

**Text: Genesis 6-8**

**Theme: The Great Flood**

**Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi during Morning Prayer Service on 05/07/2015 at 10.30am**

Last week, we grappled the grace of God which was expressed in Genesis 3:15 in the curse on Satan for deceiving our first parents and thereby forfeiting their right to God's paradise and the promise of a deliverer. A seed of Adam that would bring an end to the tyranny of Satan was foretold.

In Genesis 4, we see the growth of evil in the world. The first seed of the woman was not the real thing. He was evil. He killed his brother instead of bruising the head of Satan as our first parents might have expected. He was not the real thing. From now onwards, the stage is set. Satan would do everything possible to outwit God – in the sending of a Seed of the woman – but he would fail. Why? Because God is God and no Word of His will go unfulfilled.

But in the same chapter 4 of Genesis, you can still see the display of God's grace to murderous Cain. (Genesis 4:10-15). You can read about the lineage of Cain in the rest of chapter 4.

Chapter 5 is very interesting. Men multiplied and lived almost to eternity, but at the end, they all died. This leads us to Genesis chapters 6-8 which we shall focus on this morning. But we must not forget those key questions in Genesis:

- Where did we come from?
- Why are we here?
- How did we get from where we started to where we are today?

Genesis 6:1-8 offers the Bible's most detailed answer to the question, "Why did God send the flood?" As we have seen in previous sermons from Genesis, there was a rapid spiritual degeneration after the first sin. Nowhere else in the Bible will you find such a clear description of the doctrine of Total Depravity. Here is mankind as God sees it. This is the human race wholly apart from God's grace. In Genesis 1:31, we are repeatedly told that "God saw" what he had made and it was "good" and "very good." By Genesis 6:5-6 when God looks on the earth, he sees his creation turned into a foul cesspool of evil so much so that the Lord's heart was filled with pain and was grieved that He had made man.

If you want to know what sin is like, study this verse:

- 1) Sin is internal. It is a matter of the heart first and foremost. "The thoughts of his heart."
- 2) Sin is pervasive. It touches every part of our existence. "Every intent of the thoughts of his heart."
- 3) Sin is continual. It consumes man and controls him. "Every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This is what you are apart from God's grace.

Once sin entered the human bloodstream, it quickly spread until it dominated humanity. At first the serpent had to talk Eve into sin, then Adam sinned deliberately, then God couldn't talk Cain out of sin, then Lamech boasted about his brutality (Genesis 4:23). But now, with the passing of a few generations, the entire world has

become a cesspool of sin. Things have become so evil that God decides to start all over again.

How will God respond? I know my response if someone intentionally damages something I have made! Here we read not of 'anger' but of God's 'regret' (v 6). When 'every inclination ... of the human heart was only evil' (v 5), God's 'heart' was 'deeply troubled': human sin causes pain for God as well as for humans, most vividly seen in the cross. 'God appears, not as an angry and vengeful judge, but as a grieving and pained parent.'

The story of Noah and the ark is decidedly *not* a children's story although that is what it is the minds of many. The world had really gone evil just as it is today. Corruption of thought, practice, lifestyle, work, religion, sex, fuelled by greed and violence is what marked Noah's world. This was not a world into which you would have wanted to bring children. This was not a world where you would have felt safe. This was not a world to which you would have made any helpful contribution, for if you and I had been in this world- we too would have been part of the problem, for we are told that '*all* the people of earth had corrupted their ways.' The moral viral infection was total, immunisation was not possible- it was a world of death- a dark, dank, underworld more like a sewer than a garden.

God had to do something; so, God solemnly declares in 6:17, 'I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.' This is one of the most terrifying and tragic stories of God's wrath in the whole of the Bible. But as we saw last week, the horror of the judgement is in many ways a pale reflection of the horror of sin and God's revulsion of it. God does not declare these things lightly; there is 'pain' in God's heart as he looks at the human race (6:6). Divine judgement is no cold hearted mechanical vengeance like a wolf eagerly pursuing his quarry. No, God *agonises* before he judges. Now what is really quite striking about chapters 6-8 and to some extent chapter 9, is that the main character in the story isn't Noah at all, it is God- the LORD. We shall look at Him and the outworking of his Grace; Secondly, we shall look at Him as God who seeks, and finally as the God who remembers.

### **The God of Grace**

So now God decides to "uncreate" the earth. Think of what this means. Whole cities destroyed. Homes washed away. Roads covered. Buildings inundated. Whole villages flooded. Men, women and children vanishing beneath the waves. The whole earth under the waters of judgment. Nothing like it had happened before and nothing like it has happened since. It was a catastrophic judgment that enveloped the entire globe and washed away every vestige of human civilization.

But Noah Found Grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8 NASB). The word means "undeserved favor." It describes the blessing God gives to those who don't deserve it. It is the "contrary-to-merit" favor of God. Do not read this verse and think, "Noah was a really good man, a righteous man, and because he obeyed God, he earned God's grace." That's impossible. It doesn't happen that way. Noah didn't "earn" anything. Grace was given to him the same way it is given to people today. Either grace is a gift or it isn't grace. Instead of saying, "Noah found grace," we should say instead, "Grace found Noah." That would be more appropriate. Grace found him and saved him and his whole family.

