

Good Friday 2016

The Door of Mercy

Genesis 6-9

Allow me to present to you this Good Friday, a baby. A happy baby, a pretty cute baby, cute baby maybe like your cute baby, maybe like your cute grandbabies, maybe like your niece or your nephew, cute, happy baby. No, cute happy babies particularly in our day, certainly necessitates it seems for modern parents to have a cute and happy room and perhaps you've gone about the business as many parents do of creating your cute and happy room for your cute and happy baby. And often times I find when I go over and see these things, in peoples homes I often find this kind of motif going on in the happy cute baby's bedroom. Can you see that? Let's get a little closer look at that, there it is. There's a cute happy scene, dancing monkeys, giraffes, you see that? What is that there? There it is, Noah's Ark. Noah's Ark that's just a happy event in the Bible. The Noah's Ark, kind of the floating zoo, sun smiling down, birds flying around. Occasionally it'll list a little bit but everyone is fine. Noah is there, he's taking care of business, happy, happy times. (1:40)

And churches love this scene too, you can go to church nurseries and there it is painted on the wall, couple monkeys on the top playing cards or something like that, but there's the scene, very exciting scene and churches like it and Christians make videos about it, even vegetables get in the act there, Vegetales there building the ark. Well, Christians seem to gravitate toward it of course because it's a biblical story. We open our Old Testaments we see it there in Genesis chapter 6, then we learn about this flood, and we learn about this man named Noah, about this big boat. Ark just means box, this big box that he built and floated around in and of course he brought all the animals on to it. You say, oh yes that's in the Bible. It's not only in the Bible, matters of fact you find this in lots of places, perhaps one of the most famous is this Samarian tablet, the flood tablet. This flood tablet there Samarian religion between the rivers, the Mesopotamian region there, you had the Assyrians and the Babylonians codifying the story that has come down to us maybe if you studied some of the civilizations classes in collage you might remember the Gilgamesh epic which has quite a bit about the flood story, but it's not just the Mesopotamians or the Samaritans, you've got the Hindus that have their story, the Chinese in this case the Ma-a-oh tribe wrote a very extensive story regarding the flood. And you can lay Genesis 6 through 9 right next to that and find a million similarities between that extensive story of the flood in the Chinese stories. You have in India of course stories of being saved in a boat from a huge flood. Even in Native American Indians you have the story of the flood and the Gi-ba-oh tribe you have stories that if you lay your Bible next to it you say, "Hey, it looks a lot a like." Of course if we understand the claim of the Bible, the historicity of this event it makes sense that if everyone was descended from Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, then no matter where you are on the planet as they split up you'd say well of course they're going to tell the story of the big flood that took place. (3:45)

Anthropologist have chronicled over 200 stories of the flood that have come down through oral tradition and eventually got codified in some kind of writing in all these tribes and cultures around the world. And you'll find that if you lay these side by side that 95% of them speak of this not as some regional flood but as a global flood. I mean these are big deals that they talk about these stories of the worldwide global flood, 95% of them reflect that, 88% tell of a favored person or a favored family that's chosen the hero of the story and they go about saving the world. 70% describe a large boat as the vehicle of salvation through this terrible flood. 67 of the 200 stories that we've chronicled so far, that the anthropologists have, report of saving animals and that's part of the story. 66% speak of people being warned all through out the earth at this time, not many responding but people being forewarned that this flood was coming. And 60% also explain the cause of this as sin, as man's wickedness. And there's the rub, there's the problem. Here you have the stories even in cultures handed down through time and various places around the globe describing this as something that was the result of sin. I mean you can see the descending percentage of people that describe that but still well over 50% are going to talk about the cause of this being sin on the earth. (5:13)

Well of course if you open your Bibles and read about it, it's not tucked away as a footnote it's right there, that's how the story starts in Genesis chapter 6 verse 5. The LORD saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. I mean the story begins with here's the



problem, people's hearts are wicked and evil and continually in this culture people are always chasing after sin and two verses later it says, God's made a decision. I'm done, I've had enough. Holy God a just God says, "I'm going to blot them out, these people that I've created, from the face of the land." So when you really think about it I understand that this is a floating zoo of sorts but it doesn't seem like a happy scene if the whole point of the biblical story is, people are sinners and a just God is going to respond by blotting them out off the face of the earth. Now modern people creating throw rugs and comforters for their kids often paint it this way but back in time when biblical artists wanted to depict the flood they didn't depict the floating zoos. No, they didn't do that. Matter of fact you might remember last year we talked about the snake on the pole and I put up as our static image through out the night the recurring images, Gustave Doré famous kind of design of art in the various pictures in the Old Testament and one of them that we looked at last time was that snake on the pole that Moses raised up in the wilderness. Well, when he was asked to draw the flood he didn't draw anything like this, he drew the picture of what God was doing and that is blotting out sinful people from the planet. People clinging to the last bit of terra firma to hang onto before they were blotted out and destroyed because of the sin of their lives. (7:00)

