

The Hanging of the Bow

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[0:00] I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 9, Genesis chapter 9. We've been blessed this morning with music now, folks. My soul. Sit on that front row sometimes and say, Lord, just don't let me mess this up.

I guess we could just, after such a worship time, we could just go home, couldn't we? But we're not. But anyway, we spent a couple of weeks talking about Noah and the flood, and there's a lot to learn.

Somebody came up with a list of that. All I ever needed to know, I learned from Noah. I'll give you the top 10. Number 10, don't miss the boat. Number 9, we're all in the same boat.

Number 8, plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark. Number 7, stay fit. When you're 500 years old, you might be asked to do something big.

Number 6, don't listen to critics. Just do the job that needs to be done. Number 5, for safety's sake, travel in pairs.

[1:07] Number 4, speed isn't always an advantage. The cheaters were on board, but so were the snails. Number 3, when you stress, float a while. Number 2, remember, the ark was built by an amateur.

The Titanic was built by a team of professionals. And number 1, no matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.

And that's what I want to talk about this morning is that last one. For the rainbow is the great culmination of the flood. It really speaks to the whole story.

It speaks to everything that comes after the story as well, I believe. It's found in Genesis chapter 9, beginning in verse 8. And it says this, Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, Behold, I established my covenant with you and your offspring after you.

And with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark, it is for every beast of the earth.

[2:14] I established my covenant with you that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood. And never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for all future generations.

I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh.

And the water shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it. And remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that's on the earth.

God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that's on the earth. God had given Noah specific instructions on how to build the ark that he would fill with animals.

Noah obeyed and the flood came. For 40 days and 40 nights it rained. And 150 days later, the ark rested on Mount Ararat.

[3:31] A year after the floods had started, Noah came out of the ark. And after Noah built an altar and worshiped, God made a covenant. God was pleased by the aroma that came from the altar.

And the Lord makes a covenant not to ever destroy the earth with water because of us. Or strike down every living creature again.

He then told them to get busy replenishing the earth and we've been doing that ever since. So what's the real message of the flood? What I want to do this morning is I want to summarize the

flood event and the aftermath.

And I believe it points to a summary of the gospel as well. The good news of Christ. Almost like a gospel presentation. I want you to see this.

First thing you need to see is that our sin caused a curse. Our sin is more than a stone in the shoe of God. Our sin is not a lack of him getting his way.

[4 : 39] God's not some cosmic killjoy becoming insecure in his leadership because we do something different than what he tells us to do. Our sin is simply not an alternative way of living life.

It's an offense to God. I want you to see the devastation that God felt when he looked at the state of the world. In Genesis 6, 5 and 6 it says this.

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart.

You need to understand that our sin is a slap in the face of God. Even further and more literally a flogging on the back of God. And when we sin we accuse God of not really loving us.

Not really having the best idea for us. He apparently is not able to lead us if we're leading ourselves in a different direction. It's as if the creation has turned against the creator.

[5 : 49] That sounds like something from a horror movie. Or an episode of a horrible life. But I want you to understand that our sin grieves the heart of God. It is his deepest hurt and the consequences are great.

It drives a wedge between us and God. Jesus describes the separation that our sin causes between us and God as a fixed chasm.

What that means is friend we're alienated. We are separated. We are condemned. We have no hope unless there's a fix. And in Genesis chapter 6 he is telling us the whole world needs to be fixed.

Now the second step of that summary is this. Our Lord brought a cure. You could call it, you could call the flood the great reset if you would. Something had to fix it and God loves us so much.

He doesn't want us to destroy the earth and ourselves with no regard. And that's why he does not ignore our sin. He answers it with his wrath. He designed us, he designed our bodies and our surroundings for obedience.

[7 : 01] And when we lack obedience it destroys the body and his wrath destroys the earth. God in his love must discipline a rebellious humanity regardless of the cost.

Because he's a holy God. And so God acted in his wrath. His holiness could not ignore sin. And thankfully his love is as serious as his wrath.

Which leads to the third point of the summary. And that is our Lord made covenant. In the midst of a recovering world was a commitment.

A promise. A sign of his grace. The rainbow was seen for the first time.

