

# Saving

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.

So make yourself an ark of cypress wood, make rooms in it, and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it. The ark is to be 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high.

Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof and opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle, and upper decks. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it.

Everything on earth will perish, but I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark, you and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal, and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them. Noah did everything just as God had commanded him. Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you. The birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you, every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you. Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood. Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, this is a sign of the covenant I am making between you, me, between me and you, and every living creature with you. A covenant for all generations to come. I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring the clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds,

I will remember my covenant between me and you and all the living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth. So God said to Noah, this is a sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth. Then from John chapter 3 verse 16 through 17, 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.

[ 3 : 2 4 ]     For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. This is the word of the Lord. So, brothers and sisters, join me for a word of prayer.

Almighty and gracious God, we are indeed thankful for your movement among us this morning, for the ways in which your spirit continues to unite us all and inspire us all. And now, Lord, with our hearts open, please come to each of us and ignite that fire anew.

Fall fresh on us that we may go into the world literally on fire for you. All this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen. So, for the next six weeks, we are going to be doing this series called A Way Out of No Way.

A Way Out of No Way. And to get started, let's just check in on the news of the day. So, there is some good news in the world.

You just asked Phil, right? Because, of course, we know that the bandits won yesterday. But, in the midst of all that other good news that we just celebrated in our prayer time, because we heard lots of good things, we also know that there's this other backdrop that's riding along with us.

[ 4 : 48 ] Yes? That we wake up to the news of a constantly rising death toll after that train derailment in India. More than 280 people dead and more than 1,000 injured.

That we wake up to near misses by the U.S. and Chinese military in the South Pacific Sea. And we are all dealing with getting ready for a movement in the war in Ukraine.

More death, more destruction. Those are the things we are seeing globally. We haven't talked about a whole lot that's happening nationally. Nor have we talked about the things that may be working in individual people's lives.

So, we're dealing with a few things. So, not only are we just aware of some of the great movement that we have, but there's this backdrop with us as well.

And I know that some folks are feeling some type of way about the state of the world this morning. We regularly hear in conversations people saying, well, the world's just gone crazy.

[ 5 : 55 ] The world has just gone crazy. Now, having said that, we live in this space, looking at all these things happening around us, seeing tensions and anxieties rising.

And yet, we don't live in a time that's described like the time you just heard Tucker reading about. Because we will make that leap, and we will talk about how crazy the world is, how out of hand is.

But, when Tucker started in Genesis 6, if you want to follow along, that's the main chapter we're going to be in today, is Genesis chapter 6. And so, what we see at the beginning of the passage, in verse 11, is this.

Now, the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all people on earth had corrupted their ways.

So, God said to Noah, I'm going to put an end to all people, for the earth was full of violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.

[ 7 : 05 ] That sounds pretty heavy. That's a whole lot. But, it actually is stronger than that. Because the passage before it, which we didn't include in the reading, if you go to verse 5, I want you to hear this.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So, the Lord said, I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created.

That's a lot. Right? I mean, that's a lot to try and take in. But, can you see God in this place?

Can you see God in this place? I mean, we look around our world, and we think of how crazy it is. But, I would say that to you to put us back into this moment where Noah is.

[ 8 : 11 ] Because what we also see in that passage is that Noah had found favor with God. Noah was in right relationship with God.

And, I know some of us from time to time as we walk through this world feel like we may be the only sane ones left. Could you imagine what that must have been like for him?

Because, according to Scripture, he was. So, that's what we're really dealing with. And, this heart of God's that is breaking this way.

You know, when we get a little upset with our kids because they're doing things we don't like and how deeply it cuts us, can you hear the words of our God in here? Notice that one sentence.

That one sentence keeps leaping off the page at me. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings. I mean, that's something right there.

[ 9 : 16 ] The Lord regretted it. Now, I want us to be in the midst of this problem. Okay? I want you all to feel that thing in your stomach, that thing in your chest right now that's dealing with, wow, this isn't that much fun, Pastor.

I want you all to feel that for a minute because it's important that we grasp the gravity of that. Because where we are headed with this is appreciating how God chooses to deal with it.

Because that's something that I think we often take for granted. Because one of the things that we see in reviewing this story, one of the things that we know about our God is how much our God loves us.

But have you ever really thought how different life would be if that was not what God led with all the time? Right?

I mean, we are in this place where God is saying, this thing is a mess. Now, I know I have some fellow chefs and cooks out there.

[ 10 : 26 ] When you try something, right? You try that recipe, it's on the kitchen counter. You're mixing stuff, you're putting it together, and you give it that first taste, and you're like, no, this ain't gonna work. And into the trash it goes, right?

