

98-05-08a

The hymn we have just sung, The Solid Rock, is particularly appropriate, I think, as we begin to look at the biblical flood in Genesis, chapter 6 and following. And for our scripture reading this morning, we are going to look at a couple of passages that describe similar conditions to those that prevailed at the time when God brought the flood on the earth. Turn with me to the Psalms, Psalm 12.

Psalm 12 is dedicated to the chief musician on an eight-string harp, a psalm of David. The general rule of thumb is that the first 50 psalms are ascribed to David, and there are several others scattered through the remaining 100 psalms that are ascribed to him. But the first 50, any time you are in that section, you can figure it's a psalm of David.

Psalm 12 begins with an appeal. Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak idly, every one with his neighbor, with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

May the Lord cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks proud things, who have said, With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now I will arise, says the Lord. I will set him in the safety for which he yearns.

The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O Lord, you shall preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked prowl on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men.

Psalm 13, together with Psalm 14, these three psalms together continue this theme. They seem to be grouped together on purpose. How long, O Lord, David says in Psalm 13, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O Lord my God.

Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemies say I have prevailed against him, lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But I have trusted in your mercy. My heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me. You can see the movement in that particular psalm from verse one to verse six. He begins his meditations, how long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? And it seems to be, he seems to be in a state of confusion and uncertainty.

But as he dwells on the promises of God, on the plan of God, by the end of the psalm he

says, I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me. This is the effect that meditation on the word of God should have for us. You see the same thing in the previous psalm when he begins, help, Lord, for the godly man ceases.

But by verse seven, you shall keep them, O Lord, you shall preserve them from this generation forever. Meditating on the word of God should produce this kind of shift in perspective. It ought to comfort us.

It ought to encourage us. It ought to strengthen us in our faith in God. Now look at psalm fourteen.

This perhaps bears most directly on what we will see this morning in Genesis six. The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt.

They have done abominable works. There is none who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

They have all turned aside. They have together become corrupt. There is none who does good.

No, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call on the Lord? There they are in great fear, for God is with the generation of the righteous. You shame the counsel of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge.

Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion, when the Lord brings back the captivity of his people. Let Jacob rejoice, and Israel be glad. Psalm fourteen is quoted elsewhere in the Bible.

This theme is repeated, for example, in Psalm 53, where the same verses occur in another song. It's also referred to in Romans chapter three, where Paul quotes this in connection with the disobedience and unfaithfulness of believers. This passage is often appealed to as describing the depravity of unbelievers who are unable to look to God, unable to turn to God, unable to perform any good.

But notice carefully the vocabulary and the contrast that is illustrated in this psalm. The first verse says, the fool has said in his heart, there is no God. When it says, they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good, what do those phrases refer to? It refers back to the first subject introduced in the psalm, and that's the fool.

The category of fool, those who are foolish, the ones who say in their heart, there is no God, they are the ones who are corrupt, they are the ones who are doing these abominable works, they are the ones among whom there is not a single one that does

good. It's those who reject God. Apart from God, there can be no good, there can be no integrity, there can be no intrinsic merit of any sort.

The fool who says in his heart, there is no God, is further described as corrupt, abominable, and completely lacking good. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. And this is still referring to this category of fool.

You might think, well, it seems to me like he's looking down on the children of men, and that would include the entire human race. But notice the contrast as you continue. When it says that among these children of men that God is looking at, they have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt, there is none who does good, no not one, you have an echo of what was stated in the first verse.

And then look at verse 4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who are the workers of iniquity? Those who have just been described in the preceding three verses, who eat up my people as they eat bread. Now, if everyone in the human race is being lumped together as not doing good, having no knowledge, abominable, corrupt, and so forth, then who are these called my people in verse 4? There is a distinction being made between those who say in their heart, there is no God, and those who say in their heart, there is a God, I believe in Him, and I trust in Him. There is a clear contrast, the language of the psalm permits no other conclusion, if you are honest with it.

There are those who are my people, according to God, and those who are not. Those who are not God's people have utterly disregarded and departed from God and everything good. And they are the ones who have together become corrupt, they are the ones who can do no good, not a single one of them apart from God.

