



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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November 27, 2011

1st Sunday of Advent

Sermon Text: [Genesis 6:1-3, 5-14, 17-22](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 6:1-3, 5-14, 17-22](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Peter 3:18-22](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 13:32-37](#)

God's Advent Produces Results

Destruction

Salvation

Today we begin the season of the church year called "Advent." It comes from the Latin word *Advenio*, which means *come, to come, or coming*. In Advent we talk about Christ's various comings. The first one that probably comes to our mind is his coming in time at Bethlehem, but we also focus on how he comes as we meet him in Word and Sacrament. He comes to us with his grace and his love and his forgiveness, which we don't deserve and we haven't earned. We also remind ourselves that he will come again at the end of time. That's kind of the emphasis of the Gospel that I just read to you a little while ago. These comings of our Savior are important for us to always remember.

I think the one we are probably most inclined to forget is the one that is kind of highlighted in our readings today. That is the truth that although God comes to save, at the same time, he comes to destroy those who have rejected him. This coming produces results. It isn't ineffective. His coming always produces results. Either he comes and the Spirit works faith in our hearts, or he comes and we reject him. He comes in time and he accomplishes the gift of salvation for the whole world. It's effective. He comes at the end of time, and there will be results. So as we consider these words from Genesis and think about the flood and things like that, we see that God's coming, or God's Advent, produces results.

It's just as true in the flood as it is when Christ came to earth. It's just as true when he will come again at the end of time. The results are two...destruction or salvation. That's it. Those are the only options.

Destruction...why does destruction come? God lays it out pretty clearly in Genesis 6. The sons of God started marrying the daughters of men. It's not angels marrying women. It's the sons of God, the believers, marrying unbelievers and being led away by the unbelievers and not staying close to God. Why were they led away? Why didn't they think God was important in their life? They saw people that were pretty hot to look at evidently. They saw they were good looking, so they married someone else because they were good to look at. It just begot more violence. The Nephilim is in there. We didn't read that section. These people that were looked up to as the heroes of the day because they were violent and they were able to produce the most violence and defeat the most people. They were looked up to because they were conquerors. They saw

something and they got it. God says “That’s not how I like things. Because of this violence and because mankind’s inclination is only evil all the time” (man’s heart is only evil all the time; isn’t that what it said in there?), “I’m going to send the flood.” Things really haven’t changed, have they? Mankind’s heart is only evil all the time. Isn’t that too harsh? Isn’t that too harsh to say our hearts are only evil all the time?

Sometimes we’d like to think that, but I think it becomes obvious when we are honest with ourselves that the truth in what God says here is pretty self evident. I’ve used one example to show this truth over and over, and I think it’s pretty powerful and pretty effective. It demonstrates what God says here. If you grew up in a house where you had siblings, if you grew up where you had contact with other children, if you grew up where you interacted with other people, some play time somewhere along the line your parents had to sit down and say to you “This is how you share,” right? You had to be taught how to share because you liked to say “mine.” And when someone else took yours, you liked to say “No, that’s mine, and I don’t want to share it with you because it is mine.” Your parents had to teach you to share, right?

Do you ever remember your parents sitting down and saying, “Okay now, when you are upset with your brother or sister, here is how you should fight with them. I’d like you to just lay on the ground and scream and kick and pound your fists as hard as you can. And please, try to do it in a grocery store where everyone is around and looking.” Do you remember that moment when mom or dad had to sit you down and teach you that? Of course you don’t. No parent ever had to teach you that, right? But you knew how to do it, and you still do, right? That’s what we are. Every inclination of our heart is evil.

Yes, we have a capability for civil good, but we have no capability for good before our God, because what is good before God is what is done out of love for him according to his will. It’s kind of obvious that we know how to do the things that are wrong. So every inclination of mankind’s heart is only evil all the time and if left unchecked, it goes to places we don’t want to go. We do and say things we don’t really want to do, but it’s what we are, and we do what we are. Because we are sinners, we sin. Because they were sinners, they sinned. Because they were sinners, it became more and more violent, and God said, “That’s it. I’ve had enough. I’m sending the flood.”

We learn this story as children, and it’s a fascinating story because we see this destruction. We see the whole world changed. The topography of the earth had to be completely different after that year where the flood waters were there. Everything changed. The whole climate changed. Everything changed. It’s fascinating how God brought the animals to Noah. It’s fascinating that Noah did all of these things and did what God sent him to do. And he did it without even having a battery pack to swap when he was building this Ark. We see all that and we’re fascinated by it, but it’s a sad story because it’s a story of destruction. It’s a story of a God who says “Enough is enough. I’m not going to put up with this forever and here is what is going to happen.” And then it happened.