Or if you're trying to build something, some of my craftspeople out here, you're working on something, and you realize, nope. This just ain't gonna be what I thought it was gonna be, and let me start all over.

It's hard to think of God in that place, is it not? I mean, we do it in a way that seems so cavalier, but can you imagine what this felt like with God? Because that's where we are.

He says, this experiment is not working. But what I want us to appreciate is that as serious as that is, and on the global scale, it's on, because we are talking about a global scale in the most literal of senses, that God makes a way out of nowhere.

That he sees the one. And similarly, that we will see in other times in Scripture, that the one gives God enough hope that one who holds on to what God is about gives God enough of a sense that this thing can still work.

[ 11 : 58 ] That I'm gonna believe for it, and I'm gonna make this happen. So in Noah, he says, I'm gonna make a way. Because, like I said, when we do our thing, right, that whole recipe, that bowl of whatever, all of it goes.

And we start all over. Now this is a restart, don't get me wrong, but notice, it wasn't a tear down and let's create a whole new universe. He essentially left what he had started in place.

Because we started with Noah and his family. So all the same potential, all the same belief, all that same hope that comes with humanity, God still sees in Noah.

And so rather than do the complete tear down and say, you know what, forget this thing, I don't know what I was thinking. God says, no, we're gonna make this work away out of Noah.

Now, when you look at your circumstances, when you look at your problems, when we start to fall into that trap, do we believe that God can do that? I think there's a part of us that always knows that we believe in a God who can do all things.

[ 13 : 36 ] That we know God can make the impossible possible. We get that. But today, church, I want us to remember two things that ride along with that that we often don't bring to the table when we are in those times when the mountain feels very hot.

for example, one of the critical pieces that we tend to look past with God is this idea that God's default setting is loving and saving us.

That that's what God leads with. Remember that image of throwing the whole thing in the trash? But God says, you, the one who's doing the right thing, the one who is in good relationship, the one who is holding on in the midst of all of this insanity, I'm going to save you.

God doesn't have to work that way. And that's the piece that I hope you hear if you don't hear anything else. God doesn't have to do it like that.

Have you ever really considered how different our world would be? How different our lives would be? How different our walk would be if God's default setting was not that?

[ 14 : 58 ] That if God did not constantly come from that place of grace, that if God did not constantly come from that place of loving us first, how different would it be if this was a God whose first sense was, say, compliance?

that if God's leading edge was about power, you will do what I want. How different would our world feel?

And most of the time we look past that. And it's the fact that we look past that that often keeps us from being in the place where we really need to be if we want our relationship with God to be all it's possible, all it can possibly be.

Because when we come to those times, those Red Sea moments, those huge mountain moments, those stone in front of Lazarus's grave moments, and we're going, how in the world am I going to deal with this?

we think that, well, God, I don't know why you put me in this moment. How'd you let things get this bad?

[ 16 : 17 ] It's usually the question we're asking. And we start to get into that fist-shaking mode with God. What's wrong with you? When God is still God, you see, the thing is, we are telling the part of the story that our brains tend to chase, and forgetting the part of the story that our hearts need to remember.

Let me say that again. We're telling the story that our brains chase, and forgetting the story that our hearts and souls need to remember. Because we'll concentrate on the flood.

We'll concentrate on the crazy. We'll concentrate on how angry God was. But then we'll miss what God tells us later. That when we go back to chapter nine, and then we hear what God says, starting at verse eight, then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, I now establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that was with you.

The birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals, and all those that came out of the ark with you. Every living creature on earth.

I establish my covenant with you. Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood. Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.

[ 17 : 55 ] God is making a promise, guys. God is saying that I'm not going to come at you like that again. As mad as you made me, as crazy as y'all can get, because y'all know y'all can get crazy, that's not how I'm going to choose to deal with you.

It's not as if God doesn't get angry. it's not as if God doesn't do some things to teach us lessons, but God is saying, I'm going to stay in this for the long haul.

That I'm not just going to trash it every time something starts to happen I don't like. I want you to put yourself in that seat for a minute. If you looked at this world right now, and you actually had the powers of God, right?

Scary thought. If you were sitting in that seat, and you had the powers of God, how far do you think humanity could take you before you'd be done?

Yeah, see, some of y'all are telling the truth. Right? How long would you watch us do the things that we do before you said, I have had it.

[ 19 : 25 ] That's a wrap. But see, when you think of it that way, what I want y'all to hear is the idea that we still get another day.

We still get another chance. that just as we were singing today, you're working. You never stop working.

