



GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

The Church of the Resurrection – Weekly Guide

May 18, 2014 Noah – “After the Flood”

Scripture: Genesis 8, selected verses

The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days. But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded ... and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat ... So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. All the animals ... came out of the ark, one kind after another ... Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you ... Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

MONDAY 5.19.14 Genesis 8:6-14 Dry earth—now what?

Hurricane Katrina cleanup workers in New Orleans might envision conditions after a worldwide flood. If the waters had covered the highest mountains, the mere fact that it had stopped raining wouldn’t mean it was safe to leave the ark. So Noah used birds as “scouts” to determine what was happening on the earth. Eventually, “the earth was dry.” That would have meant all the bad was gone—but nothing had yet taken its place. Now what?

- ❖ Eventually, nearly all of us face a “blank slate” situation—a new school, a neighborhood or town where we don’t know anyone, maybe a new diagnosis that drastically changes our way of life. In what ways have you learned to “scout out” the land when you face an empty, unknown situation? In this archetypal story, God didn’t say, “Relax, Noah—I’ll tell you when the land is dry.” Was Noah “on his own,” or did he just need to live out an active role under God’s leadership?
- ❖ Jesus told a story that pointed to the danger of merely getting rid of bad things, without putting anything in their place. In Luke 11:23-26, he pictured an exorcised “unclean spirit” saying, “I’ll go back to the house I left.” He found the house cleaned up, empty and decorated, and moved back in, bringing seven other worse spirits with him. Have you ever experienced the power of putting a positive good in place of something hurtful, rather than just focusing on the negative habit or action?

Prayer: Lord God, you didn’t want an evil earth—but your creation made it plain that you also didn’t want an empty earth. Help me to fill my place on earth in a way that fulfills your purposes for my life. Amen.

TUESDAY 5.20.14 Genesis 8:15-19 Narrative two: God's mandate to repopulate

The Flood story that used the Hebrew *Elohim* to refer to God didn't mention sacrifice. It couldn't, because just two of each kind of animal were in the ark, so that an immediate sacrifice would have wiped out a whole species. Instead, it showed God immediately urging Noah and his family, as well as all the animals, to get about the business of repopulating the earth—"be fertile, and multiply."

- ❖ Genesis 8:17 echoed the original creation command in Genesis 1:28, another sign that Genesis saw the Flood's aftermath as, in effect, a second creation. In Revelation 21:5 ("I'm making all things new"), the ultimate new act of new creation belongs to God and Jesus, the Christ. What parts of life in this world do you especially look forward to God re-making? In what ways do you believe that will make life better?
- ❖ All that we know of life in the ancient Middle East suggests that over-population was just not a concern in the open, even desolate spaces of that part of the world. Given that, what enduring, timeless lessons do you believe we, living in a world with billions of people, can learn from the command to "be fruitful and multiply"? Was that command in any ways limited to the circumstances in which it was first given?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, in creation and re-creation, the Bible seems to suggest that you desired creatures you could love, and who could love you in return. As one of those creatures, I offer you my love, and thank you for loving me. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 5.21.14 Genesis 8:20-22 Narrative one: a pleasing scent to the Lord

In the other Flood story, with seven of each clean animal saved, Noah built an altar as soon as he left the ark. The story said Noah's act of devotion moved the Lord's (Heb. Yahweh) heart. Based on that, the Lord "thought to himself" that he would never flood the earth again despite the fact that "the ideas of the human mind are evil from their youth" (verse 21).

- ❖ Old Testament Survey by LaSor, Hubbard and Bush wrote of this remarkable passage: "The very same condition which affords the grounds for God's terrible judgment ("every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually," 6:5) is also the grounds for his grace ("for the inclination of the human heart is evil from his youth," 8:21)." What makes you particularly aware of your need for God's grace? Are you able to trust that God's grace is really for you?
- ❖ Verse 21 used "anthropomorphism" ("ascribing human traits to a being who isn't human, esp. God"), saying God "smelled the pleasing aroma." Ephesians 5:2 called Jesus a "fragrant offering." Clearly, Ephesians did not mean that the crucifixion smelled good in a physical sense. So then what was it about Noah's and Jesus' sacrifices that pleased God? How can you make your life a pleasing sacrifice?

Prayer: Lord God, in Romans 12:1 the apostle Paul called on all believers, including me, to present ourselves to you as a "living sacrifice." Renew my heart, that I may live in ways that are pleasing to you. Amen.

