

Sermon
1 March 2015
West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

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Text: Genesis 6:9-14; 8:6-7 & 15-16; 9:8-16

Luke 8:22-25

Holy Communion

We all know the story of Noah and the ark. Even people who don't ever come to church, know the story of Noah and the ark.

And there are lots of well-known slogans based on this story, like:

- Noah didn't wait for his ship to come in, he built one.
- Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
- Remember that the ark was built by amateurs and the Titanic was built by professionals.
- And above all else... don't miss the boat.

On a serious note: I think that we can learn a lot from the story of Noah...

God looked down to the earth, and he saw that the whole earth was corrupt, that all the people were evil. In the passage just before the one we've read, it actually states that God was "grieved that he made people, and his heart was filled with pain."

The only person around who still believed in God, was Noah. So God told him to build a huge big boat, because he was going to send a flood to destroy everything and everybody on the earth.

And in Gen 6 we read that “Noah did everything just as God commanded him.”

That of course, doesn't mean that it was easy. Can you imagine what it must have felt like to build the ark? People most certainly thought that Noah was “aff his heed”.

Not a single cloud in the sky, and Noah was building a boat bigger than a house. Can you imagine how the people must have laughed at him? Mocked him? Brought their friends along to laugh at him and mock him?

Noah must have been *some guy* to just ignore them and carry on building, because nobody likes being laughed at; being made a fool of; being shut out. But Noah chose to rather listen to *God* than to these people.

Good choice, don't you think! Because in the end it turned out that Noah was right. The rain started, for 40 days and 40 nights, just like God said it would, and Noah and his family were safe.

But that's not what I want to talk about this morning.

Today I want to focus on the fact that after a very long time in that boat, Noah and his family set foot on dry land.

Have you noticed how many times things in the Bible happen for 40 days or 40 years?

The rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights in Noah's story;

Moses stayed on mount Sinai for 40 days to get the 10 commandments from God;

the Israelites had to travel through the desert for 40 years on their way to the promised land;

once there, the spies came back to their people after exploring the promised land for 40 days;

the prophet Elijah had to travel for 40 days and 40 nights to reach Mount Horeb, the mountain of God;

Jonah preached that in 40 days Nineveh will be overturned if the people didn't repent;

the devil tempted Jesus in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights...

In Biblical times, 40 was a symbolical reference to the "right amount of time." Like a *full* year consists of 4 seasons; and the 4 directions, North, East, South and West covers the *whole* earth – 40 was an indication of the proper amount of time something had to last.

So – this long explanation just to say that Noah and his family were in that ark for *as long as* God needed them to be there.

After the flood, it was now time for a new beginning.

And for this new beginning, God promised that he would be there for them – and every time they saw a rainbow, they should remember that God would never allow the whole earth to flood again.

In other words, they should never forget that God was in charge, and that he would take care of them.

Something else we need to remember when we read this story is that the people in Biblical times were very scared of water.

Remember – where they lived it was always warm and dry, so water became a symbol of chaos and evil, of everything they couldn't understand and were scared of.

And now God promised to keep the water at bay. He even went further than that by sending Jesus to earth, who, during a storm, told the wind and the waters to calm down - and they obeyed.

God is bigger than the things that scare us. He is in control of our lives, and he can bring an end to difficult times. But he will do this at the right time.



And the best example we have of this is Jesus.

You would think that after the flood people would live in close relation to God and do what was expected of them. But no. Before long, people started caring more about themselves than about God again, but because God promised to never wipe out all the people again, he decided to follow a different route this time. He sent his own son to take the punishment the self-righteous people deserved.

And he did that not only for them, but for all of us too. And that is what we remember in this time of Lent, and when we celebrate Holy Communion.

In the rainbow, God gives us the promise of hope, the promise of life; in Jesus, God gave us the promise of hope, the promise of everlasting life.

For a whole month now we have been talking about time here in church. About how important it is to prioritise, to make sure that you have time for God in your life.

Why? Because if you make sure that God is part of everything you do, you'll never lose perspective on life:

- Which means that if He tells you to build a boat on a sunny day, you'll be the one listening instead of laughing;
- Which means that if you find yourself on stormy waters, you won't panic, because you'll know that at any point during the storm Jesus can tell the wind and the water to subside and then just that will happen;
- Which means that you'll understand God will make things happen at the *right time*. In reality, 40 days and 40 nights pass much more quickly than you think it will.

When Noah and his family set foot on dry land, God gave them the opportunity to make a new beginning.

In Jesus Christ he did exactly same thing for all of us.

Every single morning, when you open your eyes, you get the opportunity to *choose* how you are going to spend your day. You can choose to put your life in God's hands, to let your day be ruled by God and not by your own will, and to never give up hope when things are tough, and when what you have to face is hard...

You can choose to see the black clouds and the rain, *or* you can choose to see the rainbow. Remember – we need sunshine *and* rain for a rainbow to appear in the sky.

Nobody's life can always be easy, but at least if you live in close relation to God, you'll know that when the storms come, you'll be one of the people in the boat, and not one of the people drowning.

So when you eat the bread and drink the wine this morning,
see the rainbow,
feel the hope,
grab the opportunity to make a new beginning,
because God is in control of your life – not only for 40 days and 40 nights, but forever.

Amen