That God is coming for us in ways that will help us, not hurt us. But when we're standing in front of that moment, when our circumstances are in that place, when that mountain feels like it's just too long, when it feels like it's just too steep, when it feels like it's just too rocky, we're not counting on the fact that that's the God who's with me.

We're going, why is this taking so long? Why does this feel this way? God, being who God is, still comes from that place of love and grace.

And no matter how much we may be pushing back, God is still pushing forward. You see, we will fight God, straight up fight God.

[ 20 : 57 ] God will be doing everything in God's power to say, go this way. But we're like, we don't want to go that way.

And so we're going to turn this way. And then God will close a couple of doors. God will send some voices into our life that will say, you know, it might have gone better if you had done this thing. But we're like, nope.

And we will take more steps in this direction. And God keeps going, go this way. And then we'll be like, what do you mean? All this good advice over here is telling me to go this way.

The world says that if I do this, then this will happen to me. And Jesus is going to go this way. And we wonder why stuff isn't working out.

We wonder why we don't feel the way we hope to feel. We sit there and get mad because, quote, our prayers aren't being answered. Come on, y'all.

[ 22 : 00 ] Y'all know that. When God is doing everything in God's power, go this way. Because he thinks we're worth it.

God isn't up here just playing with toys. God wants us to be God's family. God wants us to bring our brains and our hearts and our souls to the party.

We're not puppets to God. We're people. And he expects us to bring those choices. He expects us to bring all that we are.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. And the point here is that even though we may find ourselves in these times when the world is going every way but the way we hope, God is still ready to make a way out of no way.

Because we have been looking at the story perhaps from God's perspective. Think about it from Noah's for a minute. That you're getting up every day trying to do the right thing. That you've heard the stories and you keep trying to pray and you keep trying to do these things and the world around you has gone completely and totally bananas.

[ 23 : 20 ] Nobody else seems to get it. Nobody else seems to care. I know some of y'all know what I'm talking about. Let's see if this helps. But that said, day after day, Noah's holding on and hanging on.

And do you think that maybe Noah said, God, why aren't my prayers being answered? Do you hear me, God? What's happening? And then all of a sudden, Noah, I got a plan.

Here's what I want you to do. Now, let's just step out of that for a minute. Because oftentimes when we have Bible studies, we like to have the what happened when Noah went home conversation.

Right? Because that's a good one. Now I want you to imagine what happened when Noah went home with that news. Guess what? I am going to build this boat.

Where? Well, probably over there somewhere. You know we live in a desert, right? Yep. How long is that going to take?

[ 24 : 34 ] I have no idea. Why are we doing this? Because God's going to flood the entire earth. Really?

Okay. I love those stories. that's probably why that part didn't make it into the Bible. That being said, that being said, we know the part that did.

And the part that did is the animals came, that the family entered the ark, and that too has its own pretty dramatic sequence. But all of it is that in the midst of it all, Noah being faithful, Noah keeping his eyes and his heart focused on God, saying, how in the world is this supposed to work?

God made a way out of no way. From God's point of view, and from Noah's point of view. And what we need to hear in that is when we are thinking that there is no way to remember these stories, to remember our own.

All of us, as you heard me say during the greeting, have had those times when we had no idea how it was going to work. We had no idea how we were getting out of this.

[ 25 : 56 ] We had no idea if we would see tomorrow. But God made a way out of no way. And we know that to be true. Can somebody say yes to that? Because we know that to be true.

How do we move forward in this world? Because as we said, we get up and we see these headlines. we get up and we have these conversations and we're in these relationships.

We get up and we have these conflicts with people and we're trying to do the right thing and we're like, I just can't take it anymore. Then we get those individual problems that show up, those medical diagnoses, those bills that come in the mail, those problems that we seem to have no answer for.

But see, those moments are exactly when we need to lean into what we believe instead of running away from it.

When I say we need to lean into what we believe, there's this great line from a Bible study. It's quite a few years old now. There's a new edition of it out. It's called Experiencing God.

[ 27 : 04 ] It was originally written by a Baptist pastor named Henry Blackaby. But there's a line in it that has always stayed with me. Some of you have heard me use this line before, which is that if you want to see a God-sized work, you need a God-sized problem.

Hear that again. If you want to see a God-sized work, you need a God-sized problem. In other words, when we told the story of Lazarus, you'll caught a couple of those details that I shared with you, right?

That the Bible is very careful to point out that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. And the reason for that is because if Lazarus had only been in the tomb for three days, people would have thought, well, maybe he wasn't really dead.

But because he had been dead for three days, because he had been dead for four days, there was no question that he was dead. If you want to see a God-sized work, you need a God-sized problem.

