

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

July 26, 2026 *"The first stories. What can the first stories in Genesis tell us about God and ourselves?" "The promise of Noah"*

I Intro.

Summer is winding down. And soon, things will be cranking back up. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. This is our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family. If there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

We're in the final Sunday in our series *"First Stories: The first four stories in Genesis"*. We have to be careful of getting bogged down in trying to find the specific historicity of these four first stories we're covering in Genesis. We need to learn to dig deeper to see what these stories are trying to tell us about who God is. And frame these as a history of God revealing himself to his people. We want to avoid the questions; **Is this really true? If so, how did it actually happen?** Those aren't interesting questions. Engaging those questions won't call us to live a specific way. We can hit the details, because those are important in revealing truths. But more importantly; **What do these stories teach us about the nature of God? Who he is. Especially; What call do these stories make on how we live our lives?** The first week we talked about Adam and Eve. Hiding from God and him seeking us. The second week we did the story of Cain and Abel. incorporating spiritual practices in your life. Last week we talked about the fill-in son...Seth, and growing our relationship with God from the rules to a personal relationship that allows God to use us no matter what. Today– the promise of Noah.

III Sunday.

I think we've all been here. **Have you ever found yourself in a tough place, whether it was of your doing or not?** You got yourself in some real trouble, or you just found yourself the unwilling victim of the unfortunate circumstances of life. And in that place you feel uncertain, lost, afraid, not sure what to do. You had plans, ideas, a path you thought you were on. And it feels like it's falling apart. Where you thought your life was going, the dreams and plans you had seems to be dust in the wind. *"All they are is dust in the wind."* (Sorry) You can't go back and change the past. Whatever you, or someone else did, now has forever changed your future. And now you have to figure that new path out. You just need help, guidance, support, wisdom, anything to help you in that moment. If you can't change the situation you find yourself in, you may be stuck, **what is one of the greatest things you could hear?** It's: someone is coming.

They may not be able to stop the tough time from happening. But they're there for you in that tough place. Obviously, I would rather not have to go through that thing. But if that's not an option, then

please let there be someone to be there with me as I go through it. It's not an undoing of something bad. Being pulled out of this tough place. It's being pulled through it. Whether you were the cause or not, there's now some possible better future. But now it's finding guidance, newness, someone who can help you through it. So, we finish this series with the promise of a future.

Today we're going to jump into another uncommon passage. But it's actually the next important truth from God, as we walk through these first four stories in Genesis. And I want to land on just one little phrase...like we did last week.

Genesis 5:28-32. *When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son. Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, "May he bring us relief^[d] from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed." After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters. Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died. After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.*

[d] relief also means comfort.

This is a stunning promise. We're going to dig into what relief, comfort is, and what it implies. The promise of Noah is the relief, comfort, from the curse in the garden. In fact the Hebrew name itself Noah sounds like the Hebrew word for comfort, relief.

So, what is this relief, comfort from the curse, and what it might imply? What can it say to us all these years later?

Let's go back to the curse in Genesis 3 for some context.

Genesis 3:16-19. *Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you." And to the man he said, "Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return."*

So, we see what the stated consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience were. Life is going to be just a painful struggle for survival. Work will be arduous. Childbirth, painful and messy. We pretty much know that, don't we? And we have to admit right off the bat, that hasn't seemed to change.

So, what could this passage about the promise of Noah mean?

I'm going to hit one of many different things this passage could mean. Just know I'm not the sole source of scriptural interpretation. Especially with a story this ancient, and lacking really any kind of explanation. But my goal is that this interpretation can meet us where we are today. We'll start with the big question. **Is this the undoing of the fall?**

Let's jump ahead to the promise of God after the story of the flood. After the flood, Noah and his family are on dry land and offer a sacrifice to God. And this was God's response.

Genesis 8:21 *"Never again will I curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things."*

The problem though, and we need to wrestle with it, is it's still difficult to grow stuff. Living in Georgia for 9 years now I'm discovering I have the largest variety of garbage plants in my yard. It's green, but I think many of those plants are from another planet. It's real work to grow the right stuff here. **And...**

have you heard of any women here who have a totally painless childbirth? It seems these curses' are still in place. **So, what is the removal of the curse and the promise of relief, comfort? What is a way we can read it that fits the rest of the story of God's redemptive work that can actually mean something in our world today?**

I'm going to make the claim that this is one of the many stories of redemption and restoration scattered all through scripture. This isn't solely about personal comfort or relief. Or undoing the consequences of the fall. **So, what might be the “promise of Noah”?**

But first– let me tell you a little bit about the story of Noah and the flood. Brace yourself. We don't know if Noah's ark was actually shaped like a boat. All the pictures we've seen of it have it shaped like a boat. Which would make perfect sense. It served the same function as a boat does. But there's nothing in the instructions to build it that says to shape it like a boat. Obviously we're not getting the exploded assembly diagram. Most likely Noah didn't get an ark kit from IKEA. And I'm willing to consider that part of the instructions may have been just understood. But...and wrestle with this. That means we have to assume, and accept, that Noah had seen a boat before, and knew what one looked like. We have nothing that gives us that indication. Not saying it couldn't be shaped like an actual boat. It could have very well been. But let's dig a little deeper.