A symbol of God's promise not to destroy the earth with water again. It's a sign of his grace upon a sinful humanity.

[7 : 59] A humankind that has started a war against God. Whether that be by ignoring their very creator that created them. Or whether it be by shaking their fist at him and continuing in our rebellion of sin.

A war that we could not win. A war that would destroy us. And so God responded. The rainbow is more than just a prism of beautiful colors.

There has been an attempt for the last 50 years to make the rainbow. A symbol of diversity and equality. And a spectrum of human sexuality and gender.

It is not. It is instead a sign of the end of a spiritual war. The bow that he speaks of is the same word that is used for a bow as if shooting an arrow.

God's wrath felt to the earth like a precision attack. As if he was using the weapons of that day. Like he aimed his bow at the earth.

[9 : 11] But with the arc of the rainbow. There is the picture of God not aiming that bow at the earth. But hanging that bow on the wall of the sky.

Hanging up his wrath against them. He said he would not cut them off. Terms only used one other time in Genesis.

And it speaks to anyone who would not enter into a covenant given to Abraham. When God says he will not cut you off. He is saying he will not give up on us.

He will not turn us away. He will not destroy us. The spectrum bow that is in the sky is not pointed at us. It's pointed away from us.

How appropriate. God's pointing the bow at himself. And that's where the summary of the gospel comes in. Because the gospel is that we are all sinners.

[10:16] Romans 3.23 says, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We're all in the same boat, folks. And that sin, our sin, has caused a curse.

Scripture is clear about what that curse is. In Romans 6.23, the wages of sin, the cost of penalty of sin is death. It's that separation. It's that chasm I spoke of. But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That death is that chasm of separation between us and God due to our sin. Our sin caused a curse. But our Lord brought a cure.

The world couldn't fix itself. Noah couldn't fix the world. Only God could bring the cure. And so it is with us as individuals.

I want you to listen to how the Apostle Paul describes it. Describes our state. It says in Ephesians chapter 2. Beginning in verse 1.

[11:19] And you were dead in the trespasses and sins. In which you once walked. Following the course of this world.

Following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh.

Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. And were by nature children of wrath. Like the rest of mankind.

It's a scathing passage of scripture. That speaks of the difficulty that we're in. And it is followed, thank God, by the biggest but in all of scripture.

But God. What did y'all think I was talking about? My goodness. But God. It goes on to tell us. It is in God's mercy.

[12:21] And because of his love. And by his grace. That he met us where we are. That he awakens our spiritually dead souls. And he draws us to himself. And our surrender to that drawing.

Our following. His lead. Changes our lives for now until eternity. He cures our curse. And just like the flood.

But even greater. Our Lord made a covenant. The rainbow is the sign of the noatic covenant. It's the first clearly defined covenant in scripture.

Even though it is not the first. But it's not the last either, thank God. He made a covenant as well with Abraham. And with his offspring.

And he marked that covenant with male circumcision. He went on to make a covenant with Moses on Mount Sinai. And he promised them a land for their own.

[13:21] He made one with David. That points to the promise of Christ. He also made one through Jeremiah. That led to the greatest covenant.

And that is that covenant through the cross. The greatest sign of grace is not the rainbow. The greatest sign of grace is the cross. I'm thankful that when I see the rainbow.

I'm reminded that God hung his warrior bow up. Not pointing it at us. We're not fighting against God. God's not mad at us. And he's not at war with you.

He's hung up his bow. Now don't misunderstand me. Lightning's going to come in your life. There's going to be thunder in your life. There's going to be difficulty in your life. You are fallen folks.

We are fallen folks. Living in a fallen world. God will make his presence known. However, I want you to hear me today.

[14:24] You can rest in his promise. God keeps his covenant. If it was just a contract, somebody could breach it and it'll be over.

But it's not. It's a covenant. God keeps his covenant. In spite of us many times. And about that bow. I want you to understand. He's actually pointing that bow at himself. That he himself now would pay penalty for the evil.

And the sin of humanity. And that is exactly what he did on the cross. The cross is what all the word of God points to.

It's what that bow in the sky points to. When we look at the cross, we remember. Like the old hymn says. Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe.

[15 : 23] My sin had left a crimson stain. But thank God he washed it. White as snow. So from the rainbow to the cross. We find our hope.

