

Murray Valley Lutheran Community ~ Pastor David Kuss
Ash Wednesday 2nd March 2022

Genesis 6 “But Noah found Grace in the eyes of the LORD”.

Sunday School tells us Noah was a “righteous man who walked in the ways of the Lord”– that’s what it says in Genesis.

But Sunday School never told how bad it was back then – the depth of the depravity is beyond imagination.

But I’m guessing you’ll try:

- Men lusting for men – women lusting for women.
- Heavenly beings lusting human beings – human beings lusting heavenly beings.
- And sadly, men lusting after animals, and a depth beyond belief, animals lusting after men.

“It grieved the Lord”.

“I will wipe out man whom I have created from the face of the earth, man and animals, all creeping things and all birds...for I am sorry that I ever made them.”

Back to Sunday School.

We have Noah and his family – they were a righteous family – led by a righteous man, Noah.

And trusty, faithful old Noah built an Ark, gathered up all the animals - waited and floated for 40 days and 40 nights – knowing God would save him.

Look it’s a nice story – but it is a wrong story – or at least an incomplete story.

Basically a whole bunch of evil people are drowned and one good bloke and his family were saved.

The moral of the story is that if you are good then God will save you from his anger, and from death – if you’re evil - you die!

The problem is this is not the gospel.

This is just plain, old-fashion, works righteousness.

It’s the law.

“Be a good person and you’ll be saved, be a bad person you’ll die” – it makes human sense at least.

We don’t want law – Jesus fulfilled the law for us, we want the Gospel.

And there is good news for us in this tragic story. It’s to point us to Jesus – like every word in Scripture.

Yes, Genesis says Noah was a righteous man:

But please know: Noah became a righteous man after he found Grace in the eyes of God.

Before Noah found grace in the eyes of God he was one of those miserable men lusting after men, and animals, and had men and animals lusting after him.

As Paul says (Romans 3:23) For all have sinned, [including Noah] and come short of the glory of God.

There is a line in the sand for Noah – a defining moment.

One moment was an evil person bound to be drowned.

“...the wickedness of every person was great in the earth, and every desire that their heart conceived was always nothing but evil”

Next moment Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Here’s the good news – God came to an evil person and “graced” him - loved him unconditionally – accepted him despite his vile ways – restored him to be acceptable in God’s presence.

After God’s grace, Noah walked in the ways of the Lord.

Noah was a righteous man – because God chose to love him unconditionally.

??Why didn’t God offer his Grace to everyone.

Well he did – it took Noah 120 years to build the Ark.

Peter tells us that once God poured out his grace on Noah he became a “preacher of righteousness” (2Pet. 2:5)

So God through Noah was asking, begging, even demanding that people repent for 120 years.

For 120 years God offered his grace to the world.

It seems Noah was the only one who accepted and received God’s love and grace and was saved from the 40 day flood.

Would you have taken God’s hand of love and forgiveness?

Most don’t?

You are people of Grace – you are bound for eternal life.

We too are given “120 years” so-to-speak to ask people to turn to God – what a privilege – to walk in righteousness – to be God’s face in this world of trouble.

Righteousness is something which makes you right before a judge.

***Let me introduce you to my favourite text – Isaiah 11 about our last day – our judgment day – Jesus coming to judge the living and the dead.

It’s pure Gospel: it says, when the judge comes, he will not judge you by what he hears with his ears.

“Hey Judge I heard that he did this and that”. “I actually heard what she did with my own ears”.

Well, I’m not here to judge by what I hear with my ears.

“Hey Judge I saw him do it – I actually saw him – she saw him do it as well”.

I will not judge what I see with my eyes.

No, I will not judge with what I hear or what I see.

This is the strangest judgment ever.

Judge Judy only judges by what she hears and see.

No Jesus says, Isaiah 11, I will judge you with my righteousness – the righteousness I put over you.

Like Noah, he will choose you, he will cover you with underserved grace, you will be a new person and Jesus will judge you right for heaven.

120 years of Grace, love, forgiveness, dangled in their face and they said no.

40 days and 40 nights and they were no more.

This is Lent – an old English word meaning length – it’s spring up there where we get our church traditions.

It’s spring, and the days are getting longer - and it’s 40 days before Easter - there is a blessed, but urgent, call for you and me to take a good look at our lives, and to repent, to turn back to God.

And there is time enough for you and me to help someone else turn back to God.

A good place to start is at the cross – just one look and you can see who should be on the cross and from the same position you can also see who is on the cross.

You have found favour in God’s eyes – you have “120” years – so to speak - to share that love.

Your love saves that’s the privilege of God invested in you.

It rained for 40 days and 40 nights. It was the flood of all floods – the floods we have in Australia every 10 years or so are one in a hundred-year floods – this flood was a once in eternity flood - it destroyed the evil of that day.

No wonder Peter draws it all in for us and reminds us of Baptism:

In the Ark... only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

There are a few absolutes here right:

Sin, Evil is dead – it has no place in God’s plan.

God's grace, and love, and forgiveness is for all who receive it. You who have received his love and grace are privileged to share it so others are saved.

And as the East Coasters will tell you there will be another flood – when and where we do not know – so there is a sense of urgency.

In Alice Spring the Todd River floods every few years. Because you live right there on the river you see it flood.

First there is a trickle of brown water – then it rises up very quickly.

That first wave carries along all the filth and rubbish stuck in the river, cans, and rubbish, and bottles, dead dogs, all kinds of dead things – the flood carries all the filth down the river, through the gap, and out into the desert.

A flood is a deadly force – and a cleansing force.

The parallels are too obvious.

The 40-day flood of Noah was a deadly force and also a cleansing force.

The water of Baptism is a deadly force and it's also a cleansing.

I suppose we think of horror as the water rose and the people drowned – maybe we are asked to look at the cleansing.

While sin survived the 40 day flood, the depth of depravity God describes in Genesis has never been seen again.

In the northern hemisphere the days are getting longer they have more time to repent in lent – here the days are getting shorter – we don't have that time.

Today, in Lent, repent and live. Amen.