

“But God Remembered...”

He Hasn't Forgotten Us

(preached 8/22/21)

Please turn to *Genesis 8*.

Last Sunday we had a Water Baptism where 11 people came forward to be fully immersed in the waters of Little Niagara and dedicate their lives to Christ.

ADDISON FLOOD. Only 3 days later flood waters would come from nowhere and immersed our community. I often see warnings of potential flash floods on my weather app and I admit, I've learned to ignore them. Most of the time they don't happen so my brain has already registered the warning as a non-threat and promptly passes over the warnings.

VIDEOS & PICTURES. Whether in person or via video/pictures, we watched helplessly as the waters swept in and overflowed. I received a call from someone who lives near the Canisteo who said some of our farm equipment parked there was in danger. I saw a couple live videos from people I knew who taped the waters breach roads and dyke's and flow into their homes. Our family took a drive the next morning and we saw sheds, cars, propane tanks, and other debris everywhere.

DESTRUCTION AFTERMATH. Now that its over, what it seems like we're left with is destruction with lots of cleaning and repairs to be made. Some people's homes were utterly destroyed and they made need to wait weeks, perhaps months, for insurance or FEMA to finally kick in. Some have no assistance of any kind coming!

We might ask “where is God?”

- Where was He in the time right before the flood, as the waters were gathering unbeknownst to us and we thought we were dwelling in peace and safety?
- Where was He as the waters rolled in destroying everything in its wake?
- Where was He as people watched helplessly as their homes, crops, cars, and property were carried away?
- Where is He now in the devastating remains? The mud, debris, destruction, and aftermath?

FORGOTTEN US? Speaking from personal experience it seems that, during times like these, God has forgotten us. We're not hearing His voice, feeling His love, or seeing His plan. We hear good things in the Bible and at Church how the Lord never leaves or forsakes us and is always with and in us. Our minds record this doctrine and agree, but our hearts don't feel His nearness.

BAPTISM, FLOOD, CONNECTION? In my own contemplations of the events this last week, starting with our own Water Baptism to entire local towns experiencing a different type of Baptism, I asked God to connect them all. There was one more thing I didn't tell you about: I had previously scheduled a private Baptism with a dad and his two sons on the DAY of the flood. I cannot help but think none of this was coincidence.

ASKED GOD? GEN 8. When I reached out to the Lord He directed me to Genesis 8. In the previous 2 chapters of Genesis, a flood devastated the entire planet. Not only did rain fall for the first time ever, but the Bible records that the “fountains of the deep” opened up which means that water began to spout forth from the ground like a volcano.

FEW LIVED. Only Noah, his family, some animals of every species were preserved...everything and everyone else was wiped out. Noah had brothers who weren't on the Ark...which means they perished.

- It rained for an additional 40 days after they entered the Ark, and they floated on the flood waters for 150 days plus.

TERROR & HARDSHIP. Imagine the terror and hardship of their ordeal from beginning to end. There's no doubt they had faith in the Lord and His promise to preserve them. Yet I can only wonder if fear, awe, and shock came upon them when “the end” finally came. Being told something is one thing—when it comes and we are going through it is another.

SHOCK & AWE. If we read of the horrifying events of Matthew 24 in a time of *peace and security* we might say “wow!” and move on. Yet when wars, rumors, earthquakes, pestilences, and natural disasters begin to happen the experience of the same can shock even a veteran Christian.

PLENTY OF TIME. God gave Noah plenty of warning and there was no doubt he shared everything with his family. They all knew and it drove them to complete the Ark...some Bible Scholars say it took nearly 100 years to complete. The day finally arrived when the Ark was done and God miraculously brought the animals, 2 x2, from the forest to enter. That must have been quite the sight! Then the Lord told Noah & his family to enter and shut the massive door.

WERE THEY AFRAID? Rain had never fallen on the earth up until that point. Noah & his family were used to clear sunny skies so I imagine that when they saw black storm clouds sweep across the sky, thunder begin to rumble, and lightning flash they might have thought God Himself had shown up. When the rain began to pelt down, the rivers & lakes overflow quickly, did they become afraid and tremble? When water began to boil up out of the ground did their mouths drop open in awe?

HARROWING! I think the most harrowing part would have been when the waters finally lifted the Ark off the ground and the waves began to buffet them about—a new experience for all of them. *Would the Ark hold? Did waves crash over the sides?* Their spirits were full of faith, but I can imagine their stomachs churned the entire time!

ENDURED MUCH. Even after the waters stopped increasing, there was 40 straight days of rain. Going out on the deck would mean getting soaked. Imagine taking care of that many animals? Feeding them, shoveling manure, and the smell? Picture being cooped up with your family, with no where to go...all this they endured for 150 days plus!

If you and I were in their positions, would it seem as though God had turned His back? The Scripture doesn't record that God spoke to them or gave any sort of sign during the 150+ days. They woke every day to the same thing: they were the only humans on the planet, everything wiped out, on a smelly ship full of animals that needed daily care. And when they went out on deck it was the same: water, water, everywhere.

And then this happened:

Genesis 8:1-5 (ESV)

¹ But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.