We find our salvation. We find our security. In the Lord. When he hung that bow.

He made a promise. To the earth and all of humanity. And when Jesus hung on the cross. He made a promise to us as individuals.

That if we would confess him Jesus as Lord. And believe that God raised him from the dead. We shall be saved.

What a shame it is. To be aware of the fallen state in which we find ourselves. And never respond to the grace of God that's offered to us in response.

[16 : 22] If you're here this morning. And there's never been a time when you've acknowledged the sin that's in your life before a holy God. When you've confessed that to him.

And asked him to forgive you and to cleanse you of that. I want you to know the day is the day of salvation. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

He'll change you where you are today. And make you what he'd have you to be. I'm thankful the word of God is clear.

That when we do confess that before him. And ask him to empower our lives with the Holy Spirit of God. He not only saves us, forgives us for our sins. Gives us an eternity with him.

But he also promises life and life more abundantly in John 10. And life and life more abundantly is not just talking about when we leave this life. It's talking about an uptick in life today.

[17 : 22] It's talking about the quality of having a living Lord leading us all the way. If you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're going to close our time together with an invitation. We're going to stand and we're going to sing. More important than standing and singing is that you respond to the Lord as he speaks to you. The Holy Spirit does not speak audibly. He speaks within your hearts. If you feel a drawing in yourself to come to the Lord Jesus. You didn't come up with that on your own. God's drawing you. And you need to respond. Maybe you're here and you have given your heart and life to the Lord. And you know that. You've done that. But you've never publicly acknowledged that. Jesus tells us by his example and by his commission that when we're saved our first step of obedience is to follow him in baptism.

If you'll come today we'll be happy to set that up for you. We're not doing it today. We'll be happy to line that up. We have it scheduled in the future already. So I encourage you if you've accepted the Lord in your life but you feel like your faith is a private faith that you've never let anybody know.

[18 : 36] Jesus said if you're ashamed of men. If you're ashamed of me before men I'll be ashamed of you before my father in heaven. So I encourage you to openly and honestly let others know that Christ has come into your life by acknowledging that today and by acknowledging that through baptism.

Maybe you're here and God's drawing you to this church. You feel like this is a place where you want to join us in your journey. Shrive together until the Lord comes together.

God's leading you to be a part of this church. We'll be happy to lead you through that process as well. But you know last Sunday I gave an opportunity for you to let me know if you had any prayer requests.

Anything to share. And I was flooded with all kinds of prayer requests. And I spent much of the day Monday and honestly most of the week praying for those needs that people had.

When I got to the middle of the week and I looked at our prayer guide that we do on Wednesday morning. And I began to think about those prayer requests that I had received in which I could add to the church prayer schedule and let other people know what was going on.

[19 : 43] I realized something. Made a huge impact on me. The requests that had been shared with me were not requests that I could make public.

They were not stuff that everybody needed to know. It reaffirmed something that I learned a long time ago. And that is there's a pain on every pew.

People struggling and dealing with stuff. Burdens about their own life. Burdens for other people's lives. Tests, struggles all along the way. And I want you to know whatever it is that you're carrying today, you can lay it at his feet at this altar.

You can do it where you stand. It's where you'll stand you too. But you can do it at this altar. You can do it with a pastor praying with you if you'd like. I just want you to lay that before the Lord.

Ask God to take it. And then trust him. Trust him. Same God that stopped the flood water. Same God that hung the rainbow. Same God that sent his son to die on the cross.

[20 : 50] Loves you enough to care about the hurt that you feel today. And he'll guide you through it if you'll surrender to him. And give it over to him. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, help us to simply be obedient as you speak to our hearts and lives. Help us not be satisfied with doing anything less than our very best to follow what you would have for us, dear God.

I pray for every soul in this building today. For those who may be watching online, dear God, if they don't know you, may today be the day of salvation. Father, if they need to make a public decision, Lord, lead them to do that.

If they have a burden, dear God, lift that burden from them, oh God, I pray. That they'll surrender that to you today. I love you and I thank you for the opportunity of worship.

Help us to do it wholeheartedly by obeying what you tell us to do. In Jesus' precious name, amen.