

Storms, floods, and our greatest need



Reading Luke 17.20-33

Luke 17.26. *"But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all....Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."*

- These are the words of the Lord to us.
- What do we make of them?
 - Should we ignore them?
 - Or is He right, and our only hope of Salvation?
- "But Sir, Salvation from what?"
- Well, let's consider - even from just our natural sensibilities
- We can certainly look out upon this world and conclude that there is something terribly wrong with it.
 - Terrible things happen every day - natural and man made. (This week - fires in LA)
 - Are these warnings to us?
 - The Lord certainly told us to heed such things.

- He was asked about a tragic incident of a building that had collapsed and killed those within it.
- Some wondered whether it was because they were especially sinful people.
- But the Lord says *“those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Luke 13.4*

-He wasn't saying they weren't sinners, but it was just that their time was up, and their judgement came.

- It is the same for all, one day our time will be up,
 - and these are warnings to be heeded, not ignored.
- The young are especially prone to **not** heed warnings.
 - The psychologists will tell you that the young mind is a risk taking one.
 - It's certainly true that the young haven't usually had much experience of the world yet,
 - and therefore are a little naive about the troubles, disasters, heart-aches etc etc that can and will come into a life.
 - So they are prone to think that because nothing generally bad has happened to them so far, then nothing will.
 - That Everything will be fine.
 - But it's just because the storms of life haven't hit yet
 - They're rather like the account of Paul in Acts when travelling by ship with others.
 - It says

“And... came unto a place which is called The fair havens;[this is like youth] ... Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, ... Paul admonished them, And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul...And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.”

- After a time of ease, A great storm came, and they all nearly died.
 - But they listened to Paul in the end.
- Sometimes we speak to old College Class or Friday meeting students years after they've left us.
 - And it's not uncommon for them to say how things didn't turn out the way they expected.
 - I had one say to me “the world beat me up Sir”- metaphorically.

- Some heed when warned, some drive on ignoring the Gospel warning and have to learn by bitter experience.
- There's another natural evidence I could point you to, other than the tragedies of life.
 - And that is the inner witness of our own consciences.
 - Our natural sense of something called 'right and wrong'.
 - Is it just a social construct?
 - You'd have to be very determined to rid yourself of any sense of personal guilt to believe that.
 - It is one of the most persistent and enduring things throughout the history of Mankind in all lands, times and cultures.
- Atheism has foolish explanations which render right and wrong meaningless
 - But I bet if someone very close to you was murdered then you'd be inclined to think that something **tangibly wrong** had happened and someone was **actually guilty** of something.
 - Something that was a universal evil, something **real- not a social construct**.
 - **not** something **invented by society**,
 - **or a breaking of the rules of rational thinking**,
 - **or merely something that doesn't bring happiness**.
 - No - something tangibly wrong.
- If 'great' things, like murder, can be wrong, then smaller things as well.
 - Things that we have done.
 - After all, what leads to those big things?
 - Murder starts with a person's character, they become hateful, vindictive, then violent.
 - Murder doesn't just spring from nowhere.
 - It starts with who we are.
- Take betrayal, as another example
 - If you get married and your wife lies and cheats on you
 - she does it because she is selfish and disloyal.
- Why do we feel such things are tangibly wrong?
- Without God, why not do as you please?
 - If there's no God, one person can't impose his/her standards on another.
 - Even if two people have agreed to be loyal - it was not before God -
 - That person may say "I didn't feel like being faithful today"
 - But morality can't be ignored - it's a real thing for everyone, and those who try to ignore it, or act against it, end up getting terribly hurt.
- Guilt

- We all have it. You may not want to think about it.
 - You may try to disbelieve it.
 - But shutting your eyes to something doesn't make it go away.
- Morality is a thing because we are made in the image of a moral God
- This means that ultimately He must be the Judge of our guilt.
- Don't you think that, if reality is as the Bible says,
 - then to try to imagine that God isn't there,
 - or that there isn't really right and wrong,
 - is one of the worst things we can do?
 - Will God hold us guiltless for doing that, when He gives us a strong sense of right and wrong- that points to Him?
- That is what God the Son is referring to when He said *“except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”*
- But He kindly warns us with the storms of life.
 - Those examples in the Bible are pictures for us:
 - Paul's shipwreck,
 - Jonah's storm,
 - the great flood of Noah's day.
- But Christ can say a word - and still our storm immediately.
- Let's consider the great flood in Genesis that the Lord referred to in Luke *“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all”*
- It's an account that is often used when talking about the evidence for creation as opposed to evolution (which there is much of).
- But that is not its primary purpose
 - It is a warning to heed about impending judgement.
- We all have a great need, whether we want to accept it or not.
 - And that need is a moral one
 - It is one understood by all humanity - **a sense of guilt**
 - It is a universal human condition - earthly religions try to address it with rites and rituals and good works and effort.
 - But only One true religion must answer to the real reason we have this guilt within, attested by our conscience.
- And only One does anything tangible to deal with our need.