So I understand that if you were going to paint the boat from a biblical perspective and biblical context and even as you reflect what 66% of the cultural stories regarding this global flood talk about I mean you're talking about a time of intensity of God's anger on the earth. Now you can go to Babies R Us all you want to look for throw comforters or what have you for your kids and you're going to find these. But if you really wanted something more biblical you'd have to shop for something like this. And depending on what kind of kid you're trying to raise that's probably not what you're going to put on there, or worse yet, people drowning in the water. Your cute little baby probably isn't going to be accented by these kinds of things or worse yet there it goes floating away, you're not on the boat, you're dying on the rock. So you're not going to find that. So when you think about the Ark you might remember my friend Ken Ham came recently and preached to us and maybe he mentioned it, I was traveling, he may have mentioned the fact that he's building a replica of the Ark there in the tri-state area of Northern Kentucky just outside of Cincinnati Ohio and it's been on the news, it's been a big deal, particularly on the local news they've been talking about that because they've been putting a lot of effort into building this gigantic ark that is to the dimensions of the biblical story in Genesis chapter 6. Which is really really big, really long, 75 feet wide, 45 feet tall, really if you talked to ship builders today if you're not building with steel, if you're building with natural materials like wood it's the exact maximum proportions you could have for a floatable box and even for stability the 6 to 1 ratio on how it's designed in the Bible is perfect for navigating the stormy seas of some big tumultuous ocean. So Ken has gone about trying to put this project together to build this and if you look at the current progress of it right now you kind of get a sense of scale, you realize this is a gigantic project and really he's trying to show in part that if you were to take the cubic space in this ark you do have about 522 at a minimum railroad box cars worth of space to put animals of every kind, seven of the clean animals, two pairs of all the unclean animals on this ark. You've got tons of space for those representative kinds and for all the provisions and of course you've got lots of room for people which didn't work out very well, very small group that got on the ark. But that's what they're building, and the scale where they're at right now where it's going to be is really gigantic when you get the sense of this. (9:36)

Now you can imagine when some crazy guy like our friend Ken is building this big boat everyone around is taking giving attention to this. This is a big deal building a boat. Well, it has caught the attention of a group of atheists that get together in the tri-state area, they call themselves the tri-state free thinkers, and as you see here at the bottom of their website I took this screen shot yesterday, they're collecting money on their web site for billboard fund raising where they've got a campaign going collecting money, they haven't collected that much from last check it was \$3000 that they've gotten in so far for this, but in Northern Kentucky that's enough to buy a few billboards. And they have put billboards together and the whole point of this is to mock the building of this big ark and actually more accurately to shame people for even believing in the Ark story. They really have done a better job reading their Bibles as Atheists than a lot of Christians have who only see this scene in the Bible as a floating zoo of happy animals and giraffes sticking their heads through the windows and monkeys playing cards on the deck of the ship. They see this, wait a minute, isn't this God getting really mad at the whole generation of sinners and wiping them off the face of the earth. So they're calling that on their billboards "Genocide" not to mention if you really have Noah and his wife and their three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth and their wives, well then who did the kids all marry, they had to marry their first cousins. But I say that because I want to explain their billboards that actually went up, here's one of the billboards that they put up. They call this park that Ken is building the Genocide and Incest Park. Now come on Christians read your Bibles, look at what this is, this is God wiping out a generation of people. This is a bunch of grandkids of Noah having to marry each other and then they put this subtext up there, celebrating 2000 years of myths. They're not really good with biblical chronology by the way but we won't correct



them on that. The point is I'm trying to make at least they get the premise of the story, do they not? (11:36)

