

STORM STORIES

“Preparing For the Storm”

Genesis 6-7

Introduction

Hurricane season is upon us! The National Weather Service is tracking storms in the Atlantic and we're tracking them on The Weather Channel. To be honest with you, June-September is the only time I watch The Weather Channel. How many of you are Weather Channel junkies? How many of you only watch the Weather Channel during Hurricane season?

Of course, the watchword during Hurricane season is preparedness. At the start of the month we were told to be prepared.

Display items from my hurricane survivor kit- We are cautioned to have a hurricane survivor kit already put together with items like flashlights, batteries, battery-operated radio, plenty of bottled drinking water and non-perishable food items among other things.

In addition to these items, a number of us probably have generators in the event that our electricity goes out during a storm. We want to be as prepared as we can be when a storm hits.

It's not just storms like Isabella and Katrina that cause devastation. There are other “life storms” that wreck havoc in our lives. Problems, difficulties, health concerns, financial crises, divorce, tragedies and other hardships are storms that blow into our lives. We need to be prepared for them.

During the next four weeks, we are going to go through this series, “Storm Stories”. We're going to track 4 storms that are mentioned in the Bible. Each of these stories has some guidelines and principles that will help us to weather the storms in our lives.

As we think about weathering the storms of life, we first of all need to remember to rely upon the Lord. Here is what Isaiah says about the Lord:

“You have been.....a shelter from the storm.” – Isaiah 25:4

That verse will be our theme verse for this series. Just as we sang this morning, the Lord is our shelter in the time of storms. God will help us weather the storms of life as we trust in and rely upon Him.

The first storm that is tracked in the Bible is what storm story? Noah and the flood. Noah braced for that storm by building an ark. It took him 120 years. From this story we can learn how we can prepare for the storm clouds that are forming and the storms that eventually blow into our lives.

The story of Noah and the flood is found in Genesis 6 & 7. Let's read a portion of the story from:

READ TEXT- Genesis 6:5-22

Before we look at the example of Noah and learn how we can prepare for the storms of life, let's review this storm story and learn some valuable lessons from it.

Your outline this morning contains just the points on how we can prepare for the storms of life. You won't be filling in any of the blanks until later in the message, unless you have tried to guess the words ahead of time. But here is the first lesson I notice from the story of Noah:

The World is an evil place

Why did God destroy the world with a flood? The people in Noah's day were so evil that God regretted creating mankind. God decided to wipe out all the evil people and start over with Noah and his family. Let's look at the evil that existed back then and see if we can see any parallels to today.

The world of Noah's day was extremely wicked. We think our world is bad, and it is, but, believe it or not, the environment in which Noah lived was worse!

The people in Noah's day were....

consumed with evil imaginations

Verse 5 reads that every inclination of the thoughts of mankind in that time was only evil all the time. Evil always has its origin in the mind, and the

people of Noah's day were dominated by evil thoughts. All of them! All the time.

Like the thoughts of the people in Noah's day, the thoughts of mankind's hearts today are becoming increasingly evil. We see this as the evil in mankind's heart is expressed through evil acts that are all around us.

The people in Noah's day were....

Extremely violent

Verse 11 says that the world was full of violence. When people drift away from God, they have no restraints on their evil imaginations. As a result, violence increases.

All you have to do today is to scan the headlines of the daily newspaper to realize that we live in a society that is becoming increasingly violent. The news is full of reports of violence.

We live in a world of bolted doors, barred windows, burglar alarms, home security systems, neighborhood watches, panic rooms and attack dogs. **A sign was posted on the window of a business in a rugged section of Louisville, Ky that read- "Warning, Attack Dog on premises three out of five nights. You guess which nights!"**

The people in Noah's day were...

preoccupied with secular interests

In Matthew 24, Jesus gives us further insight to the wickedness of Noah's day and what the conditions of our world will be like before Jesus returns.

