

"By Faith: Noah"

Hebrews 11:7

Baxter Exum (#994)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
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Four Lakes Church of Christ



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Introduction:

As we begin this morning, I would like for us to play a very brief word association game, and I would like to ask: What is the first word that comes to mind when I say the name NOAH? What word do we most often associate with Noah? Most of us would probably answer with the word "ark" or perhaps the word "flood." In fact, one of the youngest people here this morning has requested a sermon on Noah and the Flood. We studied the flood about a year and a half ago. We studied it in three lessons. We looked at Noah himself, we looked at some of the evidence for a world-wide flood, and we also looked at what the flood should mean for all of us as Christians.

However, this morning I would like for us to study Noah and the flood from a different point of view by looking together at a single verse in the New Testament book of **Hebrews**, because if we could ask the writer of the book of **Hebrews** for a word that he would associate with Noah, the word would not be ark or flood, but the one word would be "**faith**." This morning I would like to invite you to turn with me, then, to the book of **Hebrews 11**—a long list of the heroes of the faith from the Old Testament, and in that list, the writer of Hebrews takes the life of Noah and boils it all down to a single verse—the passage is found in **Hebrews 11:7**. **»PPT»** In our pew Bibles, the passage is found on **page 1882**.

The story of Noah actually starts with the passage that brother Stuart read for our Scripture reading this morning, back in **Genesis 6:5-8**. And then, several thousand years later, the writer of **Hebrews** sums it up with a single verse. If you will, please look with me at **Hebrews 11:7**. In **Hebrews 11:7**, the Bible says, "**By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.**"

This morning I would like for us to look at this one verse as we look at the faith of Noah, and I would like for us to notice that **there are certain things Noah had that we also have today**.

- I. **For example, we find right away (just from Hebrews 11:7) that NOAH HAD A WARNING FROM GOD. **»PPT»****

Certainly of all people, those of us here in south-central Wisconsin know something about the dangers of a flood. We know that water can rise very quickly. An entire lifetime of hard work can be wiped away in just a few seconds. We think of those homes that were washed away up at Lake Delton, and we know the dangers that a flood can bring. But out of His great love, we find that God sent a very clear warning to Noah—many years in advance.

Back in **Genesis 6:11-14**, the Bible says that, ***"...the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.'"*** And then God went on to give more details concerning what Noah needed to do.

Of course, as with any warning, we have a choice concerning whether we will accept it. Many of us can remember what happened with Mt. St. Helens back in May 1980. After many months of seismic and volcanic activity, scientists were very clear in warning those around Mt. St. Helens that they needed to clear out, that they needed to evacuate right away. There had been an earthquake at 5.1 on the Richter scale. By the end of April, the north side of the mountain began to bulge at a rate of five feet per day, and then 50 feet per day. The warnings were coming from all directions. But there was at least one man who stubbornly refused to listen. Perhaps some of you will remember a man by the name of Harry R. Truman, the owner of the famous Mt. St. Helens Lodge at Spirit Lake. Mr. Truman reasoned that the volcano had been dormant for 123 years, so there was no reason to move. But we know what happened on May 18, 1980. Mr. Truman and his lodge were vaporized in the explosion, and his body has never been found. In fact, a total of 57 people were either killed or have never been found. Mr. Truman (and the others) failed to heed the warning.

In a similar way, God warned Noah. And in the same way, God continues to warn all of us here this morning. God warns us about the danger and the consequences of sin. In **2 Peter 3:3-7**, God comes right out and says it, ***"Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.' For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men."***

Not only do we have a warning, then, but the Bible consistently uses the example of the flood as a motivation. Even Jesus said in **Matthew 24:36-39** (concerning the

Second Coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment), ***"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be."*** We learn, therefore, first of all, that like Noah, we have also been given a warning.

II. But let us consider a second similarity. We also find in Hebrews 11:7, that NOAH PROPERLY REACTED TO THE WARNING WITH REVERENT RESPECT FOR GOD. »PPT»

In fact, we could even refer to this as fear. Noah was a God-fearing man. The writer of **Hebrews** tells us that Noah received God's warning ***"in reverence."*** We have the idea here of standing in awe of God. We have the idea of respect—God speaks, and we listen—knowing that what God says will come true. In the Bible, the idea of fearing God can range from terror to concern. But we know that those in the world of Noah's time had neither—they were neither terrified nor even concerned about God. Noah was the only one. Out of perhaps millions of people, Noah was the only righteous man on the face of this earth. Can you imagine what that would be like? Imagine being the only person to worship God this morning—not just here at this congregation, but anywhere on the face of the earth! Imagine being the only righteous person anywhere! Noah was a God-fearing man, and it took respect for God to be in that position.