And they eat up God's people like they eat bread, and they do not call on the Lord. Now, God's people do call on the Lord, right? The psalmist here is speaking, David is speaking, he is not altogether corrupt and abominable and unable to do good. God has declared that he is righteous and that he is a man after God's own heart.

David says, I stand before God in my integrity and in my righteousness. I am blameless before God because of His cleansing power and His gracious forgiveness. So, this has been used as a proof text a lot of times to come and say, here is the total depravity of the entire human race, no one can do good, everyone is all included in this, and it is just not so.

And when you go over to Romans 3, as we have done, we see that same truth illustrated. There they are in great fear, for God is with the generation of the righteous. And we find out that these corrupt and abominable persecutors, the ones who eat up the people of God like they eat bread, part of their motivation is fear, because God is with the generation of the righteous.

And there is unexplainable preservation and there is unexplainable blessing on the people of God that these who attempt to consume them cannot comprehend, and it gives them, they are afraid. People fear what they do not understand. People fear what they cannot explain.

This is why you have all of these entertainment offerings on television having to do with ghost stories and crypt keepers and X-Files and all of these other bizarre supernatural themes. People have a combination of fear and fascination with the things that they do not understand. You shame the counsel of the poor, and this again is addressed to these who are in power, these who seek to control and consume the people of God.

You shame the counsel of the poor. These poor who are the people of God counsel to turn to God, counsel the things of God and the policies and the truth of God, and they are shamed by the fools who have no knowledge and who say there is no God and that these things have no value. We see this occurring in our culture, in our generation, and the past several generations in our country, where the value of parental training, the value of truth, the value of integrity has been set aside in favor of a floating system of convenience.

You shame the counsel of the poor, but the Lord is His refuge. And our faith in Him, our faith in Him, our faith in Him, our faith in Him, our faith in Him, our faith in Him, our faith in Him, our faith in Him. What I would like to remind us of is the fact that the bulk of the human race does not belong to the category that thinks about God, that acknowledges God, that worships God, or that has trust and confidence in God.

They are few and far between who can be called godly. Hopefully we are somewhere in that number. Hopefully we are on the narrow road, entering through the narrow gate that leads to life.

But we realize as we seek to travel that road that there are not going to be many at our side. We're not going to see many ahead of us. We're not going to see many behind us.

And I suspect that if you look around and find yourself in a stadium of thousands of people cheering and waving and saying, using holy language and so forth, it is not likely that that is in fact an expression of what it means to be on the narrow road. The godly man ceases. The faithful disappear from among the sons of men.

This was the situation in Noah's day. And as we turn back now to Genesis chapter six, we find that same contrast, the same opportunity has existed throughout human history, from the fall of Adam and Eve up through the present. We face a choice relative to the existence of God.

The sad thing is that even as believers, the majority of us do not wake up to the reality of God and to the necessity of living constantly aware of Him and His plan and His

purpose. We are constantly aware of ourselves, our existence, and our purposes. And it is only occasionally and fleetingly that we remember who we are and why we're here.

And I'm speaking generically of all believers in any given generation. The Bible says that this is so. The godly man ceases.

Even among believers, we don't remember our Creator. So in Genesis 6, we've seen that God had detailed a contingent of angels of heavenly creation to come down and to oversee the affairs of men. These sons of God were present among men in bodily form, just as the messengers of Genesis 17 who visit Abram and later Lot take human form.

Elsewhere in Scripture, you have these appearances, whether it's the angel of the Lord or quote-unquote a man, such as Jacob wrestles with or that appears to Joshua. And these are a group of unfallen angels initially who are communicating the Word of God. How did early man come to a knowledge of sacrifice, of atonement, of repentance, of the details accompanying those concepts, such as clean and unclean animals, what was proper and improper in terms of justice? These individuals, these heavenly creatures, came down and lived among men to serve that purpose.

We've seen the references to them in Peter and in Jude. Elsewhere in the Scriptures, we've spent some time in our Friday night studies looking at the Scriptures that talk about angelic involvement in human history. And we see that because they kept not their first estate, because they sinned in a similar fashion, the vocabulary and the sequence of actions we've seen is similar to what Eve did standing before the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

She looked, she saw that the fruit was tov, or good, and she partook of that fruit. The angels did the same thing. The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were tov, and they took, wise of all whom they chose.