Let's turn in our Bibles to Matthew 24:37-39

In Noah's day, people gave no thought to God whatsoever. They were totally consumed with their worldly interests. They went about their days as business as usual. The world was collapsing around them, the end of their existence was near, warning signs abounded, but they only concerned themselves with the physical. They gave no thought whatsoever to their

spiritual condition or their relationship with God. That's why they were caught off-guard when the flood came.

Many people today go about their daily life with no thought about God. It's business as usual. That makes them an evil and foolish person according to the Bible. They might be good in many moral ways, but Biblically speaking, an evil person is one who leaves God out of their life.

Some plan on including God at a later time. They decide that they want to live life the way they want to right now and they will get right with God at a later time. That is a very foolish way to live. Because, just like the people in Noah's day, no one has a lease on life. You do not know when you will die or when Jesus will return.

God destroyed the world in Noah's day because of its evilness. Our world is growing increasingly evil. As we will see in a moment, the clock is ticking down on our world. One day and for the final time, God will destroy our world and create a new heaven and earth for all eternity for those who are right with God. This leads to what we can learn from the story of Noah and the flood, which is....

The Response of God to the evil of this world

First of all.....

God is grieved at sin

We usually think of sin's incurring God's wrath. God does get angry at disobedience, as we will see. But initially, sin breaks the heart of God the way a rebellious child crushes the heart of a loving parent.

In verse 6, it says that God was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and that his heart was "filled with pain." The Living Bible reads- ***"It broke God's heart."***

Dr. Jack Cottrell has said that "sin is a wound in the heart of God."

Whenever we rebel against God with our sin, we hurt God. We break his heart. That's why the apostle Paul wrote:

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." – Ephesians 4:30

Realizing that our sin brings pain to God's heart is a reason to live in a way that pleases God and brings joy to his heart.

The second response of God to evil and this may surprise you....

God is patient with sinners

Even though the wickedness of Noah's day broke God's heart, God waited before he dealt with mankind. God was patient.

This is a part of God's nature that is difficult for us to understand because we like justice to be administered quickly.

A news report from Czechoslovakia related that Vera Surmac of Prague discovered that her husband was cheating on her. She contemplated both murder and suicide. Choosing the latter, she leaped blindly out of her third-story window. She incurred only minor injuries, however, because she landed on her husband in the street below, killing him instantly.

That's immediate justice! That's the way we think the justice of God should be. Immediate. We think that God should just come down and destroy all evil people. We know just where to draw the line, too. We would grant Him permission to destroy anyone who is more wicked than we are.

But God is so patient with man's rebellion. From the time that God told Noah that he was going to destroy the earth until the flood came there were 120 years that passed. God gave the people over a century the chance to repent and turn back to him.

Why is it that God is more patient than we are with the evil of this world? It's because there are two major differences between God and man.

First, God loves every human being and wants to save everyone possible. Peter wrote about why God hasn't as yet destroyed the world for a second and final time.

We need to turn to the book of 2 Peter to see why that is and we need to keep our Bibles open to 2 Peter as we will look at about 4 verses from 2 Peter chapter 3.

But here is why God is being patient with our world- 2 Peter 3:9

God loves every person and wants to save every person. Put it in personal terms for yourself.

Let's say that God gave you the power to destroy the world. Would you push the button right away? Or would you hesitate? You would probably hesitate because.....

You have a family member that has drifted away from the Lord and you're praying that, if given enough time, he/she might come back.

You have a neighbor you've been inviting to church who is not yet a Christian, so you want more time.

You see, for the sake of the people we care about, we hope that the world doesn't come to an end just yet. In a much broader sense, God cares about every person in a way that we can't comprehend, so He patiently provides every opportunity for them to repent and turn to Him.

The second area of distinction between God and man that allows God to patiently wait is that God measures time differently. **Look at 2 Peter 3:8.**

The 120 years that God gave the people in Noah's day to repent seems like a long time to us, but to our eternal God it's only a moment in time. God can wait patiently for man to repent because time is relative to him. God will give mankind today every opportunity because of this.

