the Lutheran hour devotion or something every day as I begin my day. I want to give to the Lord as He has given to me. I want to give a tithe.’ It makes no worldly sense. But it makes total spiritual sense, cause that's what God says. And yet, how often do we struggle with that?

And what do we read about these people and the Lord? So, the Lord God said, I will blot out man whom I have created. And there's Noah's flood. Forty days, forty nights, world wiped out. Noah and his family and the animals are saved. Why? Well, number one, it's a new start. A new start for mankind. Number two, it's a warning. God judges sin. He really does. And so, we need to take that, and we need to teach that to our children and our grandchildren. That sin has a very heavy price. It's judgment. And that it is a reality that just like in Noah's flood, God Judged sin. He is going to judge all sin eternally on that final day, Judgment Day.

And that's where Noah's flood stands as a as a huge object lesson for us. Sinful mankind was judged. Noah was saved by the grace of God through that ark. And God will judge all mankind. And He's given us an ark, a lifeboat, and it's called Jesus, who says, ‘die to self, live for me.’ And of course there will be those who are going to say ‘pastor, you know, I heard some pastor say, I heard scientists say, I read a book that says, Noah’s flood really isn't real. It didn't happen.’ Yes, it did!

How do I know? Well, number one, God is the great I AM. He says it happened. And He has the power to do it. Who am I to question His eyewitness narrative? I was not there, and I am not that powerful. But secondly, people will say, but how? Noah didn't have any power tools or anything. He didn't have engineering. He didn't have drawings. He, you

know, didn't have permitting, that would make sure it was built properly. No but he had God. And God inspired Noah. And Noah became (I believe) the most excellent craftsman in recorded history. He did all of that by hand.

And then third, this almighty God, when we look at what is written there in Genesis, we see that the heavens opened up and the waters came down. And this just isn't referring to clouds. When we look in Genesis, God put water above the firmament. Above the earth, some call that a vapor canopy that would have done great things for life. People would have lived a really long time. If you want to talk about that. See me after church because it is one of my favorite things to talk about. But God took all of that down and it began. The flood and the waters from the deep shot up, which, by the way, would have caused the continents to collapse and separate and all that, just like we see today. And He made the world flood in forty days and forty nights, and He wiped everything out.

That results in... Well, think of all this water coming up. It's coming down. It's coming down the mountains. What you're going to get is like every time there's mountain ranges and spaces in between, like the Central Valley, or between the Sierras and the Rockies or whatever, you're going to have water coming and moving, and it's going to go back and forth and back and forth, and it's going to lay down layers of sediment. Because when you see floodwaters, those are not clean waters. There's massive erosion. And it would result with layer after layer after layer of sediment with all this water on it, pushing down on it, turning it all into what we call sedimentary rock or the geologic time scale.

And I would like you now, everyone, take out your bulletin and take a look at a couple million year old tree. It's a picture from Germany. It's called a Poly straight fossil. It's a tree that was standing and sediments came and went around it, and completely encased it, and pressurized it and turned it into stone, through the process of petrification. Now here's the problem. Scientists tell us, that tree stood for millions of years while the sediments were built up. And I'd like you to think about last year in March, where living trees here in California, in a rainstorm, the ground was rather wet, heavy winds came in and they grew a bunch of trees

down. How in the world could a tree stand for millions of years? While these sediments are laid down over time, each time by, you know regional floods and stuff like that, you know big storms. The tree would have decayed, the tree would have fallen over, the tree would not exist, and yet there we have it. What's the explanation? Noah's flood.

Noah's flood, it's written in a form that speaks of a total transformation of the world. And that is the final lesson of Noah's flood. We need a total transformation of our hearts because our hearts are far from God. They are, well, corrupt, evil always. And so, we read in Romans 12/2. Do not be conformed to this world like the people at the time of Noah but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Don't be conformed, Be transformed. Trust God's Word. Trust His Savior, who comes to us today and Holy Communion and says, "Get on board. I am your eternal ark. Let me save you." In our Saviors Name, Amen.