THURSDAY 5.22.14 Genesis 9:1-11 Narrative two: God's initiative

To end the Flood story, Genesis returned to "narrative two." It was an inspired choice. While repeating God's command to be fruitful and multiply, this story said it was God's (Heb. Elohim) idea, unprompted, to make a "covenant" with Noah and all his descendants. This was the first

explicit use of the language of covenant, which became a vital theme about how God relates to humans throughout the rest of the Bible.

- ❖ Verses 5-6 seemed to look back to conditions before the Flood, when human violence broke God's heart so badly that he regretted creating the race. God firmly warned that having survived the Flood did not imply permission to go back to harming one another. In what ways do these verses speak to God's desire for how we behave today? In what ways do they bear on the complex ethical issues involved in "just war," "pre-emptive strikes" and similar subjects?
- ❖ Humanly, a covenant is "an agreement between two or more persons to do or not do something specified." God's covenant with Noah (and later ones) were not between equal partners. God promised to do what only God could do: ensure that "floodwaters" never wiped out the whole earth again. What did this covenant say about God's heart, and his hope for the world?

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for not waiting for humans to come to you, but for seeking us out and saving us. Thank you for the ways your grace and protection have continually reached out to me. Amen.

FRIDAY 5.23.14 Genesis 9:12-17 Narrative two: God's rainbow covenant

God promised Noah that there would never again be a flood that would cover the earth. God's promise took the form of a covenant with "all the living creatures on the earth" that he would remember, and that there would never again be a worldwide flood. As the seal and token of heaven's pledge, Elohim put the rainbow in the rain clouds. What a beautiful symbol of God's love and grace!

- ❖ In verse 15 God said, "I will remember my covenant ... floodwaters will never again destroy all creatures." The flood destroyed life in this archetypal story, just as pain, suffering, and injustice destroy life today. Revelation 21:4 looked ahead to God's eternal kingdom: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." How has God faithfully "remembered" his covenant of love and grace with you?
- ❖ The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery said, "The Hebrew word for rainbow is the same word that is used to refer to the bow as a military weapon (q̄eet). The idea ... in the Genesis passage seems to be that God has taken the weapon that he has used to judge his creatures and hung it in the sky ... the rainbow becomes an image of God's mercy and peace after the storm of judgment." Pastor Hamilton has noted that sometimes we just want to ignore the idea of judgment. What is the value of the rainbow image in reminding us of judgment, and yet showing that in the end mercy triumphs?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for covenanting to rid the world of "floodwaters" forever. Help me trust in you amid this life's "floods," and to join in your mission to clean up the messes this world's "floods" can cause. Amen.

SATURDAY 5.24.14 Isaiah 54:4-10, Revelation 4:1-3

Hope and unfailing love—God's enduring gifts

The Noah story shows up repeatedly in Scripture as an archetype of God's power to give fresh starts, to bring hope and salvation in what seem to be utterly hopeless situations. Isaiah drew

on Noah's story to say Israel could depend on God's mercy even on the far side of their painful exile in Babylon. Drawing on the most beautiful image in Noah's story, Revelation pictured a rainbow circling God's throne in the very heart of heaven.

- ❖ Science can explain rainbows: raindrops disperse light, making the many colors in the spectrum appear. But science cannot fully explain why we find that dispersed light so beautiful, or why we tend to feel joy, hope and a desire to share the beauty when we see a rainbow. The lyrical archetypes in the Genesis Flood story speak to dimensions of life beyond history and science. What have you learned about your Creator in this story? How can you allow the peace and hope the rainbow symbolized to fill your life?

Prayer: God, the mountains may fall into the middle of the sea. But I will not be afraid. The waters of the sea may roar and foam. The mountains may shake when the waters rise. But I will not be afraid. I will be still, and know that you are my God. Amen. (Adapted from Psalm 46 in the New International Reader's Version)

Family Activity: Read Genesis 9: 8-17. Discuss God's promise to all living creatures. As a reminder of God's promise, as a family create a two or three-dimensional rainbow. Use any combination of materials, including crayons, sequins, glitter, construction paper, crepe paper, markers, tissue paper and/or paint. As you construct it, talk about the Genesis story. When did you last see a rainbow in the sky? How did it make you feel? What did you think of and why? Wonder aloud together about why God chose a rainbow as a sign of his promise. Hang your family's rainbow in a special place in your home. Give thanks to God for his love and grace.