

Noah - Part 3

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[0 : 0 0] So this morning we looked at how God saves, how God saves from his judgment, how he shuts us in, secures and seals us, how it has nothing to do with us, and how he remembers us, takes care of us, does not forget us and carries us through, and how he calls us out and meets us on the other side. We looked at how God saves. We looked at God's pattern of salvation, and tonight what we're going to focus on is not God's pattern of salvation, but God's purpose of salvation. We're going to look at why God saves. I was at home the other day fixing something for Catherine, and Emmett came up and sat down, and I've been trying to teach him the little things here and there about, you know, how to hold a wrench or a spanner and how to use a screwdriver, you know, all those things you're supposed to teach your son when you're not teaching him how to play Angry Birds, and so he walked up and sat down and asked, what are you doing? And I was in the middle of something, so I explained, you know, I'm using this tool to tighten this, and I'm having trouble reaching that, so I've got to take this apart first, and he stopped me and he said, no dad, what are you doing? And, you know, I could be a little slow, sometimes, so I turned to him and said, well, you know, I'm using this tool to tighten this bit over here, and I'm having trouble reaching that, so I've got to take apart this first, and at that point he grabbed my face, and he said, no dad, what are you doing? Oh, okay, I'm fixing this. It's broken, I'm fixing it, and then the next question he asks is, how can I help? It's a good question, but we'll get there later. How can we help? You see, before we try to understand what God's doing, we need to understand why God's doing it. We get caught a lot of times reading our Bibles, watching God work, and asking what he's doing, when what we really need to be asking is, why is he doing it? Not just, what are you doing? What are you doing? So tonight, we're going to ask again the question we answered this morning. Not what's he doing, but what's he doing? Why is he doing it? We're going to look at

God's purpose of salvation. We're going to look at why God saves, and we're going to look for it in the same passage that we were looking at this morning, and it's not a three-point sermon. It's not a five-point sermon. You'd be very happy to know it is a one-single-solitary-point sermon. There's only one point that God saves to make God's creation new again. It's all about re-creation. It's all about recreating what is broken, fixing what is broken. It's all about renewal. It's all about rebirth.

We're going to pick up in chapter 7 of Genesis, chapter 7, verse 17, if you want to turn there. If you've got a red Bible, you can find that on page 9, chapter 7, verse 17. We're at the point in the story where Noah and his family and all the animals are safely contained and sealed in the ark, and the rain begins to fall. Verse 17, for 40 days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased, they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than 20 feet. Every living thing that moved on the earth perished. Birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind, everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out. Men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. You could not be more complete. And all was calm. There was no life. There was no laughter, no noise. And in many ways, we're right back to where we started.

The earth was formless and empty. And darkness was over the face of the deep. The world was returned to its original state. A blank canvas. And all was quiet.

And perhaps before we ask ourselves why God saves, it'd be important to ask the question, why does God destroy? Why does God judge? And the answer, one of the answers, a way of answering that, is because God's making a masterpiece. What is bad is wiped away, and what is salvageable is remade, better and more beautiful.

[5 : 39] God's taking the next step in his creative works. God is an artist. He's moving history one step closer toward his intended purposes. And I think Picasso had it right when he said that every act of creation, this side of the fall, is first an act of destruction.

I've been really wondering about this movie coming out in a couple weeks. It's going to have our Noah in it, and we're looking forward to seeing what he's going to look like in Hollywood's view, and how much it's going to capture the essence of this gospel according to Noah.

But I've been pretty surprised that of any of the themes in the story, this one has seemed to have been picked by the directors, by the writers, to make it into the script.

If you watch the trailer to the movie that's going to come out, maybe this is far off the radar screen, but if you were to go and watch the trailer for the Noah movie that's about to come out, you'll hear the character of Noah wrestling with what's coming, wrestling with God's impending judgment.

And he says, at one point, reflecting on some sort of vision that he's had, I saw water, death by water, and that's our new life.

[7 : 13] He's asked by one of his son's wives at one point, is this the end of everything? And his answer in the film is very provocative.