The most significant objection to that understanding, and of course people have other understandings of the early part of Genesis 6. They say, well, these were the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain. These were simply rulers. The sons of God seems to occasionally denote princes or rulers, judges in the human realm.

But you can't make any sense of it. But the objection to it being angelic primarily centers around the idea that if the angels sinned in taking these wives, why is it that mankind and the animal kingdom on the earth suffers the judgment of God? These things seem to be linked. You have the early part of Genesis 6 where the sons of God take the daughters of men in marriage.

There are offspring from these marriages. Then God looks down and sees the utter corruption of the world and destroys it with a flood. And he says it's mankind that is evil and sinful.

Why doesn't he say, well, these nasty angels have done this terrible thing. I'm going to judge them. There's no further mention of judgment on the sons of God.

And this is a worthy observation to make. It is true, isn't it, that after the description of the actions of the sons of God, we find no further mention of it. It doesn't say that the flood wiped them out or wiped their offspring out.

There's no further mention of the Nephilim in this account. We find only one further reference to them later on in Numbers when the spies come back from the land. So how do we reconcile this observation? Well, we began to examine the answer to that last week in noting that these are proper marriages.

These are not rapes. This has occasionally been called the angelic infiltration, the genuine humanity of the human race. Then Christ could not come and be incarnate as a true man and so forth.

But this is not a forcible incursion. This is not a violent action that the sons of God engage in. They do it by the book, as it were.

These are proper marriages. And a proper marriage involves the consent, approval, and support of the bride's family. You remember what happened and what we will see later in Genesis when Jacob's daughter Dina, interestingly her name also is derived from the verb *din*, which means to judge.

You have Dan and Dina who are brother and sister in the family of Jacob. But she is raped by an outsider and you have the brothers Simeon and Levi who go out and wreak vengeance because of their sister Dina and the violation of her. This is not the case in Genesis chapter 6. You don't have this violent forcing of these women.

They voluntarily marry and their fathers and their brothers consent and accept something in exchange as far as a dowry. The language here is completely normal for a contracted marriage. And it is an expression of what is already in men's hearts.

We tend to think that an action constitutes a sin rather than the thinking behind it. Well, I wanted to commit some act of fornication but I dare not. I wanted to take this thing but there was something that held me back.

And Jesus pointed out that it is the thoughts and intents of the heart that constitute sin. And the fact that mankind so readily accepted these marriages and approved of them and participated in them is a reflection of something that had already gone wrong in the hearts of men. And this is what we find in verse 5 of Genesis 6. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Now we've just had four verses describing the intermarriage as men multiplied on the

earth, daughters were born to them, the angels intermarried with them and so forth. If this were the cause of the flood, if the angelic intermarriage was the nature of the flood, what would God be looking at and becoming upset, as it were, over in verse 5? The Lord saw that the marriages of the sons of God and the daughters of men were unholy in his sight and the offspring were unclean and were mixed species or some such thing. We would have some indication that the marriages were what really became a stench in God's nostrils but that's not the case.

What is it that causes God to act? What is it that comes before God and causes him to decree the flood? He saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. What was it that God wanted to multiply in the earth? What was it that God commanded to be fruitful and multiply in the earth? It was man, obedient man, man who is in relationship to God and who worships God and instead there is the multiplication of evil. Every intent of the plans of his heart is what this might literally be translated.

The thoughts of his heart here, the word thoughts means plan. This is something that is formed. It's the same word that is used when it says God formed man out of the dust of the ground.

It means to shape something, to create it in the mind and this is what we do when we plan, isn't it? We visualize the way something is going to go. If you are going to go out in the backyard and build a dog house, you visualize the size of your dog and how big his house needs to be, how big the doorway needs to be and you start to form a plan and you may draw a little sketch on the back of an envelope and write down some dimensions and say this thing that will soon be a reality built out of lumber and if you are really kind to your dog you might put shingles on it and put some padding inside and orient it so that the opening doesn't face the prevailing direction of the cold winds that blow. But we form something in our mind and then we go ahead and commit it in reality.

And God looks down at man and what is he seeing? He doesn't say he saw that the violence was great and blood was crying out from the ground like that of Abel. God sees the origin and the source of these things, that there is no hope of righteousness, there is no hope of relationship with God because every plan of the heart of man, his intents, his motivations, his goals in the heart before he ever walks out of the door and does anything is only evil continually. It is a corruption.

