

Listen to the Lord 6/9/2019 Steve Harden

The scripture reading this morning is from Genesis 6:5-22 and Hebrews 11:7.

Genesis 6: “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 had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation.

Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. Of the birds

according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them.” Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.”

Hebrews 11:7: “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 the righteousness that comes by faith.”

Sometimes we do think about Noah and the ark in a lot of ways, but it’s hard to take in just the severity of what happened in that day. Before we continue in our series of enduring by faith, I wanted to share with you just a couple things, a couple announcements, and a praise that you needed to share, that I wanted to share with you. First of all, let me encourage you to sign up for one of the activities that we have going on this summer. We have several planned, and we want to give ample opportunity for you to connect with one another. Here at Ethos, community is immensely important to us. I think the model of the early church points that out to us. You know, in Acts 2 when the church was just exploding and starting, it says that it gave itself to four things: the apostle’s teaching, but also to fellowship, breaking of bread, and to prayer. All those are corporate, and it talks about being a community of believers together.

So, let me encourage you, we meet together here on Sunday in a large group but we also meet through the week in a variety of settings. We’ve talked about Meals with Ethos, a time where we’re just going to get together and have dinner together, and just learn one another’s stories. And so, I want to encourage you to write on your connect card, Meals with Ethos, and

you'll get signed up, okay? We've got Forge, the men's discipleship group starting this week, we've got women's prayer groups, we've got upcoming play dates for your kids. A lot is happening this summer, and it's all a reflection of our belief and our commitment to community. It's all about us, it's not about me, okay? So, get involved in some ways.

The other thing is a prayer report that I wanted to share with you. Over the last several months, our finances have taken a hit, as you know. So, we've been looking for ways to cut our expenses. Well as your staff, we've talked about, well why don't we just give up our office space and office out of home and coffee shops and stuff. We could do that; we could save that money. About the time we made that decision, our neighbors from downstairs in the building that we're in, they had moved out and gone downtown and they called me and said, "Steve, could y'all use our space downstairs? We want to donate it to you until after the first of the year." God, as a token of His love and His care for us, has given us free office space through the end of the year. That's reason to rejoice. He's faithful. He's just faithful to His people, and I've just seen it over and over again as a token that's He's faithful and He cares for us. So, if you come by the church office, know that you don't go in the right door, go in the left door, same building. Also, if you just have a desire to pack a few boxes of books and maybe move a few desks down a stairway, we'll be doing that tomorrow morning and we'll have a lot of fun doing it, so if you want to come by we'd love to have you, okay?

But I wanted to share that with you, it's exciting what God is doing, and it's exciting that He calls us into community, and I really want you to avail yourself of the opportunities to be a family, be in community.

Okay, Noah. God warned Noah that there was going to be a flood, judgment, and it changed Noah's life forever. This summer we are looking at Hebrews 11, the faith chapter, and we are seeing how our faith may be strengthened and encouraged by the story of these people here in the Old Testament. Today we're up to verse 7, in Noah. And when God told Noah that he was going to flood the earth and judge it, all of Noah's plans, all his hopes and his dreams, they changed in a moment. In an instant, nothing would ever be the same. I've found that believing God, having faith, does that sometimes. It puts everything else in perspective, it helps us rearrange our priorities, it becomes a driving motivator in our lives. It's the lens through which we see everything else. "By faith, Noah..."

For Noah, everything changed that day. Everything that had been important the day before was no longer important to him. God had chosen Noah to carry the weight of the world. For Noah, his obedience would be the avenue by which God fulfilled His promise to Adam and Eve to send a Redeemer. Through Noah, God would bring about a new earth. He would sustain the animals and the life. He would sustain his family. You see, God's integrity was on the line, because He'd promised Adam and Eve that there would be a Redeemer to come. For Noah, believing God meant that things weren't going to be easy, ever again. He never again would be comfortable. We are here today, because Noah believed and obeyed. He is our physical parent, and also our spiritual parent, who teaches us about faith. See, everything rode on Noah's obedience.

Now, our role in this grand story that God is writing will probably not be as significant as Noah's was. I think we can accept that, right? I'm glad I don't bear the weight that Noah bore. However, our role is not essentially any different than his. Our role is to live by faith. For Noah,

and for us, to live by faith means to believe, and obey. To believe and obey. We're going to see this play out, I've got two points today. Two skeletal frameworks: one the response of faith, and two the consequence of faith.

