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| All-Saints-logo-Green-4-nobackground.png | | Sermon Discussion Guide  FOR All Saints Small Groups |
| “The Highest and the Lowest: The Beginning of Lent” | Rev Tim Frickenschmidt | February 21, 2021 | | |
| **OldTest Reading** [Gen 6:5-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+6:5-8&version=ESV), [7:23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+7%3A23&version=ESV), [9:8-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+9%3A8-17&version=ESV)  **6 5**The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. **6**And the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart. **7**So the Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” **8**But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.  **7 23**He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.  **9 8**Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, **9**“Behold, I establish My covenant with you and your offspring after you, **10**and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. **11**I establish My covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” **12**And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: **13**I have set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. **14**When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, **15**I will remember My covenant that is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. **16**When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” **17**God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.”  **Epistle Reading** [1 Peter 3:18-22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+3%3A18-22&version=ESV)  **3 18**For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit, **19**in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, **20**because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. **21**Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22**who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.  **Gospel Reading** [Mark 1:9-15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1:9%E2%80%9315&version=ESV)  **1 9**In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10**And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. **11**And a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”  **12**The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness. **13**And He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And He was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to Him.  **14**Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, **15**and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” | **Introduction**  We think of the story of Noah’s Ark as child’s play but what if it were written for a mature audience and we were to ask the question what the story of Noah’s Ark is really saying. Two points to answer that question: (1) An Adult Reading and (2) An Inexplicable Peace.  **Background**  The Old Testament readings of the [Revised Common Lectionary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised_Common_Lectionary) always involve major watershed moments in the history of Israel, expressing the inner-most depths and the uttermost heights of Israel’s life and faith in relationship with God.   1. An Adult Reading (the inner-most depths): 2. In Gen 6:5-7, the author is trying to describe how totally ruined mankind is; that God grieved making man and will blot man out. The Bible says man, at this point, is totally ruined, spiritually, morally. Rather than accepting the child-like theological sentimentalism in the reading of Noah’s Ark, adults should elicit an honest conversation about the power of sin and how catastrophic it is in our lives and in this world.   [Fleming Rutledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fleming_Rutledge): We tend to look at things from our own constricted point of view. Things are not too bad for me personally, why should God be mad at me?   1. But is sin in us? Are we only evil continually? Read [David](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David)’s confession in [Psalm 51](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+51&version=ESV). Are we there; are we pointed that way? How do we deal with that?   Fleming Rutledge: … the Bible thinks in terms of the whole human community. It’s taken for granted in the old testament that sin contaminates the entire society. The whole population is accountable to God for the state of the world.  So, if we’re thinking like the Bible, and we know something horrific is happening someplace else, we’re not excused from responsibility for it (e.g., the [War in Darfur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Darfur)).   1. A major purpose of Lent is for us to begin thinking as the Bible thinks; and become people who see sin in the way that God sees it: the worst people and situations are merely examples of how damaged the whole is. This adult story begins with a divine decision, from God, to wipe out the entire human race. Everything about this story, afterward, depends on if we think God has the right to do it. 2. An Inexplicable Peace. (the uttermost heights):    1. Gen 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord, not because Noah was a good, holy, righteous man who was rescued by God. Instead, in Gen 6:8 favor might be translated as Grace: i.e., Noah found Grace with God; as He had plans for Noah.    2. The story is not about Noah but about the unimaginable extent of God’s Grace. The beauty of that Grace and what it can accomplish in any situation of total wreckage. That can offer us hope, today; God can re-create what has been ruined (our lives).    3. The story is not about the horrors of the flood captured in Michelangelo [Deluge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Deluge,_Michelangelo.png) but about the wonders of the Ark, its cargo and how it floats safely above that which is being destroyed. That’s what we’re meant to be struck by: the kindness and Grace of God preserving us and the rest of His creation, giving us a new start.    4. Lent offers a new start with everything, with God, with ourselves and how we treat others. God calls the bow, hung in the clouds, a sign of a covenant relationship with Him, in which mankind shares one life with Him (Gen 6:9-17).    5. He made a way to be at Peace with people who are not at Peace with Him or others. Gen 9 is a picture of God’s way with us. Rainbows happen when darkness and light meet; when the darkness of God’s wrath and the light of His Grace meet.    6. It ultimately happened on the Cross, when the storm of God’s judgement fell upon Christ in order that the light of His forgiveness might fall on us, God’s only means of the Inexplicable Peace that He offers to all people. He took our death so that we might have His life. He was blotted out so that we might start again.    7. Jesus didn’t just come to die for us. Jesus came to be raised from the dead as King so that He might defeat the power of sin in us. That very same power that flooded the earth, that cleansed it of all evil now floods our souls, if we are Christians.    8. The Christian life is a flood and Lent is like a yearly flood of God’s Judgement and Grace where things in our lives need to be washed away. The highest cannot stand without the lowest, and we should admit the lowest of our stories. Admit the depths of our lives and follow God to the heights of the new life He offers to us.   **Discuss**   1. Is the power of sin catastrophic? How is it? Always evil, all the time? (Gen 6:5) 2. Might we deserve to be blotted out? (Gen 6:7) Do we think God has that right? 3. The adult story of Noah’s Ark is not about Noah or the horrors of the flood. 4. Inexplicable Peace.   **Conclusion/Application**  •Flood our souls with God’s Word in the 40 days of Lent and see what gets washed away. Let Lent be a flash flood that tears things away from us (e.g., fast from something that has too strong a hold on our hearts and see what receives new life). | |
| By Pete Myers | | |