Let me give you another option. Try this. **What if it was simply built like the instructions said to build it?** Just the rectangular dimensions of length, width, and height.

Genesis 6:14-15 So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch and tar inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.

Then Noah's ark would just be shaped like a rectangular box. With no instructions for any steering mechanism. No rudder, steering device (wheel), anything. And if you know anything about boats. Unless you have a system of power (sails, motor, oars) you have no power to steer it anyway. There is absolutely no benefit for the ark to be shaped like a boat. **So, what could this possibly tell us?** Let's jump to another time, see if we can tie the story of Noah in a box with another story.

What else was placed in a box for protection because it was of ultimate value? And in this story is the only place in scripture that also bore the Hebrew name of “ark”.

Exodus 2:1-3. About this time, a man and woman from the tribe of Levi got married. The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw that he was a special baby and kept him hidden for three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she got a basket made of papyrus reeds and waterproofed it with tar and pitch. She put the baby in the basket and laid it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile River.

Recognize that story? The only other time this Hebrew word ‘tebah’ ark was used was in the story of Moses and the basket he was put in to save his life. And that basket/ark just floated downstream until it was discovered. God guided that basket/ark to the place of safety. Nobody needed to direct that basket/ark. It's a sign, a promise, of God's protection.

Back to Noah. In all of the other stories of a flood in other religions, the ships had rudders and steering mechanisms because the people were responsible for their own safety. But– the story of the ark, possibly not being a boat but a box (a giant basket) tells the story that the storm and flood still comes. But it's not up to our effort to safely direct ourselves. Not having any power or steering mechanisms, then Noah and his family learn to fully trust God for their safety. In a flood/storm, we

learn we can trust in God to steer us safely through the storm. I believe the story of Noah is the establishment of God's value of, and protection over what he considers sacred and important. God's love and concern for his people can be seen in God placing them into a box, and guiding them to safety, is a magnificent story. Personally, I love this image of God in the story of Noah– and Moses.

IV Challenge.

Wrap this up. Going back to the original passage.

So, what could the “*promise of relief and comfort*” mean to us in this story?

God sees and knows your struggles. From the toil of the earth to the pain of childbirth. All of those are still all too real. Things are hard. There are painful and harmful things in our world. A lot of times we just can't avoid what happens to us. But in all that, **God sees you.** God has always had the ultimate compassion and kindness in our struggles. Salvation for us is fully contained in the promise of Noah. In the midst of those earth swallowing storms, God will provide comfort and relief.

This has been God's plan from the very beginning. Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel. Seth. This story of the “*promise of Noah*” is built into the creation work of redemption. That is the continual work, and thread all through scripture. It begins in these first four stories we've hit in Genesis. And culminates in the work of Jesus. To bring comfort to those who experience heartache, pain, and struggle.

Matthew 11:28-30. *Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”*

The Greek word for “rest” here is ‘*anapauo*’ which means refresh, ease, relief, comfort. This is the ‘WORK’ of redemption and salvation. Not always being rescued (pulled from) from the curse. But being saved through the consequences of the curse. I would never want to go through some of the things I've been through again. But I'm beginning to like who God is molding me to be THROUGH those things. How his presence is molding and shaping me, as he is with me in those times. The work of salvation, redemption is the work of walking with us through the curse.

Most of all, the promise of Noah is the promise of hope. God has been working his plan to make himself known to all of creation. But if we see Jesus as this long arc (pun intended) of the redemptive work of God, redeeming all of creation back to him, then the promise of restorative hope is that God will never give up on his work to redeem all of creation. The promise of Noah is a promise we have continually seen in the work of God. Not always in escape or removal from the difficulty of life. But in real, deep, genuine, relief and comfort in the midst of it.

Life is hard, full of struggles, and heartaches. And even the work of living for God is hard work.

AMEN? So...when you find yourself in the place of struggle, hardship, real difficulty. And that difficulty doesn't look like it's going to go away. That you may be in that hard place for a while.

Remember the “*promise of Noah*”. Life will be difficult...very difficult. The calling to live how God has called us to live is hard, and at times exhausting. But you have ultimate value. And someone is coming. Someone HAS come. Relief and comfort will be poured out on you. Be full of hope.