In the same way God has said “There is a day coming when I’m going to come to destroy.” The world as we know it will be laid bare. All the elements will be destroyed by fire and God will create a new heavens and a new earth, the home of righteousness. But before he does that, he is going to destroy. The world as we know it will be gone, not by water this time but by fire. The destruction is coming. God will come to destroy. And that’s for us in a sense kind of a sad story. We don’t like to think about that all that often.

But we can’t say that we don’t deserve it or that they didn’t deserve it or that the earth doesn’t deserve it because God has said, “The wages of sin is death,” and we’re sinners. That’s what we are. If God would have destroyed us completely and absolutely and the whole world right after the fall into sin, we couldn’t have said he was unfair. That’s what everyone had coming.

God comes to destroy. He comes to destroy by water. But the thing that we forget is that he didn’t just come to destroy. He didn’t destroy every living creature and every person on earth. There were those people on the Ark. Not only did he come to destroy, at the same time, he came to save. He came to provide deliverance for his elect so that they wouldn’t fall away. He came and acted in a way that was powerful to deliver Noah.

We talk about this as the story of the flood, but did you notice what God calls this? He doesn’t say “Here’s the story of the flood.” He says “This is the account of Noah.” His title is completely different than our emphasis. His title emphasizes “Look at what I do for my people.”

Yes, Noah had it tough. He lived for all this time among people that were not what he was. He was a righteous man, a man who believed the promise of the coming Savior. He was blameless. Blameless isn’t a real good translation there. It’s more completed righteousness, a devout man, a man who lived his faith. That doesn’t mean he never sinned, because he, like the rest of us, was a sinner. But when he sinned, he turned back to God. In that he found forgiveness and he was declared righteous by God. It’s a courtroom term. God declared him not guilty, declared him righteous because he believed the promise that a Messiah was coming.

Devout...a completed righteousness that showed itself in faith, in actions. I think that’s fascinating, especially when you read in 2 Peter that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. God said, “Hey, I’m sick of this. I’m going to destroy the world. Mankind’s time is 120 years.” That meant he gave Noah 120 years, not just to build an Ark, but to preach and lead people to repentance. Even though mankind didn’t deserve it, God, in his grace, reached out to them through Noah, a preacher of righteousness, who talked about God and repentance and turning to his promise of a Messiah. Evidently the people didn’t listen. But we are told Noah was a preacher of righteousness and kept on preaching even though people didn’t listen.

Now we see what our God did for him. Our God destroyed the world by water, but he saved Noah and Noah's family, his wife, and his sons and their wives through the same water. In Scripture we heard in our Second Lesson that water of the flood pictures Baptism.

The same thing happens in our Baptism, doesn't it? Destruction and salvation; God comes and breaks Satan's hold over us when he gives us the gift of faith. He washes away our sins, clothes us with Christ's righteousness at our Baptism and says, "You are mine. I have bought you with my blood. You are forgiven." The sinful nature in us remains, but it no longer controls us completely and absolutely. We drown the Old Adam and our new man is raised up to live before God, to live a devout life before God. Water as a picture of our Baptism is something we've all experienced, destruction and salvation.

Destruction and salvation...it's coming at the end of time. The question is, are we ready to meet it like Noah? Will the end of the world for us be a title God could give, "This is the account of (fill in your name in the blank)." "This is the account of (blank). I came and I lived and died and took away their sins. And at the end of time I came and I took you to be with me in heaven." That's God's plan. That's God's purpose. That's why he gives us this time of grace that we have here on earth to hear the Gospel message that God loves us so much that he lived and died to take away our sins. God loves us so much that he gives us the Word and the Sacraments so that we have a place to turn to when grief and despair all around we see because we still live in that sinful world. We still need that salvation. We still need that comfort that our God and his Gospel message offers us.

That's got to be the only thing that kept Noah going for those 120 years, doesn't it, trust in God? There are many times in our lives when we go through stuff that the only thing that keeps us going is trust in our God. It's not what we can do with our hands. It's not what we can do with our minds. It's not what we can do with our feet. But it's what God has done for us in Christ that gives us the confidence to know that the Lord who loved Noah loves me. The Lord who forgave Noah forgives me. If you want to see just how Noah is no different than you, a sinner like you and a sinner like me, read the rest of the story after the account of the flood in Genesis and see the foolish, silly things Noah did. He's no different than you and me. Yet God worked through him.

God will work through us to announce God's destruction and salvation to others, to remind each other to be ready to meet Christ and to share with those who don't know Christ that the answer, the answer for eternity, is faith that Jesus lived and died to take away your sins. That's what Christ's Advent produces in us.