They understand this is about people who are now being judged by God because their thoughts in the heart and their intentions and their actions and their words are sinful. Now if you want to shame me by telling me as a Christian hey you believe in that Ark story? Don't you know that's God killing people off? I'm going to go, not only do I know that, that really is the distilled theology that we teach our kids from the time they're little. Perhaps you learned this verse, Romans 6:23, for the wages of sin is death. It's one of the first verses we teach our children to remind them that the problem with a Holy God when he looks at sinful people is he can't deal with that. He cannot sit there like some indulgent grandfather and just roll his eyes and say, "Boys will be boys, they'll just do what they're going to do, no big deal." The just, righteous, holy, omnipotent God has to respond to the wickedness of man in a way that's just and the word death is not just physical death but of course the punishment, the just punishment of separation from him eternally. People don't like that. They would actually like you and I to be shamed by the fact that God would kill people in his creation and yet that's what happened in Genesis 3 on the day he ate of the fruit you'll surely die. And the curse came along in that same chapter and said because you've sinned you're going to return to dust, you will die you will be separated from me, which was symbolically shown by their clothing and all the shame that they felt that separation relationally from God. (13:10)

Well it's not much different today when it comes to God looking at the planet. As a matter of fact Jesus makes this parallel recorded twice in the gospels where he makes parallel between the days of Noah and the days that will be at the end of the current age in which we live. The last days, this period of time between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ that we preached about last weekend from this platform. And he says it'll be just like in the days of Noah and I think about that when he makes the statement and as I understand the context of when he discussed that twice in the gospels I realize what is saying is God is still a God who sees sin as a problem and because he's just and holy the wages of sin for God have to be death. There has to be a just punishment. And I realize when I look at the news today it must look like, a lot like back there in Noah's day because if you're going to talk about sin, I mean it's all over the place and it's getting worse. Have you noticed? It's everywhere, and by the way you don't have to read the news to hear about the corruption in the world, all you have to do is look in your own heart. I mean the church has been pretty helpful I suppose in taking some of the major sins that are discussed in the Bible that we all struggle with and put them in those categories, call them the 7 deadly sins because the wages of sin is death. All you need to do is put the mirror of God's word up and start to think about things like lust and pride and laziness and anger and envy and gluttony and greed and say, you know what? I've got that problem in my heart. You've got that problem in yours and your neighbor does and your coworker does and your family members do and just like it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the coming of the Son of Man. There's going to be a kind of permissiveness in society even an applauding in society, even a champion of sin in society where people are giving hearty approval to one another for these things they're no longer ashamed, it says in the prophets they're not even ashamed enough to learn how to blush. They can't blush at sin anymore. (15:12)

We understand the wages of sin is death. And so when you think about it you do realize the flood story if it's anything, it's a story of God just keeping his promise and responding to his nature and being someone who in a measured sense breaks out in his justice against sin but that's not all of the verse. As a matter of fact we teach our kids the whole verse, which not only does it says the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus our Lord. That second half of the verse is why you shouldn't be completely ashamed if you're going to show me your kid's nursery and you've got some Noah border up on the wall. It's okay. It's okay because there is a silver lining if you will to this story. And the point is that there was an Ark. It doesn't surprise me really when I think about a just God responding to sinful people that there would be a flood. What really surprises me is that God would give opportunity for someone to build an Ark, and for them to climb into that Ark and to be safe from that punishment. And you say "I've read the story, I mean there's Noah. He's a good guy, that's how he's presented in Genesis 6." Well, he is but all you have to do is read the Bible, maybe we can get an Atheist to help us read the Bible fairly and you start to understand this Noah guy isn't all that righteous after all isn't he? And his own kids, have you read about his kids did, it wasn't very good either. I mean these are sinners too. Well, maybe they're not the same kind of sinners the rest of society was but what's the difference? It wasn't that they were perfect; it wasn't that they were sinless; it wasn't that they were righteous, not in an absolute sense. Really what set them apart was that when God made a promise based on his character that the wages of sin is death, they took notice. Matter of fact they feared that, they said, "Wow really." And if God says there's a way out, there's a free gift, I can get you off this planet and I can save you, then they said, "I fear God enough and I believe God enough to respond to that." See the amazing thing is grace, not justice. The reasonable thing is that a just God will punish sinful people. The



