

This Week at the Creek

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Here's the text from the pastor's Sunday message:

Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head

Genesis 7:1-23

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Two men, one from Texas and one from Kentucky, were having a friendly chat about their respective farms. The Texan asked the Kentuckian how big his home place was, and the Kentuckian answered, "A little over a hundred acres. How 'bout you?" The Texan replied, "Well son, if you got in a truck and drove from sunup to sundown, you still wouldn't reach the end of my property." The Kentuckian responded, "Yep, I had a truck like that once myself."

Maybe the main lesson that we can learn from this ancient Bible story is the critical importance of securing the right vehicle of salvation. In other words, if you want to survive life and eternity you had better get on the one boat that God intends to keep afloat. You can barricade yourself in your multimillion-dollar mansion, but you'll still end up under water. You can try drive away in your every-option Lexus, but you'll still end up under water. You can climb the highest tree or even the highest mountain on the continent, but you'll still end up under water. No, there is but one way to salvation, and God in His grace and mercy provides it for us. But the decision remains ours as to whether or not we will heed His call and get on His boat.

People made fun of Noah for devoting the best portion of his life to what seemed to his neighbors like a frivolously lost cause. But Noah, instead of being distracting by jesting opinions of those around him, stayed focused on doing exactly what God had told him to do. Under the absolute worst of conditions, Noah rowed against the flow and stayed on task. He was faithful; he was true; he was dedicated. He listened to God above and beyond everyone else, and because he did, he and all that he brought with him on the ark were saved while the rest of the world was inundated and wiped out.

I cannot help but get the feeling that Noah could have sung along with B.J. Thomas this song: "Raindrops keep falling on my head / And just like the guy whose feet are too big for his bed, / Nothing seems to fit. / These raindrops keep falling on my head, they keep fallin' / So I just did me some talkin' to the sun, / And I said I didn't like the way he got things done, / Sleep in' on the job, / These raindrops keep falling on my head, they keep fallin' / But there's one thing I know, the blues they send to meet me / Won't defeat me, / It won't be long till happiness steps up to greet me. / Raindrops keep falling on my head / But that doesn't mean my eyes will soon be turning red, / Crying's not for me, / Cause I'm never gonna stop the rain by complainin' / Because I'm free, nothing's worryin' me." Jesus reminds us more than once that we shouldn't worry about the future as long as we're following God's plan for our lives. And Noah steadily followed God's plan.

Now that I've mentioned the main lesson that is to be learned from this event, let's also look at some other important lessons. Indeed, it's been said that all that we really need to know about how to make our way through this life we can learn from Noah and the ark. Here are just a few principles to keep in mind.

Plan ahead. After all, it wasn't raining when Noah constructed the ark. God told Noah that it was going to rain – someday – and Noah simply believed God and got to work getting ready for the fulfillment of God's plan. He believed God – that's the gist of it. Oh, and by the way, there's another principle that kind of goes along with this one, and that is to stay fit. Work and work out and eat right and in general just be ready! You don't ever really know when you're going to get that big assignment that requires every ounce of your energy. In fact, when you're six hundred years old, God Himself might ask you to do something really big – something that will help to save the world!

Don't pay much attention to the critics. Just do what really needs to be done; follow through on the task that God has given you to do, and don't let the critics distract you. I promise you this – better yet, God promises you this – He will honor your obedience. Listen to Him, follow His instructions, and then trust and obey.

For safety's sake, travel in pairs. And don't think that the Bible is just talking about the animals in regard to this principle. Yes, the animals boarded the ark in pairs, but so did the human beings! Noah boarded the ark with his wife; Shem boarded the ark with his wife; Ham boarded the ark with his wife; Japheth boarded the ark with his wife. The people who made it on the ark also traveled in pairs! As it's always been said, "Two heads are better than one." And, by the way, if you have to start all over, it's always best to have someone you love by your side. Indeed, even your obedience to God is better secured when you share the important things of life with someone who is also devoted to obeying the Lord.