The third response of God to evil is that

God warns people

God not only waited for mankind to repent, but he also warned the people in Noah's day to repent. 2 Peter 2:5 refers to Noah as a "preacher of righteousness." For 120 years, as Noah built the ark, he preached to the people and called them to turn to God.

God never brought judgment on the earth without advance warning. **Before fire fell on Sodom, God sent an angel into the city to alert them. Before Nineveh was purged for their sin, God sent the prophet Jonah to urge repentance.**

God is warning our world today. He is warning our world through the preaching of His Word. In the Bible we are told of the impending destruction of this world and that mankind's only hope of salvation is found through Jesus Christ.

Noah preached for 120 years. When the flood came, the people were without excuse. God is warning and waiting today.

The last and final response of God to evil is...

God judges evildoers

Finally, God's patience wore thin and the day of mercy was past. It was time for judgment day for the people of Noah's day.

God judged those who were wicked and wiped them out with the flood. His judgment was decisive. The flood destroyed every evil person and left only those who were righteous.

One day, God will again, reach the end of his tolerance with mankind's wickedness. He will again destroy the world. Not with a flood. The second time, it will be with fire, as Peter wrote **in 2 Peter 3:10**.

God will destroy this world and create a new world for Christians for all eternity as Peter went on to write of in **2 Peter 3:13**.

Here is a third thing we learn from the story of Noah and the flood:

In the midst of God's judgment, there is salvation

The Scripture says that Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord. It says that Noah was a righteous man. But what was it that made Noah righteous and led him to rise above the evil of his day? Three things:

Noah was distinctive

Noah was different. He didn't indulge in the sins of his world. He brought his family up to respect the Lord. He gave priority to the spiritual.

Noah's example teaches us that it is important to be distinctive from the world around us. The book of Romans urges us:

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” – Romans 12:2

We need to renew our mind with reading and accepting the truth of God's word. God's word will guide us into paths of righteousness and keep us from slipping back into sinful behaviors and lifestyles.

The second thing about Noah's righteousness was...

Noah was obedient to detail

That was quite a boat that Noah built! It took 120 years to build it. If he didn't follow God's instructions, it wouldn't have saved Noah and his family.

But Noah obeyed God, down to the slightest detail. I love what verse 22 says about Noah's obedience- “Noah did everything just as God commanded him.” It doesn't say that Noah did some of the things that God commanded. Nor does it say that Noah did most of the things that God commanded. It says that Noah did everything that God commanded.

Now, none of us are perfect, but this doesn't mean that we cannot try to obey everything we know God wants us to do. We can't pick and choose which of God's commands we want to obey and which we don't. **I like what newsman Ted Koppel once said about the Ten Commandments. He said-“they're not the Ten Suggestions.”**

If we want to live a righteous life like Noah then we need to try our best, with God's help, to follow all God's ways.

The third thing about Noah's righteousness is that....

Noah was diligent

Can you imagine working for 120 years on building the ark? Can you imagine caring for all those animals? When the ark was built and Noah got on board, it was not a pleasure cruise. Noah had an entire zoo to feed and clean up after every day!

But Noah never gave up. He remained faithful to God and the mission God gave him. If you want to please God, then have faith in God and keep the faith. Stay at the ministry God gives you to do. Stay with it even when you feel like giving up. The Scripture says:

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” – Galatians 6:9

Persevering in doing good does pay off.

From what we have learned today about Noah and about how God deals with evil, let's look at how we can prepare for the storms of life.

There are 4 things you can do to brace yourself for the impending storms of life. Now, we will fill out your outline. First....

1. Be obedient

Noah was righteous and God saved him and his family. Today, God still honors those who are righteous. God will help us when trouble comes:

“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.” – Psalm 34:17

It is important to be living right when a storm of life hits. The reason is you want to feel God's presence. You want him to comfort you and reassure you.

