

# When The Flood Comes

On Sunday we continued exploring the consequences of the Fall of humanity, focusing on broken dreams – and how we can survive that brokenness, then move beyond it.

1. Warm-up question: All great works of literature have universal themes that speak to us in powerful ways because we see ourselves in them. Jeff used the example of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Name a literary work or movie that has greatly moved you. What made it so moving for you?
  
2. The story of Noah's flood raises deep theological questions. As told, the story says "the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and . . . every inclination of their hearts was only evil continually," so God decided to "blot out from the earth the human beings I have created – people together with animals . . . , for I am sorry I have made them." Genesis 6:5-7. This raises the question: Would God really choose to destroy all of life, including innocent children and animals, in a flood?
  - Some say yes – the world had become so corrupt it was necessary to restart everything to give life on earth a clean start.
  - Others say no – the notion God would destroy everything, even innocent children and animals, reflects an old understanding of God that was updated and corrected by Jesus and the New Testament.

What do you think?

3. Rather than getting stuck in theological debate, on Sunday we focused on the practical life lessons we can learn from the story of Noah's flood. To understand the story and apply it to ourselves, we asked three key questions: What does Noah represent in this story? What does the ark represent? And what does the rainbow that appears at the end represent? Let's walk through each. Read Genesis 7:1-22.
  - a. Imagine how news of the coming the flood impacted Noah and his family. Basically, they were told that everyone and everything in their life was going to be destroyed – taken away from them. Then the rain came, they entered the ark, and "everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died." Genesis 7:22. Try to put yourself in their shoes. What do you think they felt as: (a) the rain began to fall and they first entered the ark; (b) flood waters began to lift up the ark and wash away everything outside; and (c) they floated above a decimated earth in open water for months?
  - b. Noah represents anyone who encounters tragedy in life. In your own life, when have you encountered a cataclysmic flood that destroyed life as you knew it? How did that tragedy impact you?
  - c. Read Jesus' prophecy about Peter found at John 21:18. Jeff suggested this verse has application to all of us. What does this verse tell us about how life usually goes?

- d. Mike Tyson once said, “Everybody has a plan till they get punched in the face.” What do you think he meant?
  - e. As you look into the future, what kind of potential tragedy do you most fear?
4. If Noah represents anyone who experiences tragedy in life, then his story becomes a parable about how to survive tragedy, then move beyond it. That brings us to the question: What does the ark represent? When God first told Noah to build an ark, years before the flood, far from any major sea, Noah probably figured everybody would think he was crazy. Yet he devoted himself to the task, one plank at a time over the course of years, until the ark was seaworthy. Hebrews 11:7 says, “By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household.” This provides our key clue: The ark represents faith. It was faith that saved Noah and his family and got them through the flood.
- a. If faith is the ark that will carry us through the storms of life, we need to start building our faith well before the floods of life come. How do we do that? What are some concrete things you are doing to build your faith on plank at a time?
  - b. Have you ever known someone who patiently built a strong faith over a period of years? How did their faith help them in times of great trouble?
  - c. Psalm 23:4 says, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, thou art with me.” Isaiah 43:2 says, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. . . Do not fear, for I am with you.” Faith assures us that God is always with us, even in the deepest storm. When in your life have you felt the presence of God in times of great trouble? How did God’s presence manifest itself to you in those times?
5. When Noah and his family left the ark, they saw a rainbow in the sky and interpreted that as a symbol of God’s promise for their future. As such, the rainbow represents the promise of beauty in life on the other side of tragedy. That doesn’t mean we don’t suffer great loss in times of tragedy. Noah and his family lost everything – all their old friends, extended family, and way of life. But there were still good things awaiting them on the other side of the flood.
- a. On Sunday Jeff reminded us of the tragedy Shelly Fitzgerald has experienced with the loss of her career at Roncalli. Then he showed the portion of Shelly’s interview with Ellen Degeneres where her former students surprised her on set. What signs of rainbow promise do you already see sprouting in Shelly’s life?
  - b. What’s the biggest loss you are experiencing in your life right now? What kinds of rainbow promise are you already seeing sprout or anticipating may sprout as time unfolds?