

“God Will Always Judge Evil”

Genesis 6:1-13

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5th Sunday Before Easter

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Our sermon text this morning is found in Genesis 6:1-13. Listen now to God’s holy and inerrant word. It is more to be desired than gold, even much fine gold. It is sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

6 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. 3 Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” 4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

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.

9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Thus far the reading of God's word. It is absolutely true, and it is given to you because your Father in heaven loves you. Prayer...

For the next several weeks, we'll be looking at the story of the Great Flood and Noah's Ark, as we move through Genesis 6-9.

This is, of course, one of the most well known stories in all of the Bible, though it's interesting to think about what we usually emphasize as modern people when we imagine this story.

If I say, "Noah's Ark," what do you think of? I think most of us probably immediately imagine some of kind of illustration meant for children, Noah standing on the ark with an olive branch and a dove in his hands, the giraffes with their too tall necks and heads sticking out of a window. It's almost light hearted. A fun story for children.

The presbyterian minister Frederick Buechner writes this:

"It is an ironic fact that this ancient story about Noah survives in our age mainly as a children's story. When I was a child, I had a Noah's ark made of wood with a roof that came off so you could take the animals out and put them in again, and my children have one too.

Yet if you stop to look at it at all, this is really as dark a tale as there is in the Bible, which is full of dark tales. It is a tale of God's terrible despair over the human race and his decision to visit them with a great flood that would destroy them all except for this one man, Noah, and his family. Only now we give it to children to read. One wonders why.

Not, I suspect, because children particularly want to read it, but more because their elders particularly do not want to read it, or at least do not want to read it for what it actually says and so make it instead into a fairy tale, which no one has to take seriously."

I think Buechner is on to something. This story of the Great Flood and Noah's ark is indeed one of the darkest and most difficult stories in the Bible, because ultimately this is a story about God's judgment of the wickedness of the human race.

But it's not just a story of judgment. It's also a story of how God brings the salvation of his people through his judgment of the wicked.

And if you stop to think about it for a minute, this theme of God's salvation coming through his judgment is one of the most prominent themes in all of the Scriptures.

When God saves his people from their slavery in the exodus, he does so through bringing judgment on the wickedness of Egypt.

When God brings his people into the promise land, he does so through his judgment of the wickedness of the Canaanites.

When God places David on the throne to rule as Israel's Messianic King, he does so by bringing judgment on the wickedness of Saul.

When God saves a remnant of his people who will flourish in exile — men and women like Daniel and Ezekiel and Esther, he does so by bringing judgment on the wickedness of Jerusalem.

And then, of course, in the death of Jesus, God saves his people by giving over his Son to judgment on their behalf.

However, the death of Jesus does not bring an end to God's judgment.

God saves the early church from the persecution of the Apostate Jews by bringing judgment once again on the wickedness of Jerusalem and destroying the temple for the second and last time.

And we look forward now to the Last Day when God will bring about the final salvation of the righteous by sending his Son to eternally judge all the wicked, along with Satan and his demonic servants.

God's judgment is all over the place in the story of God's redemption, and this story of the Great Flood and Noah's Ark is the first great judgment of the wicked in all of Scripture — and as such the Great Flood sets the paradigm, the pattern, for all the judgments of God that will follow.

In other words, we learn here, in the story of Noah's Ark, certain principles and themes about God's judgment of the wicked that will help us to rightly understand all the rest of God's judgments that will take place through the Scriptures and even in our world today.

So, as we look at this story of the Great Flood and Noah's Ark in the weeks to come, we'll focus on three themes that are always found in God's judgment.

First, as we'll discuss this morning, Genesis 6:1-13 shows us that God Will Always Judge Evil.

Next week, as we look at Genesis 6:14-22, we'll consider how God's judgment of evil always include a way of escape because of his mercy.

And then, on March 19, we'll look at Genesis 7 and consider how God's Judgment always brings about New and Transformed world — indeed, the judgment of the wicked is how God is always moving history forward into new and greater places of maturity and glory.

So, today, we'll consider how our passage this morning teaches us that God will always judge evil.

In Genesis 4, we read about the wicked line of Cain, which begins with Cain's murder of Abel, his lack of repentance, his building of the city of Enoch, and culminates in his descendant Lamech, who boasts of murder and revenge.

In Genesis 5, we read about the righteous line of Seth, where the Lord preserved his church and protected the right worship of God.

But the story of Genesis 6 begins with a description of how the wickedness of Cain's line corrupted the descendants of Seth until the whole earth was filled with violence and evil.

In the first five verses of Genesis 6, we read: 6 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. 3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." 4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

Now, I'll be the first to acknowledge that this is a complex and confusing set of verses.

