

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN AN EVIL WORLD
GENESIS 6:8-10, 22

The eyes of our country have been turned backward a few years this week. There has been a lot of focus on a baseball player who wore #42 for the Brooklyn Dodgers. It is the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's breaking in to the major league baseball world. No person has made as much difference in the world of baseball in the past generation as Jackie Robinson. He opened the door of opportunity by paying a price. He has made it possible for black children to grow up with a realistic dream of making it big time in the world of baseball.

Every generation has a few people who make a difference in a big way. Some make a difference in the world of business, finances, entertainment, education, or some other realm. However, for each one who makes a difference in a big way that gathers a lot of attention, there will be many more who will take advantage of their opportunities and make a difference in their smaller way in a very significant fashion.

Tonight we want to look at a person who made as much difference in his generation as any person who ever lived. Never did a man have more against him and less likelihood of making a difference than Noah, the builder of the ark. He lived in a very evil and corrupt time. It was so corrupt that the Creator God decided the only solution was complete destruction. He made known in Noah's generation his plans to destroy the whole world. But through Noah God was able to preserve His purpose and the future of

the human race. You and I are actually here tonight because of the difference Noah made. He, his wife, his three sons, and his three daughter-in-laws were the only survivors in that time of complete destruction. So every person in this room is a direct descendent of one of the sons of Noah. You owe so much to the contribution that was made by this one solitary figure in the Old Testament.

Surely all of us carry in our hearts a dream of making a difference in our day. It is possible for you to make a difference. A careful look at what is revealed concerning the life of Noah will give us insights into the kind of person that makes a difference in a evil day.

I. CHOSEN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

This is where the divine record begins. It begins with God and not with Noah. In his inspired record of all that transpired, Moses wrote, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” You will recognize that the word translated “favor” is translated “grace” in the old version of the Old Testament. The whole life of Noah and the contribution that he made found its beginning in God. God was pleased to bestow grace and favor upon Noah.

Students of the life of Noah have debated back and forth concerning this grace that he found. Did Noah find grace in the eyes of the Lord because of the kind of person he was? We will hear in the next verse that he was a righteous and good man. Is this the explanation of the grace that came upon his life? Or, is the good life described in the next

verse the consequences of finding favor in the eyes of the Lord? My heart is inclined to understand it in this second way. God took the initiative and exercised a choice. Out of the sinful family of man, God chose Noah, the grandson of Enoch, to be the one through whom the family of man would continue. God choosing Noah was an expression of his grace and favor. Once he became aware that God had chosen him, then his life began to be molded by this awareness of having been chosen. He had come into the family of man for just this moment by divine favor and divine providence.

This is true of all of those who make a difference eternally in our world. God has chosen them to have a relationship with Himself and to be used by His grace to make a difference in his world. I would encourage you to believe tonight that in the course of your life that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is going to lead you into circumstances in which you will have an opportunity to make a difference. When those opportunities to make a difference come you should be encouraged by knowing that you have been chosen by God for just such a calling.

II. PERSONS WITH CHARACTER

The people through whom God makes a difference in an evil age are persons of character. In the summary statement concerning the life of Noah we read, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.” The first two statements by Moses give us insight into the godly character of this man Noah. His character set him apart from the corrupt world in which he lived.

1. A righteous man.

How are we to understand this reference to righteousness in the life of Noah? Are we to understand it in light of the New Testament as being gift righteousness? Is this a reference to a righteousness that God gave him because of his faith? Or is it practical righteousness that simple refers to the way he related to his fellowman in that day? It may actually include both of these possibilities. I think, however, the emphasis is upon the manifestation of his godly character in the day to day affairs of life. Noah was a man who did the right thing at the right time as he related to his fellowman. In a world that was characterized by violence, dishonesty, deceit, and immorality, Noah was found doing the right thing. He did the right thing because in his walk with God godly character had been developed in his life.

2. Blameless among the people of his time.

The older version translates this “perfect.” The newer version is probably a better translation in our day. The word “perfect” suggest sinless perfection to a contemporary congregation. This was not the idea in the word used by Moses in the Hebrew text. A better translation would be, “whole.,” or a person of integrity. It simply means that as he lived his life out in the midst of a corrupt society, Noah was found to be a person of moral wholeness, of integrity, and thus was considered “blameless” in the eyes of his fellowman. As they judged his conduct, they could not find any point of his conduct against which they could lodge blame.

It does not mean he was sinlessly perfect. However, he was a person of godly character. It is persons of character that God uses to make a difference in an evil world. This explains why God is so faithfully working in your life to bring about mature, whole, godly character. He is seeking to make you a person of integrity so that you can be his channel through which He works in the evil world in which you and I live.

III. LIVED IN COMMUNION WITH GOD.

The other statement made by Moses concerning Noah is very helpful, “and he walked with God.” A similar statement was made concerning his grandfather Enoch. Enoch, too, had walked with God and had become a witness to his generation. However, the structure in the Hebrew text is a little different at this point. God is in the Hebrew statement put in the first preposition in the sentence. An emphasis is placed upon walking in dependence upon God. An emphasis is placed upon the God with whom Noah walked being the only true and living God.