- You see, if you're guilty then there must be a punishment.
 - We all know this deep down
 - You could try to ignore it, or explain it away.
 - You could try to live a 'good' life
 - you can't be perfect, but as good as you can...
 - .. but what if a perfect God's standard is perfection?
- Then all these tactics won't work in the end, and we'll perish in our sins just like Christ warned us!
- There is only one solution to the great human need for **redemption**.
 - And that is **a Redeemer**
 - There is only one true religion that has that.
 - The others are poor copies
 - Like counterfeit money- similar looking, but with no worth.
 - They may claim to be true, but they don't have a Saviour - everyone of them boils down to just human efforts - just what you would expect from a human invention.
- In the days before the flood most people ignored the warning
 - after all it had never happened before.
- But God had commanded Noah to obedience
 - God had prepared a way out.
 - This way (THE ARK) is meant to be a picture of Christ for us, and how we can escape a storm of personal judgement- even that great last Judgment.
- Unless you were IN the ark then you perished.
 - It was God who commanded it and God who sealed them in
 - In John 10.9 Jesus says "I am the door"
 - God seals them into the ark, and covers them, protecting and preserving them from the raging outside.
 - If He hadn't, no doubt that ship would have broken up with everything else.- I'm sure other boats existed.
- This is the idea of the word propitiation.
 - A covering from wrath.
- It rained 40 days and nights.
 - The same time as
 - Moses in mount Sinai,
 - Elijah travelling to Horeb's cave,
 - Christ's temptation in the wilderness.

It's always a time synonymous with judgement, or trial.

- The Ark was said to be **'lifted up above the earth'**
This is very significant
Gen 7.17 **"And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth"**
 - like Christ was lifted up upon the cross.
 - It is supposed to be a symbol of Calvary!
 - In John 12.31,32 Christ Himself says- *"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"*
 - He means lifted up on the cross.
 - It's the same language for a reason.
 - So we notice it.
 - It says **"the ark went upon the face of the waters"** - like the Spirit before creation of the earth
"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters". Gen 1.2
 - this pictures Christ's 'new creation' for a person's soul
- All land life died in the flood.
 - In Revelation we have a symbolic reference to all life dying in the sea.
 - This is referring to *'the sea of nations'*, and the concept of the soul of Men dying in society - the soul not being believed to be a real thing,
 - or at least not being valued.
- Also the high hills and mountains are covered by the waters
 - And in Revelation, and other places, 'mountains' symbolise human powers and ideologies - High and immovable things.
 - But God judges them all.
- The wind comes like the Holy Spirit to cause the waters to subside.
- Then the ark rests, like Christ rests after His work, on the 7th month, on the 7th day upon the mountain. (7 being God's number)
 - And We enter into God's 'rest' by the work of the Spirit..
- The sending out of the raven (which is a dark foreboding bird), then and dove (which symbolises peace and rest for the soul). Is symbolic of looking for assurance.
 - First we fear being lost
 - Then the Dove comes back with an olive leaf-
 - this is assurance by the Holy Spirit - the dove and the olive leaf, are a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
- Rom 8.1 says ***"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"***

- In the 1st month, and the 1st day, the waters dried up
 - A completely new beginning - A re-birth. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* 2 Cor 5.17
- This is a New Year! Will it be a new beginning for you?
- Noah removes the covering - the ark was covered for protection, like Christ's propitiatory work (like the atonement cover in the ark of the covenant).
- Noah then makes a sacrifice - a 'sweet savour'
 - And Christ's righteous and holy offering for us is accepted.
 - And His righteousness is given to us.
 - No more condemnation.- no more flood.
- So, will you heed the warning,
 - escape the Judgement,
 - and step out into a new life as a saved man?
 - Noah literally stepped out into a new world
 - And, if you find the Lord, you'll be the same, stepping out to a fresh start
- Or will you laugh at all this, and say everything will be fine in my life?
 - But things aren't always fine in any life
 - If you think you don't need God, then what will you rely upon instead when life's storms and floods come?
- I bet those people in Noah's day tried to save themselves.
 - I bet they felt foolish when they held onto anything they could find and it was useless.
 - I bet they remembered disbelieving Noah's warning.
 - But they all perished.
 - Christ said *"and the flood came, and destroyed them all"*
- What are you hanging onto?
 - Let it go.
 - Our reading said *"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it"*
 - It was too late for those outside the ark, but the Door is still open for you
 - Christ is that door.
 - Knock, in prayer, and it shall be opened unto you.
- Don't love this life at the expense of the next.
 - Believe in God, believe in Christ, heed the warning of your own conscience, and the warnings of our world every time we turn on the news.
 - Tragic things happen to us all.

- Often people, hit by tragedy, say “I thought it will never happen to me”.
- But with a Redeemer we can be prepared - We can ride the storm.
- But without Him we must take our chances relying on our own efforts ...
- It won't be enough - it never is.
- I know which one I'm relying on.
- Don't trust yourself, trust the One who left that conscience within you as a divine witness.
- Let's pray