In order to feel close to God, you have to be walking in fellowship with him. You can't do that if there is sin in your life that you haven't dealt with. God hears the cry of the righteous, but God doesn't obligate himself to listen to any of his children who are flagrantly being disobedient. The prophet Isaiah wrote:

“Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” – Isaiah 59:1-2

If you are being disobedient to God, you are out of fellowship with Him. You won't feel close to God. You don't have the promise of his help when trouble comes. The Psalm writer declared:

“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;” – Psalm 66:18

It is only when we are living in obedience to his will that we are in fellowship with him. It is only then that God will hear us and help us when we cry out for help. And help us, he will! Our theme verse says this about the Lord:

“You have been...a shelter from the storm.” – Isaiah 25:4

If you want God's help when the storm hits, you need to be living in fellowship with him. If you want to sense God's presence when trouble comes, you need to be living in close relationship with him. You do this through obedient living. This is the first way that you prepare yourself for the storm.

A second way to prepare for the storm is to....

2. Be persistent

Noah kept his faith in God for 120 years before the flood came. He persevered in his faith.

If you want to prepare yourself spiritually for the storms of life, then have faith in God and keep the faith. Resolve right now that you will not give up. Develop the characteristic of perseverance in your life. It will serve you well when difficult times come up.

The time to start is not when a storm cloud is on the horizon. The time to start is right now. Pray now. Read your Bible now. Serve God now. And keep on doing those things. Persevere in doing what is right. Consistently practice your faith. Then when a storm blows into your life, you can weather it with the quality of perseverance that is already developed in your character.

One thing that we can do to help other people prepare for the storm is to...

3. Be evangelistic

Noah is sometimes pitied for preaching for 120 years without a convert outside of his family. But saving his 7 family members had to be gratifying for Noah.

When we think about those we need to reach for Christ, begin at home with family members. **I read that many new members of churches come from the families of church members. The book said that those people are often overlooked as churches seek to win others for Christ.**

Beyond our own families, as our world grows increasingly wicked, it becomes more urgent for us to share our faith with those around us.

Dirk Been, was a 24-year-old youth ministries major from Seattle Pacific University who became a contestant on Survivor. Dirk said that the hardest aspect of being marooned on a remote island was not having anyone around who shared his beliefs.

Apparently, the other 15 castaways weren't Christians. I wonder if Dirk realized that even though those 15 people didn't share his belief in Christ that he could share his belief with them and seek to lead them to Christ.

There are people all around us who need Jesus as Savior. This leads to the final act of preparation. The most important thing to do to prepare for the storm of judgment that God will bring on this world is to...

4. Become a Christian

When the flood came in Noah's day, the only safe place was to be in the ark. To survive the evil of this world and go to heaven one day, the only safe place is to be in the church by becoming a Christian. To do so a person needs to:

Place their faith in Christ to save them. Jesus said of Himself:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” – John 3:16-17

God wants to save you through Christ. Once a person believes in Christ for their salvation, he/she needs to be baptized into Christ. Peter makes a connection between Noah and his family being saved through the flood waters and the salvation that God brings us when we are baptized:

“and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” – 1 Peter 3:21

As God saved Noah and his family through the floodwaters, so God will save you through the waters of baptism.

I would urge you to make this decision today. After Noah and his family went into the ark, the Scripture says that God shut the door. It is possible to imagine that as the floodwaters rose, that people were banging on the door of the ark, pleading with Noah to let them in. But he couldn't open the door. The Lord had sealed it. The people had had their chance. The day of mercy was past. Judgment day had arrived.

One day each person will stand before God in judgment. Only those who accept Christ in this life will be saved for eternity. Once a person dies, it is too late for them if they haven't accepted Christ. The Bible states that it is destined for man to die and after that the judgment.

God is patient, yes that's true. But the problem with putting off your decision to accept Christ is not God's patience. It's the matter that none of us know when our time on earth will be up.

Today is the day of mercy. Today is your second chance. Today is your day of salvation. Come, receive Christ today!