And so when God looked out over the whole world, God saw Noah. Perhaps you remember the words of **2 Chronicles 16:9**, where the Bible says, ***"For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."*** God was looking for someone to support, and God found Noah. God found a God-fearing man. And please notice, Noah built an ark not out of fear of dying in the flood, but he built an ark out of his fear, and love, and respect for God. Noah's reverence changed his life. In a world that was committed to doing evil continually, Noah was different.

And even though Noah had probably never seen a drop of rain, even though it is possible he had never even seen the ocean, Noah reacts to God's command to build an ark with ***"reverence."*** Noah's respect for God kept him doing the right thing, even though he was most likely ridiculed by his neighbors. As William Penn once said, ***"Right is right, even if everyone is against it; and wrong is wrong even if everyone is for it."*** Noah had the choice: He could take God at His word or he could basically call God a liar. But thankfully, Noah treated God's warning with respect. And again, that is something that we can share with Noah. Just as Noah did, we can also react to God's warning with respect.

III. **As we look back at Hebrews 11:7, we also find that NOAH HAD OBEDIENT FAITH. »PPT»**

Noah had faith, and he did something about it. Noah reacted by doing something. It has been said that one of the greatest acts of faith in the history of the world was Noah cutting down the very first gopher tree. And from that point on, Noah spent 120 years fulfilling a single command. God said, "**Build an ark,**" and with every swing of the axe, Noah was proclaiming to the world, "**I believe in God.**" With every stroke of every saw, Noah was shouting, "**I believe in God.**" With every swing of the hammer, Noah was proclaiming, "**I believe in God.**" And with every brushstroke of pitch, Noah was shouting out, "**I believe in God.**" Noah had obedient faith. Noah did not just say he believed in God, but Noah put that faith in motion. And what an example for us to follow!

This past week, I read about a little boy who had studied Noah in Bible class, and when he was asked to lead the prayer at dinner that evening, the little boy thanked God for the food, and then he said, "**And Lord, if you ever need someone to build an ark, I'll do it!**" God has given all of us something to do. Faith, therefore, motivates us to obey the word of God.

We believe that God's work should progress here in the Madison area, and so we give sacrificially. We believe that God will destroy the earth a second time with fire, and so we warn our neighbors. We believe that God offered His only Son as a sacrifice for our sins, and so we fall down in worship as we express our thankfulness to God. Our faith changes our behavior. Faith may not be easy, but when God has spoken, what else can we do?

Noah never questioned God's commands, he never labeled anything as "non-essential," but Noah heard God, he believed the message, and then he reacted with faithful obedience. God's pattern for our salvation has not changed. Like Noah, we are also to respond to God's message with obedient faith.

IV. **There is something else Noah had that we also have, and that is, NOAH HAD A PLACE OF SAFETY. »PPT»**

We learn from the Scriptures that the ark was not designed for pleasure. This was not Noah's yacht, but it was a place of survival. Noah had no right to say to God, "**You know, God, gopher wood is twenty miles away, and we have a lot of other wood right here, and cedar smells better, so I think we're going to make a few changes here.**" Noah did not say that, but Noah built the ark exactly as God had instructed. In fact, after all of the instructions, the last verse of Genesis 6 says, "**Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.**" From a human point of view, we might have added a rudder. We might have added some sails. We might have added some lifeboats. We might have installed a few more doors to make the loading and unloading more efficient. We might have added more windows to air it out a little better.

But we understand (looking back on it) that this ship had only one purpose—the purpose was not entertainment, the purpose was not a year-long pleasure cruise, but the purpose was to save the human race. The ark was built for survival, and once the rain started, the only place of safety was inside the ark. We learn from the Scriptures, in fact, that God closed the door. It was not even up to Noah to decide who got in. God made that decision.

I hope we see some serious parallels between the ark and the Lord's church. The Lord's church is also a place of safety. On the day the church was established in **Acts 2**, Peter told the people they had murdered God's son, and the people responded by saying, "**Brethren, what shall we do?**" Peter answered by saying, "**Change your hearts, and let each one of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins might be forgiven...**" (**verse 38**). We find that 3,000 people responded to the gospel message, and at the end of that chapter, the Bible says that, "**The Lord was adding together daily the ones who were being saved**" (**verse 47**). People were being baptized and God was adding them to the church—God was putting them in the place of safety.