Take care of your animals as if they were the last ones on earth. And don't forget that we're all in the same boat. And by the way, speed isn't always the

advantage you may think it is. Sure, the cheetahs were on board, but so were the turtles. So regardless of your speed or your strength, when you can't flee or fight, try just floating! Oh, and lest you forget, even though you're safe and sound on the ark, you're still going to have to spend a significant part of your day shoveling! When all those animals do what they will do and the dung gets really deep, it doesn't do any of us any good to sit around and complain about the smell. At that point, the important thing is to get rid of the bad stuff and keep the good stuff safe and sound on board. One sidebar here: Keep in mind that it can be the woodpeckers on the inside that are a far greater threat than the storm that is raging on the outside.

During the storm, it's best to stay **below deck**. We sing about how God is a shelter in the time of storm. In essence, we need to learn to follow God's timing. Occasionally Noah would send out a bird out to test if the earth was dry. But Noah didn't get out of the boat until God told him to. He was waiting for God's timing. What patience Noah showed, especially after spending an entire year locked up inside that ark! All of us, like Noah, must trust God to give us patience during those difficult times when we must wait – when we must hover below deck.

Do your **part** and let God do His. Many scholars have wondered how this enormous animal kingdom roundup could have happened. In actuality, there seems to have been no problem gathering the animals; God was taking care of all that while Noah was obediently doing his part by building the boat. (Let me add here an oft-mentioned note: the ark was constructed by amateurs while the Titanic was built by professionals!) We worry so much about the details of living over which we have no control, while neglecting specific areas – such as our attitudes, our relationships, and our responsibilities – that are under our control! Like Noah, let us concentrate on what God has given us to do, and leave the rest to Him.

For one of the most encouraging principles that I find in this story is that God is able to bring **restoration** where He has brought **destruction**. There's this beautiful re-creation theme that runs through the story of Noah and the ark; it shows God starting all over again with humanity. Yes, there is certainly salvation here, for all who board the ark are saved. But there is more. God is also committed to salvaging operations. You see, Noah and his family are saved, but the world and civilization are salvaged. Salvaging involves retrieving what is valuable from the wreckage we human beings have made of God's earth. And this salvaging is at work too in each of our lives. It's this quality of God that finds amidst Saul's destructive, skeptical zeal, Paul's apostolic vision for the church. It's this quality of God that finds amidst the carnage of carnality in Augustine a philosophical thinker who lays the foundation for the church's systematic theology. It's this quality of God that finds amidst each of our own messed-up lives something worthy of transforming for His purpose.

It is as though He sees beyond our rust, and so digs us out of the junk heap and cleans us up and shines us up for both use and display in His kitchen! He finds and nurtures in each one of us that which transforms our lives from sinful rubble to useful ministry. God is in the business of re-creating, and your life and mine testify to that grace! Yes, we're saved from our sin and its condemnation, but we're also salvaged for ministry and its service to God.

One of the most famous fairy tales of the brothers Grimm is the story of Cinderella. The timeless portrait of elevation from rags to riches has been recast in many different forms, and one of the most recent retellings can be found in the movie *Ever After*. The plot of the story is always built on the concept that when obstacles of social station are set aside, the real value of the person can be recognized. In the same way, God looks beyond the factor of sin that defines our position to see the value of the person He has created. It's because of that value that His salvaging becomes worthwhile. For we are nothing but "Sinderellas" who are given the chance to take up the role of being the bride of Christ!

And so it is that this last principle brings us right back to the beginning: Don't miss the boat. Like Noah, live in acceptance of God's grace and mercy by devoting to Him an entire lifetime of obedience and gratitude. And no matter how bleak it looks, don't forget that there's always a rainbow on the other side of the raindrops falling on your head. As I've heard said so many times, "Sorrow looks back, worry looks around, but faith looks up."

Let us pray: Lord, thank You for loving us so much that You would want to save us – that You would want to salvage us for Your service. Like Noah, help us to row against the flow and stay on task; help us to be faithful and true and dedicated. Help us to listen to You above and beyond everyone else. We ask it for Your glory and in Your name.

Sources

Atkinson, Mike. Mikey's Funnies (www.MikeysFunnies.com)

John H. Walton. *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis* (Zondervan)

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