A minority of biblical interpreters have argued that the Sons of God here are angels that come to earth, take human wives and have children with them, and it is this intermingling of the angelic and human races that is the great sin of Genesis 6, which leads to the corruption of the earth. However, I believe that reading of this text is exegetically incorrect, for two reasons, which I'll try to explain briefly.

The first reason I believe this interpretation is incorrect is because the Scriptures are clear that angels are spiritual, not physical beings.

God did not create Angels with physical bodies, and there is nothing in the Scriptures that give us any evidence that Angels somehow have the capacity to have sexual relations with one another, much less with human beings. For my money, this alone is sufficient as a reason to reject this reading of the text.

And another reason point in this direction as well.

If it is angels who initiate this great sin, then why is there no record in the text of God judging or even mentioning the sin of these wicked angels? Rather, the emphasis again and again throughout the text is God's anger at the corruption and wickedness of *humanity*, not the wickedness of angels. This text is not about angelic sin. It is about the sin of human beings.

But there is another reading of this text that makes a great deal more sense, I believe.

And that is that the Sons of God mentioned here (as the line of the righteous) are the descendants of Seth, while the daughters of men are the descendants of Cain (the line of the wicked).

And therefore the error that is being committed is not that of angelic beings intermarrying with human beings, but rather, men departing from the righteous line of Seth and intermarrying with the line of Cain.

This reading is also supported in that it provides an explanation for how the violence and evil of Cain's line spread throughout the whole earth—it happened over time, as each generation became more corrupted than the one before it.

And remember — at this point in human history, men and women were often living as long as 800 or 900 years. And for people who rejected God, their wickedness had the potential to affect and influence and harm others exponentially more than they would if they only lived as long as we do today.

In fact, you might argue that one of the reasons that God shortened the life spans of human beings after the flood was for the purpose of restraining evil and corruption.

In any case, however you interpret verses 1 and 2 of Genesis, in verses 5-13, we read of the effect of the intermarriage between the Sons of God and the daughters of men — and this is where I want to spend the rest of our time this morning.

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.

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What this portion of God's word is telling us, beloved, is essentially this.

God drew near to the earth, and he evaluated it, and he found that it was evil.

God determined that humanity at this point in history was evil and wicked and full of violence.

And because of that evil, God determined to bring judgment.

Now, that judgment did not come immediately.

It took at least as many years as it took for Noah to build a massive ark — which we'll talk about in a lot more detail next week.

And actually, I think that the 120 years that the Lord speaks of in verse 3 is a reference to the amount of time between that passed between when the Lord spoke to Noah and announced his decision to judge humanity and when the floodwaters finally came.

But make no mistake. God drew near to the earth, he found that it was evil, and he responded to that evil by destroying all of humanity save for one righteous man and his family.

And because of this story, because of this dark and terrible judgment of God in the early days of human history that resulted in the loss of so much human life, we can be confident, beloved, that the God who made the heavens and the earth is also the God who will always judge evil.

He is, as our Westminster Confession puts it, the God who is not only most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, but also the God who is most just and terrible in his judgments; who hates all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

Beloved, our God will always judge evil. That's what this story teaches us.

All of the evil that has ever been done. Every wrong. Every violation of God's law. Every act of injustice. Every deed of violence. Every abuse. Every theft. Every murder. Every adultery. Every lie. Every act of covetousness. Every idolatry.

He will, in his good time, judge all of it.

Now, make no mistake. For those who put their trust in God's mercy, there is a way of escape.

Those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus will be able to stand without shame in the judgment of God, for Jesus has borne their judgment on their behalf.

But...and this is important: The salvation that the cross brings only makes any sense at all in the context of a God who will always judge evil.

If God does not judge evil, then what is the point of cross at all? What does salvation even mean, if it does not mean deliverance from the reign of evil?

And indeed, the story of the Great Flood teaches us that our God does not overlook evil. He does not simply shake his head and look the other way.

And this is profoundly good news.

Because we *need* the justice and the judgment of God to deliver us from the oppressive reign of evil.

We need to be delivered and healed from the sins we have committed. And we need to be delivered and healed from the sins others have committed against us.

And the only way this can happen is if someone *outside* the whole corrupt system draws near and sees what has been done — sees ALL of it — and refuses to let evil stand.

In other words, we need need not only our Lord Jesus in his death on the cross, we also need our Lord Jesus in his resurrection from the dead, and we need the Lord Jesus in his promise that he will come in his risen body one day come to judge the living and the dead and deal with evil once and for all.

That is to say, we need to remember and hold on to the vision of the Lord Jesus that John spoke of in Revelation, when he wrote these words:

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Indeed, we need this God. We need the God who will always judge and ultimately, will put a complete end to evil.

And the good news, Beloved, is that is exactly who our God is.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.