amazing thing is that God would be gracious enough to save penitent sinners who take him at his word. That's why when you look at the Ark you shouldn't see this simply as a reminder of God's judgment. I mean you could call it genocide if you like, I suppose, tongue in cheek you could say that, but God is justly carrying out a penalty but that's really not the highlight or why we as Christian would ever celebrate this story. We celebrate the story not because of the justice of God but because of the grace of God, because that box represents salvation. That box, that ark that was built, I you might remember verses like this from the New Testament, highlights the fact that God didn't do this without warning. Look at this verse, by faith Noah being warned by God concerning the events yet unseen in reverent fear constructed an ark for the – here's the keyword – saving of his household. It's a saving by grace because as we read about Noah and his children, they're sinners but they're willing, out of fear and a just respect, a kind of serious sobriety about God's promise of judgment, to say, "You know what? If God's going to warn us about the problem and provide a solution, I'm going to take it." As Peter put it, 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 20, God's patience waited in the days of Noah, right there, God could have punished everyone the moment they sinned, but in his patience he waited, while Noah was building this ark, preparing this ark in which a few, that is 8 persons were brought safely through the water. That's God's grace. I'll let you build a box so that you can be brought safely through this time of judgment. (18:55)

Eight people, it doesn't seem like a lot all that Noah was able to talk into getting on the ark was seven people. I understand that, but here's a little hint from 2 Peter chapter 2. That Noah was doing more than just trying to talk secretly to his family. Look at this word here, God preserved Noah, a herald, that word herald, the Greek word kerusso, the word kerusso is the word that's commonly translated preacher. He's the preacher of righteousness. He's the preacher of what's right and what's just. The word righteousness, same translation, comes from the same word we translate just. He's preaching about justice that God's justice demands a punishment. He's a herald of righteousness. I mean that really spoke to the fact that he's out there in his generation being very clear about the problem and why he's building that boat. With seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly, God preserved Noah. And he was one who was willing to speak up for what was right and as this famous picture; I remember this from my childhood, seeing this famous picture. I mean most people scoffed and laughed at him. Any scoffers today when we talk about the wages of sin is death? Absolutely. You can go to the tri-state area outside of Cincinnati and you can read their billboards, they're going up all over the country, from other groups just like them. They scoff at a God that would be just and respond to sin in a just way. And they'll say, "You know what? That's not how it's going to be, if there is a God, God must be a loving God who sits there in his rocker and approves of his grandkids doing, you know, their stuff. He may be a little embarrassed from time to time but he's not going to wipe people out." Peter said you know there's going to be scoffers that will come in the last days. That's the days Jesus talked about that'll be just like the day of Noah. Where's the promise of his coming, you guys keep talking about getting it ready, getting saved, having your sins forgiven, where's God showing up to do anything about sin? He says when people say that they deliberately overlook, it's like on purpose they're forgetting, the fact that by God's word, that's all it took to start the rain that day, that's all it took to make these flood channels from the deep burst by God's word, the world that was, that then existed was deluged, was flooded with water and perished, by a word. He says they forget that and it says by that same word, you need to know from a New Testament perspective, the earth that now exists is stored up for – now you Sunday School Graduates might know the next word – because God put a bow in the sky, saying, "I'm not going to flood the world, we're not going to destroy the world by flood." So every time it starts raining don't think that's the end of the world, there's something else that's going to come from the sky that you haven't seen come from the sky. And the Bible says there's another time when the world gets like it was in the days of Noah, there's judgment coming but it's stored up not for water it's stored up for – you know the word? – fire. God says he's going to destroy everything, look how he puts it in the next phrase. Being kept – God is keeping it by his patience – until the day of judgment for the destruction of the ungodly. (21:52)

I know they'll call us fire and brimstone preachers to bring up the fact that the wages of sin is death, and to make the comparison that just like he flooded the world one day he's going to destroy this current world this time not with water but with fire. And they'll say well that's the God of genocide; well you can say that all you want because you don't like the phrase that the wages of sin is death. I mean this is something people do not like, they want to get rid of that truth but that is the fundamental building block of New Testament theology. Let's put the rest of this statement in context, Matthew 24, as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, they were going about their business; they didn't think this flood thing was any threat at all. He would stand up, Noah would and preach, no big deal, we got an opportunity to be saved, not interested in that, we've got weddings to plan, we've got parties to plan, we've got vacations to plan forget all that, until the day Noah entered the ark they were just going about