We are going to see that a way of translating this brings out a word play in the Hebrew that helps us understand this idea. The idea here is of ruin. Let me read you a more literal translation beginning in chapter 6 verse 9. This is the family history of Noah.

Noah was a righteous man. He was blameless among his contemporaries or he was righteous in his generations. Noah walked with God and of course that links him in a very strong way with Enoch that we saw in the last chapter.

Noah was a just man. The word for just there is tzaddik. Tzedek is the classic Hebrew word for righteous.

We tend to say somebody is good in English. If you wanted to say somebody is a good man in Hebrew you would use the word tzaddik. You wouldn't use the word tov.

Tov has more the idea of good in the sense of beauty or of quality of a thing or a circumstance. When you talk about people and you say that they are good you use the word tzedek or tzaddik in this case. Blameless in his generations.

This word in Hebrew is very interesting. It is very rarely used of people. It is primarily used in the law in Leviticus to describe the animal that is qualified for sacrifice.

It means without blemish. It means without intermixture or without corruption. Blameless is the word that is used to describe the lamb for the Passover that is analyzed for four days to be sure that it is without spot and without blemish.

It is notable that this word, which is so rarely used of people, is used of Noah here to describe him in the context of his generation. The debate has raged over whether this is his genealogy, his lineage. Does it mean that there was no angelic intermarriage in his background? The language here that is the same as what is used for the sacrificial animal sort of lends support to that view.

At the same time, in this generation that God has just described as having every intent of the thoughts of the heart, only evil continually, Noah stands out. We get the idea that this is intended to be a double entendre and that both ideas are in view. Noah is a righteous man and he is blameless in his generations.

This statement is made of him twice. Once the generations is in the singular and once in the plural. Noah walked with God.

Noah begot three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now look at verse 11. The earth also was corrupt before God, it says in the New King James, and the earth was filled with violence.

So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. You notice the recurrence of the word corrupt in verse 11, verse 12, and we're going to see that it also occurs in verse 13 when God says to Noah, the end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them, and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. This entire section from verse 5 through verse 13 hammers on one theme and one contrast, doesn't it? The entire earth is corrupt, it's evil, the plans that are formed in the recesses of the heart are only evil continually, and the earth is corrupt before God.

A good translation of the Hebrew word here for corrupt is ruined. This is the verb shakat,

S-H-A-C-H-A-T, and a good way of translating this would be the earth was ruined in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. God saw the earth, it was really ruined, because all flesh had ruined its way on the earth.

The reason that ruin or ruination is a good translation of this verb is because it is used again by God for what he will do to the earth in verse 13. God said to Noah, the end of all flesh has come before me, or has been determined by me, because the earth is full of violence because of them, so I am about to ruin them with the earth. The very same verb used in verse 11 and verse 12, God uses of himself, the last verb in verse 13, I will destroy them, I will ruin them, I will shakat them.

The sequence here is critical. We've talked occasionally about the view of reformed theology in terms of depravity and so on. I should point out, by the way, as I make reference to reformed theology, I am referring primarily to the distinctives of reformed theology, not to the entire system.

There is a great deal of overlap. People who hold to and preach and teach reformed theology have much in common with genuine, true biblical theology. They believe in the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the role of the church, the commands of God, the images in the Old Testament reflected in the New, and so forth.

There is a great deal that we have in common. Do not think that because something is found in reformed theology it must necessarily be wrong. When we speak of reformed theology, at least when I speak of it, I am referring primarily to its distinctives.

These are the self-described distinctives that the proponents of that view put forward. That's primarily the five emphases that we do not share. Total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints.

When I talk about reformed theology, that is generally what I am referring to, these things that are outside what the Scripture teaches. This is one of those cases where we see the Scriptures teaching something that reformed theology can't wrap its mind around. What is the sequence here? Man on the earth has ruined his way.

Man is responsible. Even the form of the verb here, the hithpahel, is a reflexive stem. It means that you do something for yourself.

If you say, I hit myself, that's reflexive. Or, if I cause myself to go, it's a causative or reflexive stem. And so you have here the earth ruined in God's sight.

This is a passive. This is a nipahl in Hebrew. The earth has been ruined by something in God's sight.