² The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained,

³ and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated,

⁴ and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

⁵ And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

God remembered them. The word for “remember” does NOT imply that God forgot about them or was ignoring them on purpose. The translation of the word is fascinating—it means to MARK something, to record it, and its an act of burning incense.

It's predetermined and programmed ahead of time.

LUNCH BELL RANG EVERYDAY. I worked at a factory in Dunkirk once and the lunch hour was marked by a bell that would ring at the same time everyday, alerting us to stop work and head for the break room. The lunch bell was predetermined and programmed to ring at noon every day...the people in charge didn't need to “remember.”

GOD HAD ALREADY DECIDED. In the case of Noah & His family, God had already decided ahead of time how long the flood would last. He'd already programmed the exact day and hour when, as it states in verse 1, the wind would blow and the waters would begin to recede. He'd already marked the precise moment when, in verse 2, the rain would stop and the fountains of the deep would be stopped.

In other words, when God “remembers” us He already decided—ahead of time—not just when help would come but that it **WOULD come.**

For every disaster we face—every single one—God programs His help into it.

HE WILL BE THERE. For every calamity we’re going through whether the aftermath of a flood, or the deep waters of trouble, depression, anxiety, and conflict, the Lord has already decided ahead of time that He will be there for us.

He’s not like us. Human individuals and organizations don’t decide to help us ahead of the fact and even after we appeal to them, they might say no. The closest we come is with insurance companies and the reason many of us feel secure when we have _____ insurance, is they guarantee certain coverage for certain situations before the fact. Then again, don’t we often battle them too? I recently filed a claim with my insurance company that they declined and many feel the rug pulled out from under their feet when the same happens to them.

NO CONTEMPLATION NECESSARY. God isn’t like that. We don’t boldly approach the throne of grace to ask for something God isn’t already aware of AND has already planned for. When we petition our Lord He doesn’t sit there and contemplate our request and we’re not waiting for Him to make up His mind.

I say to you again: ***the word “remember” means God has already decided on the help He’s going to give and He’s already written it into our destiny.***

NOT ALWAYS WHAT WE THOUGHT. Let me be clear: that help isn’t always exactly what we requested. It doesn’t always come in the form we were thinking and hoping it would. Yet the Word of God is clear: ***the Lord has already marked us to receive His aid.***

ISAIAH TOUGH AT FIRST. The Book of Isaiah is a tough read...at first. God starts it out laying the smack down upon His people who have turned away from Him. Yet later on His tune changes as He begins to tell them about His coming Kingdom and His Son, the Messiah. Chapter 42, verses 1-4 spell out that a day will come when Messiah arrives and....

Isaiah 42:1-4 (ESV)

¹ Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

² He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;

³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will

faithfully bring forth justice.

⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

JESUS! Jesus had the Holy Spirit in Him! Jesus will bring complete justice to all nations through His work on the Cross.

Verses 2-3: Jesus will be humble at His first coming.

Verse 4: He will go all the way to the Cross and won't waiver. He'll complete the work His Father sent Him to do.

THE COMING OF MESSIAH JESUS IS GOD REMEMBERING HIS PEOPLE.

PEOPLE LANGUISHING. There was 400 years of silence between Malachi, the last book of the OT, and the coming of Christ. Fact is the people had languished for 4000 years ever since Adam disobeyed in the Garden.

- Constantly trying to tread water in the flood of iniquity and sin that plagued their lives.
- They were continually overwhelmed and carried away by the waves of God's wrath that came upon them over the centuries, sometimes to the point of the entire nation being taken into slavery.
- They were like people watching helplessly as their crops, possessions, and even homes were being swept away before their eyes.

Did the Lord know this was going to happen? Yes. Did He realize His people were like sheep without a shepherd and really needed one? Yes. And He'd promised them, centuries ahead of time, that He was sending the best aid possible: Christ Jesus.

PREDETERMINED. Jesus was preprogrammed by God to show up from the very beginning.

- When God wrote the plan for all of humanity and what would happen to us, Jesus was the keynote part of said plan.
- He didn't just send Christ—John 3:16 says He GAVE Christ to us. Father God remembered us.

REST OF CHAP 42. The rest of Isaiah 42 talks about things Messiah will do and that, when He comes, the nations will rejoice, sing praises, and give thanks!

Isaiah 43, in my view, is Jesus speaking directly to His people. Listen to what He says:

Isaiah 43:1-3 (ESV)

¹ But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

People ask “why does God allow terrible things like floods to happen?”

I would like to ask an alternate question, one that places emphasis on the goodness of God rather than perceived neglect: ***why does God factor in His aid, His help, and His restoration ahead of time?***

CARING PARENT. Let me pose it another way. Your daughter wants to move in with a guy she just meant on the internet, and she sells everything she owns to go be with him. You immediately prepare a room in your house in case things don't work out so she'll have a place to lay her head and food on the table. You do this because you love her and therefore you take preemptive action so that she'll have a soft place to fall.