So, first the response of faith. When we respond in faith, there is both an internal response and an external response. The internal response is, we believe. In our story, Noah believed God. God said, "I am going to send a cataclysmic event, and it will destroy all of the inhabitants of the earth." Now you've got to understand, try to step into Noah's shoes, this was a lot to take in. He had no framework for this. But he believed. He trusted what God said as true. He believed in spite of zero visible evidence. This fits our description in verse one, right? The evidence of things unseen! Noah saw nothing of this. There wasn't a cloud in the sky when God told him this. There had never been a flood. There had never been a rain. And the day after God told him that he was going to destroy the earth, nothing appeared to be different at all. Yet, he believed. In spite of being all alone in the expectation of this judgment, he believed.

You see, Noah didn't just believe in God, he believed God when He spoke. Faith is not living on my gut, or my heart, or my feelings, or what my friends tell me, faith is hearing a word from God and trusting it with all that you have. That's what faith is. God speaks, I believe. Without God speaking, there can be no faith, okay? Romans 10:17: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of Christ." So, faith starts with God speaking, I respond in belief and it's that simple. This will be a recurring theme in our study of Hebrews 11, you will see all the way through, God speaks and they believe. We actually have one step further than these Old Testament saints did because we have the word of God. We can see what God says. All

of this is God's word. He tells us our role by faith, "Believe." You believe in God, well so do the demons. You have to go further than that, you have to believe what He says.

Faith is believing what God says is true. It's interesting to me as I look at these hall of famers in Hebrews 11, it's not that they were so brave, or so courageous, or so powerful. Many of them were, but they received their commendation from God because they believed Him. And I don't know about you, but that puts pleasing God on a low enough shelf for me to grab it. All I have to do is believe Him and I can receive the commendation of God. That's all. Please don't complicate it. If He says it, I believe it. That's faith.

So, Noah believed Him, but not only that but Noah feared Him. The implications of what was to happen had to blow his mind. Can you imagine being in Noah's shoes? Our text says that the fear of God possessed him. The scope of what was going to happen had to almost crush him. Scholars estimate that the world was about 1500 years old, or at least mankind was 1500 years old at this point. And they estimate conservatively that there were 8 million people on the earth. And some estimates go up to 150 million people on the earth. What would go through your mind if God said, "I'm going to wipe them all out, Noah"? The weight had to be extreme. How his heart must have gone out everywhere he saw men and women, boys and girls, just going about their daily life unconcerned and somewhat unaware of what was about to happen! You know, I don't know about you, but when I'm stressed, I don't sleep very well. Can you imagine? It's a wonder if Noah slept at all. The fate of the whole world rested upon him doing what God told him to do and doing it well.

We're going to talk about the boat here in a little bit, but the boat had to hold together. The logistics of building that thing, let alone caring for so many animals? The need for food for

over a year for all those animals and themselves? Having spent a lot of time in a cow barn, can you imagine the smell? All these things he had to take into account. But in all of it, he didn't doubt God's word or fail to act on what God had said. He didn't shrink from his task, he believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

But not only does faith have an inward response, it also has an outward response. Noah obeyed. He obeyed! Because Noah believed God, it resulted in his obedience to God. Faith changes your behavior. Don't let anyone tell you that you can have faith and it never affect what you do. That's a lie. When you believe God, it's going to make its way out into what you do and say. God spoke, Noah obeyed. James says: "Show me your faith without works, I will show you my faith by my works." Now, Noah obeyed in two ways.

First of all, he built the ark. Verse 7: "He built the ark." He really believed God. You don't start a 120-year building project if you don't believe. That's a long time to work on one thing. The word ark here literally translated is "box." Noah built a box. The only other time in the Old Testament where ark is used, is for the box that Miriam put Moses in and put him on the river, these are the only two times this word is used. So, Noah built this great big box. It didn't have a hull it wasn't meant to go through water. It didn't have a rudder, or a steering wheel or anything else. All it was meant to do was float. It was a box, and it was a really big box: 450 feet long, 75-foot wide, and 45-foot tall. Now if you're like me, that means nothing to me. Let's try it this way: if you go to a football field, the ark was one and a half times the length of the field. It was about as wide as a football field, and it was four stories tall. Does that help? It means a little bit more to me than feet and all that, certainly more than cubits, right? Okay, the proportions of this ark were exactly right for stability. It's interesting that the big ships that have all come after

that, generally have the same proportion of dimensions as did the ark. God knew what He was doing for stability. The ark had a carrying capacity of a train that had 522 box cars. 522. A box car holds about two hundred and forty sheep, if that helps. So, the ark would have been able to carry about 125,000 sheep. Now, we use sheep because its kind of the average size of animal, right? There were some bigger, some smaller: mammoth, mammoth construction. Interestingly, the ark is thought to have been the largest boat built until the mid- 19th century, when they started building ships out of steel. It is a marvel. God told him how to build it, and he obeyed. Because Noah believed God when He said that He was sending a flood, Noah built a boat, and he did it for 120 years.