This first occurrence in verse 11 when it says the earth was ruined in God's sight, something ruined it. It didn't ruin itself. It doesn't say God ruined it.

It has been ruined by some agent that has not yet been explicitly named. And the earth is filled with violence. God saw the earth.

It really was ruined. Why? Because all flesh had ruined its way on the earth. The reason the earth is corrupted, the reason the earth is filled with violence and has been corrupted is because flesh has ruined its own way on the earth.

This is a reminder to us of the principle of both blessing by association and cursing by association. We think, well, the things that go on in my own mind, as long as they don't leak out in action, as long as no one can see them, as long as they're not observed and don't have any outward manifestation, they're harmless. People live great fantasy lives of various kinds.

And they think, well, since it's just a fantasy, it's okay. I've even read about this thing called controlled dreaming. This is something that psychologists occasionally try to use for people who have mental problems.

They say, well, you know, you have these nightmares, you have these dreams. They've even made movies about this where people operate in a dream world. I think some of the Freddy movies had something to do with this, where Freddy comes while you're asleep and so forth.

There's a movie called Dreamscape and a few others that explore this idea that there is a reality in dream world somehow, but that it may or may not connect with the real world. Controlled dreaming is a technique whereby psychologists tell people, you know, you can occasionally, while you're in the midst of a dream, you will realize that you are dreaming. And they say, you know, this is your chance to sort of live out your fantasies.

This is a chance to take control. And if you're in love with somebody and you're fantasizing about them and it's illegitimate, it's illicit, it would constitute adultery or fornication in the real world, well, you can live this out in your dream and it'll be okay because it's just a dream. You can do anything you want to in dream world because it's not reality.

And the problem with this is it completely ignores and in fact rebels against and rejects the idea that we're responsible for our desires. We're responsible for our thoughts and intents. And it's not okay because you're dreaming to go ahead and murder or go ahead and fornicate or go ahead and commit adultery to live out some fantasy because quote, it's only a dream.

Because it is the thought and intent of the heart that is the issue, not the expression of it in the real world. And this is one of the places where genuine Christianity is completely at odds with human thinking. So when flesh ruins its way, when the thoughts and intents of the heart, when the plans that are formed in the mind are evil, self-centered, godless,

continually, what happens? Not only has flesh ruined its way, but the earth is corrupted.

The presence of those people with those hearts corrupts the earth. God begins by noting in verse 11 that the earth is ruined. The place that God created and saw that it was good in Genesis chapter 1 and Genesis chapter 2, this beautiful garden environment that God created in Eden, man through his fall, through his knowledge of good and evil and his pursuit of the evil, has corrupted this good thing that God made.

God made it good. Man, by man's intents, man's thoughts, has corrupted it. And we do this all the time.

We take the New Testament church and by our thoughts and our intents, we corrupt it. We call it good when it's not. We call it godly when it isn't.

We call it righteous when it is wicked. We call it fruit when it is chaff. The earth was ruined in God's sight and the earth was filled with violence.

This word for violence, by the way, we tend to think of hacking and slashing with machetes and violent bloodshed when we think of violence. But this word violence is used in a lot of ways in the Old Testament. It is used for oppression of the poor.

It is used for injustice in the courts. It is used for moral turpitude, injustice, unrighteousness, policy-wise. It doesn't mean you have to go out and violently murder or violently break in and steal or violently overcome someone.

This has the idea of the exercise of force, of levering people into evil. And the earth is full of this. Men are forcing each other.

Men are maneuvering. It's like politics. There is a very ugly, dirty, shameful side to politics that we generally only see the ragged edges of in the media and in the press.

You hear someone initially speak out against what is wrong, against what is evil in the country, and then suddenly that voice falls silent, or its impact and the range in which it is heard is greatly reduced. Why is that? Because somebody gets to them. Somebody gets something on them and says, you be quiet or else.

And this unfortunately happens even in our own generation. This is violence. Squelching, suppressing the truth, suppressing justice, perverting justice, calling that which is evil good and calling that which is good evil.

God saw the earth in verse 12, it was really ruined. Because all flesh had ruined its way on the earth. Those thoughts and intents of the heart are the source and the core of what spreads out into the lives of those people and even further into the earth.