When we think about the Israelites up against the Red Sea, which we'll talk about, if you want to see a God-sized work, you need a God-sized problem.

[ 28 : 32 ] the problem is that God-sized problems are scary. God-sized problems aren't any fun. And when we're standing in them, we're like, this is not the way this is supposed to work.

When in fact, from God's point of view, it's exactly how it's supposed to work. Because God wants to show us, remember, it's only me who can do these things. Not the world.

Me. says God. And in case you forgot, I'll remind you. So that said, I want you to hear that important lesson again.

Because if God was just about flexing God's power, we would be in a very different place. But God loves us. And God comes with this mindset that's built around saving us.

We see it in today's story, in the way God saved humanity. But we also know it, how true it is for us. Because that's why we included those two verses that are so familiar.

[ 29 : 44 ] And we've talked about this in different Bible studies. I know some of you are familiar with this. Because we talk about this idea of everybody gets John 3.16. people saw the football games, right?

Everybody saw the sign, and it gets tattooed on people's arms, and we see it on bumper stickers, and all of that. And everybody, most of us who've been raised in the church know exactly what it says.

For God so loved the world, believes in him. Very good, y'all.

Very good. But here's why John 3.17 is so important. Because we get that. It's kind of the whole gospel summarized in one sentence.

But here's the why. Here's the thing that matters. right? It's important that we get that fact, but then we remember who God is and how God works when we say John 3.17.

[ 30 : 46 ] And I know some of y'all know that. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be through him.

Saved through him. Because that's who God is. that if God wanted to just throw it in the trash, God could do that.

But God thinks you're worth it. So the next time you're looking for God to make a way, the next time the world feels simply too much to bear, the next time you're saying, I have no idea how this is going to work, get ready.

God to be God. God gets to be God for you in a way that we often leave behind. Because it's only when God can make a way out of no way that many of us have our eyes opened, that many of us will have our hearts opened, and that many of us will remember that this is who we follow, this is who we serve.

And it's because of those moments, it's because of our story that we get to go into the world and help those folks who don't know God understand because God made a way for us.

[ 32 : 19 ] Amen? And amen. Loving and gracious God, we give you thanks for the ways in which you continue to make a way, that you make a way for us to know you, you make a way for us to love you and one another, that in spite of ourselves, in spite of our limits, in spite of the ways in which we continue to fail and fall, you continue to show up, that you do not give up on us, that you continue to work, that you continue to show up, that you continue to show off, showing us that this mountain can be moved, that this valley may feel deep and dark, but it can't touch us, because you are with us, that even though things may not go the way we expect, that even though things may not go according to our plan, your way is better, and you made that way out of the darkness for us.

We love you, we celebrate you, and we thank you for all that you are, because we know that we wouldn't even be here were it not for your love and your grace.

All of this we pray in the name of Jesus, who makes all things possible. Amen. Our God is indeed mighty to save, our God is inclined to save, our God works to save, and so as you rest in that, thinking about how a way might need to be made for you, trust that God will make that way in a way that will draw you closer to him, not push you further away.

As we consider the ways in which we might put our faith into action this week, there are a few things that are happening that you want to pay attention to. They are highlighted in your bulletin. A few I want to draw your attention to in one that's not in the bulletin.

Let me lead with that one. Some of you got the newsletter, and you saw my piece in there about an upcoming sermon series we want to do. We're really excited about this. Where people will be sharing a little bit about a hymn or a sacred song that means something to them.

[ 34 : 29 ] And if you want to send those in, technically yesterday was supposed to be the deadline, but we've been in an annual conference for a few days, and so my brain is just not working right. I'm just going to be honest about that being said.

If you still want to do that, we will still leave another week or so for you to send those in. So if you haven't read it in the newsletter, we're going to get it into next week's bulletin for sure so you can find out more information about that.

I also want to highlight the upcoming church retreat, especially because there's a deposit due. And those of you who may not know Linda Zanke, Linda's here. Linda, you want to just wave your hand a little bit? So if you want to find out more about the church retreat, read that piece in the bulletin as well as you can talk to Linda.

There's also the preschool trichathon this week, so that's also in there. Make sure you pay attention to that. Last one. Our Luke Bible study still has two sessions left on Thursday, so if you haven't joined us yet, you still can join us even at this point, and so we'd be happy to have you.

A lot going on, a lot of opportunity to connect with the community, put your life. And so that said, let's receive our benediction before this thing explodes off my hip. In the name of God, our creator and king, and in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, our counselor and our sustainer, may God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children.

[ 35 : 54 ] Amen.