

Imagine your parents have a priceless Ming Dynasty vase. You are playing at home and you knock the vase over and it is broken in pieces. What are you going to do? Can you fix it? You get out the super glue and try to piece it all together, but it's broken. It will never be the same. Or perhaps you hide the pieces and hope they won't notice. That's not going to work is it?! No, you've got a real problem. What will God do with a broken world?

### 1. Sinful people

Peter Dutton (the Minister for Immigration) has recently visited a refugee camp in Jordan. He said it had a deep impact on him to see the distress there, but the people in that refugee camp are only a small fraction of the 50 million displaced people around the world at the moment.

In the sermon two weeks ago we saw that human society is broken. Last week on TV there was an item on a doctor who had post-traumatic stress disorder. He had treated the injured and dying after the Bali bombing. This one event had had a deep impact on him and affected his health. But the Bali bombing is only one event in many traumatic incidents around the world.

If to see just one small part of the world's suffering can have such a devastating effect, can we ever take in the totality of the world's distress? Think of the effect of the many wars, the crime and corruption, relationship breakdown, and all the other evils of this world. It truly is a broken world.

In Genesis 6:5 we read, *"The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time."* *"...every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time."* This is a devastating assessment of the human condition! Note that the problem lies in the human heart. Since Adam and Eve disobeyed God our hearts have been affected. We seek to control our own lives and do what we want rather than seeking to honour and obey God. Like a bowling ball has a bias so it doesn't go straight, we have a bias away from God.

Some people do very good things but they still have this bias. My children both had chicken pox. One had a pox on her foot and 1 or 2 others. The other had pox everywhere; body, face and inside his mouth. Outwardly one looked far worse than the other but they both had the same disease.

No matter how good we appear to be on the outside we all have the disease called sin, this bias away from God. In Genesis 1:31, at the end of creation it says, *"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."* Now it says, *"The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth."* (6:5) Sin had come into the world and affected the human race.

Human hearts had been affected by sin but this quickly showed itself in violent behaviour. *"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. <sup>12</sup> God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways."* (6:11-12)

Watch the news on TV any day and you will see some of these effects but the totality of the violence in the world is too much to comprehend. Not only does this sin and violence cause human suffering, it is an offence against a holy God. It is rebellion. A holy and just God must punish sin. He cannot just ignore it. *"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.'"* (6:13) The flood is God's judgment on human sin.

## Humans can be Redeemed

### Genesis 6:9-22 (6:5-9:17)

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When we tell the story to children we concentrate on God rescuing Noah, how he built the ark and gathered all the animals two by two, and that's appropriate. But we must not miss the fact that this is against the background of God's judgment.

God sends the flood to destroy those who have sinned. We need to see that sin is serious and that God will judge sin. Salvation is all about being rescued from God's judgement.

This is a very black picture but there is a light shining in this darkness.

#### 2. A righteous man

*"Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God."* (6:9) God has his man in the midst of this rebellion. Are you concerned about how few people believe? Do you look at all the people at your work, or in your family, or among your neighbours and see that there are not many Christians?

Remember Elijah after contest on Mount Carmel. Queen Jezebel was after him to kill him. Elijah says to God, "I am the only one left who is faithful." Do you sometime feel as if you are the only one swimming against the flow like Elijah? But God says to Elijah, "I have kept 7000 people faithful." He was not alone.

Isaiah lived in another evil age when God was about to send his people into exile, but God has kept a holy remnant. In every age God has his people. Here it is only one family, but God will work through them.

Noah is described as *"righteous and blameless"*. It doesn't mean that he was sinless but he was one who faithfully served God and was obedient to him. *"...he walked faithfully with God."* As we read the story we are struck by his obedience to God's instructions. Several times we are told, *"Noah did everything just as God commanded him."*

Imagine someone building a giant boat in their back yard and gathering all those animals when there was no sign of clouds in the sky. Think of the neighbours' comments!! But Noah does exactly what God tells him. He is obedient to God's commands.

However the hero of the story is not Noah but God himself.

#### 3. A saving God.

What is your idea of God? Is he a God to be feared? A God who will throw a flood or some other disaster at you if you put a step out of line?

In one church we had a woman who scratched her car. She said, "That was God's punishment because I did something wrong." Is God like that? Is he like some heavenly policeman just waiting to give you ticket? While God is just and needs to punish sin, throughout the Bible we see that he is a God who provides a way of rescue. He longs to restore the broken relationship with people. Not only to save them from his judgment but to draw people back into his love and blessing.

So here God gives instruction to Noah. God takes the initiative to save Noah and his family from flood. When they are all in the ark it says, *"Then the Lord shut him in."* (7:16) God keeps them safe. God sends the flood and all life on earth is destroyed but 8:1 is a turning point; *"But God*

*remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.” (8:1)*

God ‘remembering’ doesn’t mean he had forgotten. It means this was God’s time to act on the basis of his promise to Noah. God sends a wind to remove the water. The water gradually recedes and Noah is able to leave to ark. It is like a new creation. The wind is like the breath of God over the water at the first creation. Then, like before, *“God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.’” (9:1)* God repeats the command given at the creation. God makes his covenant with Noah restoring God’s relationship with him and blessing him.

#### **4. Looking forward**

We would love to read, “And they all lived happily ever after” but this isn’t quite like the first creation. God says, *“Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.” (8:21)* Even though God promises not to flood the earth again he notes that human hearts are still inclined to evil, *“...every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.”* Sin is still there in the human heart. That bias still remains. The rest of the Old Testament confirms this; as God works with his people they constantly fail him.

Here as God speaks to Noah about his covenant he tells Noah how he will deal with cases of murder, *“I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed.” (9:5-6)* And soon after this we read about human rebellion at the Tower of Babel.

No the flood doesn’t solve everything. It really looks forward to God’s saving actions in the New Testament that will deliver us from his judgment.

Think again of the awful depth and extent of human sin and evil, and then remember, *“He (Jesus) himself bore our sins in his body on the cross.” (1 Peter 2:24)* All the sin from Adam onwards was laid on God’s Son. Such is God’s love for his wayward people. *“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.” (John 3:16)*

By faith we are redeemed, forgiven, made God’s children now, blessed and given a life with God for ever. God is a saving God who longs to rescue people from judgment.

But God is also dealing with the problem of our heart. God is changing our hearts by his Holy Spirit fulfilling his promise; *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:26)* God has begun that process of change by giving us his Spirit. One day the transformation will be complete when we stand in his presence. *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)* We will be made like Christ. Our hearts will be renewed.

In the story of Noah we see that the problem of human nature is sin, their rebellion against God, this bias away from God. The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart. We see that God is a just and holy God who must punish sin but that he is by nature a loving God who longs to save people and restore them to a relationship with himself. We see it in the way God rescues

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Noah, but above all in the way he sent his only Son to die for us. The only solution to the human problem is found in Jesus.