The second thing that Noah did was warn others of the coming judgment. This may have been more of a challenge than the building of the boat. How could he make them believe that the world was coming to an end, that judgment was coming? And I know he did this, how could he not tell others that if they didn't repent of their sins, that they were going to die? He preached the coming judgement. In 2 Peter 2:5 Peter calls him a "herald of righteousness." A herald. He warned those, while he was building, of the judgment to come. And yet, no one outside his family believed him. He would spend 120 years preaching one message, judgment is coming, and no one listened. They must have ridiculed him and didn't believe his words. Think of the message that he told! "Guys, God spoke to me," which in and of itself, right? "God told me that He is going to destroy the world with a flood. Help me build this boat," in Kansas, if you will. "Help me build this huge boat, and when it rains, I know you've never seen rain, but rain is when water falls from the sky, you can get in it with me." Try selling that one.

And yet, that's exactly what Noah did. He preached a message that he knew would be ridiculed. Can you imagine what they said about him? "There goes crazy Noah!" "Sky looks pretty clear today, Noah." "It's been 100 years, still hasn't come through." "How many Noah's does it take to build an ark," right? He's kind of like the guy with the sandwich board that says 'the end is near.' I think that's kind of the attitude they must have had. And yet, he continued to preach. Life wasn't easy for Noah; life wasn't comfortable for Noah. I don't think that he would subscribe to 'your best life now,' philosophy! 'I'm okay, you're okay,' was not his mantra. 'Something good is going to happen to you,' no! 'Judgment is coming,' was his message. You see, more was at stake than his comfort, or his popularity. There were things that were more important to him than fitting in with everybody else and having everybody like him. Judgment was coming. Lives were at stake.

So, what can we learn from Noah's responses, both internally and externally? Well first, God has spoken in His word. And He speaks to us differently than He did to Noah, but it's no less authoritative. And in His word, He has warned us that there is coming a day of judgment. He has warned us of a coming day. Do we not share Noah's calling to warn a world of coming judgment? Listen as I read 2 Peter 3:1-7, Peter says: "This is now the second letter that I am writing to you beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long

ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.” He’s talking about Noah, right? “But by the same word, the heavens and the earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”

Peter says that just like judgment came then, judgment is going to come in days ahead. In Noah’s day, judgment came by water, in the day ahead, judgment comes by fire. God says, there is a cataclysmic judgement coming. We don’t know when it’s coming, but we know it’s coming. We don’t know if Noah knew the timetable of the flood, I think he just got up every morning and he went to work on building a boat. But just like there is a cataclysmic judgment coming at the end of time, each of us face a day of judgment. Hebrews 9:27 says “And just as it is appointed for a man to die once, and after that comes the judgment.” This is scary stuff!

Shall we take God at His word and repent of our sins that we might be saved? I don’t want to be like those who ignored Noah’s message of judgment. But do I not need to take responsibility as Noah did and tell others that there is a judgment day coming? This is kind of where the rubber hits the road for me. It really kind of slammed me all week. This is a heavy reality check, because you see, the judgment that is coming is no less horrifying than the one that was sent in Noah’s day. And whether it is cataclysmic end of time judgment, or the individual judgment that comes at one’s death, judgment is still coming. The severity and the longevity of the judgment is no different than it was in Noah’s day. We read in Revelation 6 where men will cry out to the mountains, for them to fall on them and crush them, and save them from the wrath of God.

Let me ask you, I know it's kind of heavy right now, but let me ask you, what kind of person would Noah have been, knowing the judgment to come, and not warn anyone? What kind of person would he have been? But I have to ask myself, what kind of a person am I knowing judgment to come, if I don't warn those with whom I do business, those who I come in contact with? Can I just go about my business, knowing what is to come, and never warn anyone? I've had to ask myself this week, am I more afraid of being known as crazy Steve and offending someone, than caring enough about them to tell them that judgment is coming? You see, in the gospel we talk about love and mercy and grace, as we should. And those are kind of easy to talk about. It's not hard to say that God loves you, and He cares about you, and He's been merciful and He sent His Son to die for people just like you. But it's a little harder to say, but if you reject Him there's a day coming when you will be judged for that. And it will be horrifying. You cannot just do what you want to do.