Peter even makes a direct comparison between the flood and baptism in **1 Peter 3:20-21**, where he refers to, "**...the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**" We would say that just as Noah and his family had a place of safety in the ark, so also people today can have a place of safety if they will submit to Christ in baptism and if they will remain faithful to the Lord's church.

V. There is something else we can have in common with Noah, and that is, LIKE NOAH WE CAN ALSO BE SAVED WITH OUR FAMILIES. »PPT»

In **Hebrews 11:7**, the writer refers to the "**salvation of [Noah's] household.**" We know from the Scriptures that Noah was saved along with his wife, his three sons, and their three wives—for a total of eight people. Apparently, they also believed the word of God. Hopefully, we can also convince our families concerning the word of God. Especially as fathers, we are standing between our children and the flood. Certainly in a real flood, we would do everything possible to rescue our children. If the floodwaters were rising around our house, we would jump in—we would do whatever we had to do. But it seems today that some fathers (in a spiritual sense) are standing outside the house simply watching the floodwaters rise. In some homes, it seems that fathers have even turned on all the faucets—even adding to the situation, through their own wicked example. Fathers especially, then, have a serious responsibility to save their children from the flood. As fathers, we can be the spiritual heroes of the family. Like Noah, those of us as fathers today need to heed the warning, we need to fear God, we need to respond with obedient faith, and we need to do everything possible to bring our families into the place of safety, so that we can all be saved together!

VI. There is something else we have in common with Noah, and that is, NOAH HAD A MISSION TO PREACH. »PPT»

In **Hebrews 11:7**, the Bible says that by building the ark, Noah **"...condemned the world."** Noah, then, did not keep God's warning to himself, but Noah passed it on. In fact, we find in **2 Peter 2:5** that God, **"...did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly."** Noah, therefore, was a **"preacher of righteousness."** Noah condemned the world through what he did and through what he said. Even the building of the ark was a sermon: Judgment is coming! And when we refuse to compromise that message, people tend to get a little uneasy. Noah's neighbors had to know what was going on. I mean, here is a huge boat—more than 1½ football fields long, four stories tall, nearly 100,000 square feet of cargo space, covered with tar—it would have been a very strange thing to see. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. His life and his words were in perfect agreement.

Noah's mission is our mission. In **Colossians 1:28**, the Bible says (referring to Jesus), **"We proclaim Him, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone complete in Christ."** Like Noah, we need to think of our neighbors. Do we know people who are not in the ark of safety? Do we know people who have not yet turned away from sin? Do we know people who have not yet been immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins? If so, then the example of Noah tells us that we, also, are to be preachers of righteousness.

VII. There is one final thing that we share with Noah, and that is NOAH WAS BLESSED WITH AN INHERITANCE. »PPT»

In **Hebrews 11:7**, the Bible says that Noah, **"...became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."** This does not mean that building the ark got any easier. Building the ark was still a huge project. Building the ark was still hard work. But after his faithful response to God's warning, after 120 years of work, and after being sealed up in a giant box full of animals for more than a year, Noah was blessed with a reward. Immediately, Noah became one of only seven other people to survive the world-wide flood. Noah was one of only two people in the Bible who were ever described as having **"walked with God"** (**Genesis 6:9**).

In a similar way, we will also be rewarded for our faithful response to God's warning. In the very last chapter of the Bible, Jesus says, **"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done"** (**Revelation 22:12**).

Conclusion:

As we think about the example of Noah and what we both have, all of us here this morning are offered a choice. The choice is so much more than what side we would like to have with our butter burger. But instead, we are facing the choice of what we will do with the word of God. Will we accept it for what it really is and will we obey it? Or, like Mr. Truman on the shores of Spirit Lake, will we ignore the warning? In the Bible, it seems that salvation is almost always offered as a choice. Generally speaking, God does not drag us out of danger, but God offers an invitation.

This morning, we are passing it on. God has offered His only Son. We respond to that sacrifice with faithful obedience. We turn away from sin, and we allow ourselves to be buried in water for the forgiveness of our sins. If you have any questions, we would love to talk with you sometime soon. But if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org