their business. And they were “unaware”, you can put that in quotes because they certainly heard it but in their hearts they hadn’t let it sink in. They were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away and now the stinger, and so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Why don’t we have thousands of people at every Bible teaching church in Orange County? We’ve got millions of people in this county, why aren’t they there recognizing the value of the cross and what Good Friday is all about? Why? Because they’ve got parties to go to, they’ve got things to do, they’ve got parties and lunches to plan, they’re not interested. It’s just like the days of Noah, approving evil, sin in our hearts, looking in the mirror of scripture and seeing gluttony and pride, and all these things that offend God and we’re like, well, it’s okay. Where’s God coming, he’s not going to come and judge us with fire. Well they forgot God judged the world once with water just like in the days of Noah so it will be in the coming of the Son of Man the wages of sin is death. Well it’s pretty negative sermon for Good Friday. Well, Good Friday you do understand from a human perspective looking at the history of events, these are negative events. I mean really if you understand it, God so loved the world that he gave his only son. Well what does that mean? He comes to die on a cross. This is the Father according to Isaiah 53 we read it earlier in the service, crushing his own son, giving his son as a sacrifice. This is negative, I understand that, but you can’t appreciate the free gift of eternal life until you recognize the gravity of the problem of sin. I mean have I said it a hundred times from this platform? How can you appreciate the good news of the gospel until you really grapple with the bad news of sin? And the bad news of sin is there’s no way a good holy and just God can ever look at us with our sin and our lives in our hearts continually and say, “Well, it’s okay. We will look the other way.” God has to take our sin and somehow get rid of it. There has to be a sacrifice. So in the New Testament we think of Good Friday. You need to see Good Friday as an ark. You need to see Good Friday as an open door on an ark. You need to understand that Jesus even said when he spoke of himself, he said it this way, John 10:9, I am the door, if anyone enters by me, he will be saved. He said, “I am the way the truth the life, no one has come to the Father except through me.” You need to understand there’s a pathway for you to be saved in this world, if you would understand the opportunity for you through the death of Christ to enter into a safe place, a holy place it’s called in Hebrews chapter 10, we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Christ. He had to die on a cross so that I can take a seat in a place where the wrath of God has already been. A new and living way, not like the Old Testament, he opened it up through the curtain that is through his flesh. I know the curtain tore there on that day that he was crucified but that curtain was just a symbol of the fact that we could have access to the holy place, to the place where God is, where safety is, where the payment of sin has already been and what was torn that day was symbolized by the curtain but the reality of it was Christ’s body had to be broken. God had to treat Jesus on a cross as though he were the sinner that we are so that our sins could be pinned to his account. Oh, I know the sign over his head said, “King of the Jews” but the Bible says very clearly what really happened from God’s perspective is your sins and mine were nailed to that cross. And his righteous life could be applied to us. That’s a seat in God’s grace, that’s a place in the ark that allows us to have peace with God. See you can’t offer Christ to a dying world, and say, “Hey have Christ because your life will be better. Your kids will obey you, your skin will clear up or whatever people say about Christianity.” We offer Christ to a world because there’s a flood coming, not a flood of water but of God’s perfect justice. You can put up your billboards and mock the fact that God once destroyed the culmination of a sinful generation of people, but you need to understand the New Testament that we think is full of kittens and butterflies and heart shaped, you know, candies or whatever, really the New Testament says the same thing only worse. It’s not water it’s fire. Oh that’s fire and brimstone, no that’s just the truth that the wages of sin is death. But the good news that we celebrate on Good Friday is that the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (27:22)

I’d like you to take advantage of the image of thinking about you in the sandals and robes of people in Noah’s day, knowing there’s a door that is open for you, allowing you to enter a place where the wrath of God has already been, where there’s safety, where you have peace with God, where his anger has already been spent. Think of it in terms of John Newton. Do you know the name John Newton who wrote that famous hymn, “Amazing Grace”? He wrote a lot of hymns over 300 if I remember correctly. Some of his titles you won’t find in a lot of chorus that are sung today. Here’s one, “See the gloomy gathering clouds.” That ain’t going to sell much today, right? Here’s the last verse of that hymn, “Sinner – thinking of Christ now – see the ark prepared. Haste to enter while there’s still room, through the Lord his arm has bared, mercy delays your doom. Seek him while there yet is hope, err the day of grace be passed. Lest in wrath he give you up, and his call should prove to be your last.” (28:32)

I don’t know how long we have until the coming of the Son of Man but the good news that we celebrate on Good Friday is there’s a place on the ark that’s available for you because of the death of Jesus Christ.