Why does God have to destroy the animals in the flood? It is a picture, it's a representation of cursing by association. Man is perverting his way in his heart, which

perverts his actions, which corrupts and perverts the world. And even the animal kingdom suffers.

Why are there thorns and thistles and briars? Why are there carnivorous animals? Watch PBS for any length of time and you see these film documentaries. It's amazing to me how they get this footage. They use infrared cameras and film and so forth.

I saw one this past week on crocodiles and for a long time nobody knew what crocodiles did at night because if you shine a light they don't act normal. But they've got infrared lights and cameras out there and showed crocodiles who at night when there's drought and there aren't enough animals to snare and eat on the shores of the bodies of water there, they actually eat fish. Nobody knew that crocodiles ate fish before.

They eat each other. They eat each other's young and so on. They find this out by looking at night.

But why is there this cannibalism, if you will, in the animal kingdom where one animal eats another? We know that in the perfect environment of the pre-fall garden and in the perfect environment of the millennium there is no such carnivorous relationship between the animals. The lion lays down with the lamb and so forth. It's because of us.

The thoughts of Adam's heart, the thoughts of Eve's heart corrupted the entire planet. And God sees this as a ripple effect that has gone to a gross level here. Why are we dwelling on this point? Because it matters.

It matters in our lives. Our thoughts, our fantasies, the plans that are formed in our minds make a difference. It doesn't matter if you think it, but you never do it.

That's what we like to believe. That's what humanity wants to believe. That's what the secular worldview says.

You can think it, but as long as you don't do it, it's okay. The Bible says when you encourage and when you dwell on corrupt thinking, it has an effect. It corrupts your environment.

It corrupts your actions. It fills the earth with violence. It promotes self-centeredness.

It promotes an alternate worldview that doesn't reflect the truth of God. It matters what we think. Our thought life is at the center of God's purpose.

And it is at that level that we need transformation. Why does Romans 12 say, be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind? It doesn't say be transformed by the renewing of your habits or by the renewing of your actions or by the renewing of your activities. It's the heart that needs transformation.

There's only one power that can do that. We get frustrated when we try to do it

ourselves. It is only the transforming power of God that can make that change.

So when God sees the earth and sees the ruination of it, he says, I am about to ruin them along with the earth. Man harbors evil in his heart and it ruins the earth. God says, I'm going to ruin man and I'm going to ruin the earth.

And despite what Reformed theology is fond of touting, that while God isn't up there responding to man, that's blasphemy, that God bases his actions on the actions of men. What does this passage tell us? God looks at man and sees what man is doing and when it's evil, God responds. God says, because you have done this, I am going to act.

Because you have ruined yourself and ruined the earth, I am going to ruin you with the earth. There is cause and effect. There is action and there is response on the part of God and there's just no getting around it.

God did not ruin man. Man ruined himself and man ruins the earth and God comes in in judgment and discipline and holds man accountable for that ruination because he had an alternative. He had an option.

It's the option that Noah takes. Noah is a righteous man. He is tzaddik.

He is blameless. Not because Noah never sinned. It doesn't mean Noah never yelled at Mrs. Noah or never hauled off and whacked one of his sons and later regretted his anger or his haste or his impatience or any of the other sins that he probably committed.

But he was blameless in the same way that David is blameless. He claimed the cleansing forgiveness of God. And when God forgives, as we saw in our scripture reading last time, your sins are separated as far as the east is from the west and you are left in the wake of that forgiveness blameless, upright, righteous.

We magnify our sins too much when we think that they linger after the forgiveness of God. The power of God is much greater in forgiveness than our power is in sinning. And when God forgives, you are utterly, totally, absolutely cleansed and forgiven.

That sin is expunged and there's nothing left. The only way that sin can have any further power is if we drag it back up like a buried bone and try to chew on it again. Noah availed himself of that grace.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. They wrote a song about that that Ernie Ford sang. He was righteous.

He was blameless. He walked with God. It doesn't take a lot of human ingenuity or human effort to simply walk, does it? It's an ability we're all born with.

Anybody can walk. It's where you decide to walk that makes a difference. Noah chose to walk with God.

And because of that, he is righteous and he is blameless. The rest of the earth has ruined itself, ruined its way on the earth. This is a good place to pause and take our break as we are on the brink of hearing what God has to say and what God is about to do based on what man has done in the earth.

Let's pause here and take a break.