This explains the first two statements in Moses’ summary. The secret of Noah being so different from the corrupt society about him is found in his communion with God day by day. When God choose him to be the object of His grace, He chose him to walk with Him in communion. A life of fellowship with God and dependence upon God is a critical element in being able to make a difference in the world in which you live.

Any time you neglect your life of communion with God, and begin to walk in dependence upon self rather than in dependence upon God, you are putting in jeopardy your potential

for making a difference in the world. You are increasing the likelihood that instead of making a difference you will simply become another citizen in a corrupt and evil world. There is a price to be paid in discipline and dedication if you are to walk with God.

In a conversation with a member of another congregation in this city a few days ago, the person said to me, “I am desperately looking for a new job!” When I asked her why the urgency about a new job she explained to me that the office in which she worked was filled with non-Christians. She found herself spiritually stifled by this evil atmosphere in which she had to work day by day. I didn’t preach to her or even admonish her, but I listened with concern. Where did we get the idea that the only place you can walk with God is in some kind of protected environment? Where did we get the idea that it might be easier to live for God if you work in an office where no one ever curses, ever tells dirty stories or ever cheats? We need to remember the lesson we learned from the life of Noah. Actually, those adverse circumstances in which you live may become an encouragement to lean upon the Lord even more, and it may be that God has placed you in that dark situation because He has in mind making a difference through you. The possibility of those with whom you work becoming children of God is greatly enhanced when God puts you as a Christian in communion with Him into their world. You can walk with God in the midst of a corrupt and dark age.

IV. TAKE A RISK BY FAITH.

When you study the circumstance of Noah’s life it is easy to understand why he is identified as a person of exceptional faith in the New Testament. Actually there are no

references to his faith in the Genesis account of his life. There we simply learn that he “did everything just as God commanded him.” Actually, that expression is repeated more than once. The thing that distinguished him was his obedience to the Lord. We learn from the New Testament that his obedience was an expression of his faith.

We learn something about the risk that he took when we consider what he did.

According to the Genesis account the world in which Noah lived was unacquainted with rain and floods. The earth seems to have been watered by some other process before this cataclysmic event took place. In a world that had never seen a rain and never seen a flood, Noah began to build an ark. The ark was even by today’s standards a massive construction project. This man along with his sons and others that they may have enlisted to help them spent multiplied years building this ark. The ark was large enough that it would hold thousands of animals paired with each other along with Noah and his family throughout the days of that devastating flood. The only basis for what Noah did was that he had a word from God. He risked the ridicule of the world in which he lived. He risked the misunderstanding of the whole of society. He risked everything on the Word of God. People who make a difference are always ready to step out and to take a risk.

While I would not put the feat of Jackie Robinson in the same category as that of Noah, it is easy to see though why he made a difference. Even though he had the support of the owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Mr. Branch Richey, behind him, he had most of the baseball world against him. We now know that several National League clubs took a

vote to decide whether or not they would actually play against the Dodgers with a black player on their team. He received all kinds of ridicule and angry responses from the fans in the different cities he went to play. He was called all kinds of ugly names by players on his team as well as the other teams. He realized that in that world of the 50's he was actually putting life itself in jeopardy by walking out on the baseball field to compete in the game of baseball as a black baseball player. It was a risk that he had to take if he was to open the door of opportunity to the generations of black players that would come behind him.

Noah took an even greater risk. His was a risk in which all he had for the basis of what he did was a heart deep conviction that God had spoken to him. It is important that we note that the record says "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." We need to underline that word "everything." The old version translates it "all." The emphasis is upon the completeness of his obedience to the Lord. He didn't do 75% of what God commanded, or 90% of what God commanded or even 99% of what God commanded! He did "everything" just as God commanded him.

This is probably the point of greatest danger for some of us. We may have developed the character and we may attempt to maintain a life of communion with God, we may even sense that we have been chosen by God for making a difference but we are hesitant about risking on nothing but the Word of God. We waver in our faith. As I look back over my years my face blushes with shame when I remember some situations in which I now believe God wanted to make a difference through me, but I was hesitant to risk everything

by faith. I want to encourage you for the sake of the Kingdom of God, for the sake of your family, for the sake of the world in which you and I live, take the risk! Take the risk!

It is noteworthy that Noah made a difference in the world in which he lived while being the head of a household. He was still the husband of one wife and the father of three sons. He did not allow the presence of family to keep him from taking the risk. It is amazing how many times we use our families as an excuse for not taking a risk. I would encourage you to be aware that it is a greater risk to your family not to be obedient to God than it is to do with all of your heart what God has called you to do.

I want to be a pastor in the last years of my ministry who makes a difference. I want to make a difference until the end of the journey! I want to pastor a church that wants to make a difference! Let's be a Noah people in the midst of an evil world.