I think about what would I do if I knew a bridge was out, you know, we've had all this flooding around which made it kind of apropos for this message, but what if I knew there was a bridge out on a highway and that if somebody drove over it they would plunge to their death? Would I not do everything I would know how to do, to stop their car? I think I would! I would do whatever it took. I don't think you would find me standing along side of the highway saying, "Have a nice trip!" What a monster that would be, right? How can I do less about the realities of heaven and hell, and judgement to come? For us as a church, I think it's our responsibility to keep these unseen realities of mercy and grace and judgment and heaven and hell at the forefront of everything we do. We can't afford to play games with eternal destinies. He has called us to tell our generation that judgment is coming, and God has declared it so. Our time is now. Noah had

his day; we have our day. And we can't be surprised if people reject our message, respond with ridicule, scorn, laughter, just like they did Noah, because it's really popular right now to say you can do anything you want, and it's okay. God tells us, it's not okay. Judgment is coming. And God says, unless you repent you will be judged severely, can I say anything less than what God says and be a faithful steward? So, Noah obeyed.

Now the consequences of faith. The response is to believe and obey, now the consequences of faith. The world is condemned. No one listened to Noah, they were condemned for rejecting God's warning through Noah. In that day, judgement wasn't a foreign concept. They had no excuse. I mean, it wasn't very many generations, when you have a 900-year life span it doesn't take many generations to really extend out, right? Adam was only a couple generations away, and surely, they knew the story of the fall. They had heard the story about Cain and Abel, how Cain was judged. Enoch was called a preacher of judgement, and now Noah had been telling them for 120 years judgment is coming, and they still rejected the warning. Verse 7 says "the world was condemned." They were without excuse.

But secondly, it says that Noah became an heir of righteousness there in verse 7. This is really the heart of Christianity; I love this so much. I want to take some time here because it would be easy to think, maybe even we tend to think that Noah found favor with God because he obeyed. Because he was this brave, courageous person. But that's not what our text says, not at all. More accurately, Noah was commended by God because he believed God and it was counted unto him as righteousness. And it says, "he became an heir of righteousness." So, what does it mean to be an heir of righteousness? Well think about it, what is an heir? An heir is someone who gains wealth or property because of their relationship with someone else, very simple. They

gain wealth because of their relationship with someone else. An heir receives something that they did not earn. No one becomes an heir because “I worked hard for this, out of my own effort, my skills, my abilities.” No! That’s not how it works. An heir becomes an heir solely because of their relationship with another, and that’s what Christianity is about.

Romans 4:13: “For the promise to Abraham and to his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.” Our inheritance, our blessing comes not because we are smart enough to believe, not because we work hard enough to believe, but it is all because of our relationship with Jesus. We are heirs. We receive an inheritance that we did not earn, like Noah we are given a righteousness that is not our own. The theological word for this, or phrase, is imputed righteousness. Imputed righteousness.

You see, there are only two kind of religions in the world. The first one is the religion of human achievement. We’re all wired this way. To try to seek God and the approval of God because of how hard we work, by being better, more moral, more ethical, whatever. But God says, that’s not the way you find me. God says there is another means by which I will accept you. Christianity is not about human achievement, it’s about Jesus’ achievement. He is righteous and He grants us as His heirs, His own righteousness. The avenue by which we receive our inheritance is faith and trust and belief. Noah believed God, he had faith that what He said was true, and then he entrusted himself to God. And it was counted to him as righteousness. In like manner, we believe God, we believe Christ, and faith is the avenue by which we receive His righteousness and are counted as righteous.

We need more than human achievement. We need more than trying harder. We need someone to grant us His righteousness. We need an ark. Noah needed an ark; we need an ark. The only way for protection is through an ark, and His name is Jesus. Jesus caused the storm of our own sin, the flood waters of our unrighteousness to beat down upon the ark whose name is Jesus. And if we find our rest and our protection inside that ark, we are safe. Our only call is to believe Him that what He says is true, and then get on the ark and entrust ourselves to Him. If we will simply believe that we are rescued from the judgment to come, based on His work alone, entrust ourselves to Him, we'll be rescued from the wrath to come. Let's pray.