FATHER KNOWS & HAS PREPARED! Whether it's a flood of our own making or one that flashed upon us suddenly, our loving Father knew ahead of time and—please listen—He's already arranged for aid. ***Notice in the verses above Father DIDN'T say we could avoid the raging waters or the flames!***

WHEN WE PASS THROUGH.... He said WHEN we pass through the waters and the raging rivers...which means we're in them. WHEN were walking through the fire...He won't let it consume us. Our Father isn't just watching, He knows everything ahead of time and He's prepared a table for us already.

ZACCHAEUS. Consider this: we all know that Zacchaeus was short...really short. I'm not picking on him, Luke pointed it out on purpose! He needed Jesus...I mean we all do, yeah...but Zach needed to see Jesus. More importantly, Jesus needed to see Zach. Luke records that a big crowd had surrounded the Lord and Zach couldn't see...so he climbed a tree and that's when Jesus invited Himself over for dinner and Zach was Saved!

REMEMBERED. Jesus REMEMBERED Zach and years before, made sure that tree was planted in that spot so that at the right time, short Zach could climb it and have the Messiah Himself in his home that very evening!

RACHEL. When Jacob first meant Rachel it was love at first sight...but it would be 14 years later until he could marry her. Through some crafty maneuvering on her father Laban's part, Jacob marries his older daughter Leah first and then Rachel 7 years later. Even after there was another problem: Rachel wasn't conceiving kids. Please remember Jacob was renamed Israel

and would go on to have a passel of kids who would become the tribes of Israel! Leah was bearing children, but Rachel was striking out.

REMEMBERED HER. Yet what had God promised? Just as He had promised Noah that the flood would go away and just as He promised Israel their Messiah would come, He'd told Jacob he would have enough sons to form the 12 tribes plus the Levites and then one more. At the right time, this happened:

Genesis 30:22-24 (ESV)

²² Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

²³ She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach."

²⁴ And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!"

GREATEST SON. Joseph would go on to be the most well known son of Jacob, the one God wrote most about in the Bible, and the one who most closely represented Jesus! Had God "forgotten" about Rachel? Did He suddenly do a V-8 smack to His own forehead and say "oh! That's right! I said Rachel would have kids too! I almost forgot!"

No. He'd planned from the beginning it would be this way.

SLAVES IN EGYPT. The Israeli people were slaves in Egypt for nearly 400 years, toiling their lives away. Then this happened:

Exodus 2:23-25 (ESV)

²³ During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.

²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

²⁵ God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

GOD REMEMBERED ISRAEL. God heard their groaning and had compassion for His people, yes. ***At the same time the deliverance He'd already written into their plan had finally come and He would work it through Moses.*** God carefully planned the entire thing, even to the point of Moses real mom sending him down the river in a basket to be raised as Egyptian royalty. When God made the covenant with Abe, Isaac, and Jacob He also wrote in the birth of Moses and the role he would play.

WE "REMEMBER" TOO. You and I are also created by God to REMEMBER. Not being Him, the process has one more step: ***the Holy Spirit brings the pre-programmed things of Jesus to our spirit as divine revelation.***

He does so at the appointed time so that we will take ACTION.

The action can be taken in our own lives or that of another.

ROLL OUR EYES. When reading the Gospels, for example, it's easy for us to look upon the disciples and roll our eyes not understanding why they didn't understand that Jesus needed to die on the Cross, and also that He would be resurrected 3 days later.

PALM SUNDAY. Yet John speaks directly to this several times in his gospel. Right after the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Passover, which we call Palm Sunday, John says this:

John 12:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.

DIDN'T UNDERSTAND YET. Consider that verse carefully. *Jesus planted the seeds, or pre-programmed, them ahead of time by saying certain things to them that they DIDN'T understand with their hearts and minds.*

- Despite this lack of comprehension, the seed was planted and lay hidden underneath the earth of their spirits waiting for the right time....

RESURRECTION CAUSED REMEMBRANCE. SEEDS. When Jesus walked out of the tomb and met up with all of them, they REMEMBERED. In the spirit, Jesus spoke to seeds He planted in their spirits with the same raise the dead power that He did with Lazarus. He said "come out!" to those seeds and remember: seeds must die first and go through their own resurrection before they sprout. As soon as they heard His voice, they came alive...and the disciples REMEMBERED.

"Remembering" inspired the disciples to overcome their fear of arrest & death, and boldly step into the limelight to share the Gospel and proclaim the name of Jesus!

IT MOTIVATED THEM TO DISTRIBUTE FOOD AND GOODS TO THE POOREST AMONG THEM!

THINK BACK.... Think back right now on the last time you were slammed with a revelation from God. When the appointed time came for you and realized why all those things needed to happen for this moment to come about.

- For you to receive the wisdom you got in that moment, life-shifting knowledge that drew you closer to the Lord and refined your character to be more like that of Christ.
- For you to be motivated to step up and meet the needs of another.

You have more of those seeds in you right now, waiting to hear the voice of Jesus call out to them. After 400 years of slavery in Egypt the people cried out to God and He heard them...remembered the covenant He made with their fathers. He made His own seeds of revelation come alive in Moses first, then everyone else, and they were part of an amazing move of God.

Let's call out to Him right now and ask Him to awaken those seeds He's planted in us! He has not forgotten us!