Let us learn two important truths from this verse: First, grace is available in the darkest hours. Even though the world was rushing headlong into judgment, Noah

found grace. There is never a pit so deep that the love of God is not deeper still. Do not say, "I am too bad a sinner to ever be saved." You don't know that. Don't say, "God could never forgive me." Yes, he can. And he will, if you will cry out to him. And don't say, "My husband is too far gone to ever be saved" or "I'm going to stop praying for that person because she is a hopeless case." You don't know that. While there is life, there is hope. Leave the final judgment in the hands of the Lord. Keep praying. And if you do not know the Lord, seek him while he may be found. Turn to him. Come to him. Trust in him. This is the day of grace. By grace, God became the rescuer of the human race through Noah.

And the result of that grace was that Noah agreed with God about the evil of his own sin, turned from it, and trusted God for grace. He is called righteous and blameless. But blameless in the Old Testament doesn't always mean sinless. A man is blameless if he does not persist in his blameworthy actions, if he hates them and comes to God seeking mercy (cf. Job 1:1). Neither does righteous mean sinless. In the Old Testament, a righteous man is a sinner who turns from his sin, trusts God, pursues obedience, and enjoys acceptance by grace. (See Psalm 32:1–2, 10–11.) This is confirmed by Hebrews 11:7, "By *faith* Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes *by faith*." The initiative, then always lies with God- extending the hand that feeds us, even if all we do is bite it-that hand keeps on coming back. So, the reason why Noah was righteous was because God was gracious and not the other way around.

And it is after the warning given about the impending judgement and the instructions to build a box- which is what an ark is- so to escape the judgement, God says something quite remarkable in verse 18: 'I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark-you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you.' God is putting it into effect a covenant *already* made. What is that? Well, the context is that of salvation, rescue from judgement- so it may be taking us back to the promise God made to the woman in chapter 3:15 that God would ensure that a descendent of the woman would be born who would defeat God's enemy- the serpent, with the implication that he will fulfil God's original purposes to bring the world under God's loving rule. Well, that can't happen if everyone is wiped out, can it? So, in the face of this perishing of mankind, God puts his covenant into effect through Noah, bringing him and his family into the ark. Whatever this covenant is, it involves immediate safety which comes through this going into a box.

### **The Lord who remembers and relates**

In chapter 7:1 Noah was instructed to go into the Ark and for forty days, the earth was flooded. The Ark took all the fury of the weather, the pounding, the winds, the thunders, and it just kept soaring high to protect its cargo.

That we see so clearly in Genesis 8:1, which is the focal point of the whole episode: 'But God *remembered* Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.' Now, that doesn't mean that God had forgotten Noah through some sort of memory lapse. Rather, it means that God took thought for him, he was never out of his thoughts, but now his thought about Noah led to action- the restoring of Noah and the world back to some sort of normality.

And finally, we have **the LORD-the God who restrains-** chapter 8:21:

(21) The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil

from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. (22) "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." Now here is a significant change in God's attitude to humankind. In chapter 6 it was because 'every inclination of the thoughts of man were evil' that he decided to bring about universal judgement. Now that same reason is given for *not* bringing about such judgement. In other words, yes, this is what human beings are like this side of Eden and if God were to simply act in swift justice then there would be flood, after flood, after flood. But God in his great forbearance holds back from wiping us off the face of the earth every time we sin- instead he sends the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and unjust alike- and these things are meant to make us wonder at the kind of God who will do this.

Jesus in Matthew 24. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when Jesus returns. If you want to know what the future looks like, go back to the past. The days of Noah are the key to understanding the days to come.

What are the marks of the "days of Noah?" Here is my answer:

- 1) The world completely unprepared for the coming judgment.**
- 2) Widespread moral perversion and the breakdown of the family.**
- 3) A sharp rise in Satanic activity and growing interest in the occult.**
- 4) Shocking failure of leaders we thought we could trust.**
- 5) Rejection of God's authority in the name of "freedom."**
- 6) Believers standing alone against the world.**

As it was ... So it shall be.

As it was ... So it is today.

I believe the "days of Noah" are upon us right now. And that's one reason I believe we are living in the last days before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth.

Do not despair. If you know the Lord, stand strong. Speak the truth. Follow God's call and do not let the world's hostility intimidate you. These are wonderful days to serve the Lord. Think of it. We may be the generation privileged to see Christ return to the earth. If so, let's be busy about our business, spreading the Good News, working for the Kingdom, being salt and light, serving the Lord with joy wherever we go.

And the best news for all of us is this: Grace is available for those who want it. This week I ran across a sentence that arrested my attention: "You are more sinful than you can ever believe and you are more loved than you could ever hope." Both sides of that statement are true. You are more sinful than you think and God loves you more than you could imagine. If you want the grace of God, it's yours for the asking. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. What about you? Amen.