He says, he says, the beginning. The beginning of everything. God destroys what he's made that he might remake it again.

Death is the beginning of life. It's one of the beautiful paradoxes of God's economy, that out of dying, out of death, one might live again.

That through pain, we might find our way back to the God we've wandered from. That the judgment the world is waiting for, that the captives are crying out for, and the oppressed are holding their breath for, will come not as the final flatline of the world's cardiac arrest, but as the defibrillation that will shock the world's cardiac transplant, to function as it was meant to from the beginning.

It's what starts everything over again. It's what gets it pumping the way it was meant to from the beginning. And right in the middle of this story, right at the center, we have that wonderful verse we touched on this morning, that God remembered Noah.

[8 : 44] And as much as it wasn't Noah that merited God's grace in the beginning of this story, it's probably right to say that it wasn't Noah that merited God's remembrance in the middle.

The wonderful thing about this story is not that it is Noah who is remembered, but that it's God who does the remembering. God doesn't forget.

God's plans aren't done because his purposes are not yet accomplished. He doesn't forget because he's not finished with what he's doing.

You ever had this happen to you? I remember when I got overly ambitious with Emmett, and I bought him his first model, and I mean he was probably two at the time, and we were going to start modeling together.

So it was this World War II fighter jet, and I remember when we got to the end, my hands were cut up, and we had glue all over the place.

[9 : 43] But worse than that, there was still an entire sheet of parts left over. And so what do you do at that point? You try and distract and hide and put them somewhere, and unfortunately your son doesn't forget.

He knows that you had more there, and where did those go, and I have no idea. They're not even on the instruction manual. I don't know. God doesn't forget, though.

God doesn't want to hide pieces. He's not really the type of God to leave all these loose ends out there, this ark just floating around, a little shook up that there's no more mountains anywhere to land this thing on.

If you see a loose end in your life, you can bet the farm that God's not done with you. I took a film class once.

I didn't get much out of it. I didn't get much out of it. But I remember one thing that impressed me and has changed the way I watch movies ever since. One of these books said, nothing is in a movie by accident.

[10 : 57] Every detail was decided on and purposed and placed in that film to communicate meaning. If there is a director, you must assume that everything and anything which comes into focus has been placed there to communicate meaning.

And God's a much better director than Steven Spielberg or whoever you want to put on that list.

No loose ends. Nothing forgotten. No meaning lost on aimless destruction.

Everything purposed, woven in to create his masterpiece. God destroys so he can remake.

God saves so he can recreate. And listen to what he does with his blank canvas. Listen. In verse 1 of chapter 8, he sends a wind over the earth.

[12 : 04] The word for wind here is the same word for spirit. The Hebrew is ruach. So like the spirit was hovering over the waters of the face of the deep, here his wind, his spirit, is blowing over the face of the earth and the waters receded.

The springs of the deep were closed. The beginning of creation. You know, and this is just to remember. You have to be careful.

You have to watch out for God's wind. When God's wind starts blowing, you can be sure that he's up to something, remaking something, recreating his world, remaking his people, and all sorts of strange things start to happen.

You have to watch out for God's wind. Do you know this? Can you trace in your mind all the places God's wind, God's breath, God's spirit shows up in history?

People start proclaiming the mighty works of God when his spirit comes into them. And start dying for things and giving their money away and setting the captives free.

[13 : 15] You have to watch out for when God's spirit starts to blow. And whenever you get a chance, you have to get right in front of it because that's something you want to be a part of.

When God's spirit is blowing, that's something you want to get in front of. And here he starts. It's the beginning. He remembers, his spirit blows.

And recreation begins. So creation gets going and we're told the rain stopped falling from the sky. Where the springs of the deep had burst and the floodgates of heaven had opened and the expanse between the waters below and the waters above had collapsed.

The sky now appears. Listen, day two. Then God separates water from water. And verse five says, as the waters continued to recede until the 10th month.

And on the first day of the 10th month, the tops of the mountains became visible. Literally, it says, they appeared. Dry land appeared. God gathered the water into one place and dry land appeared.

[14 : 25] Day three. The sun and the moon, the stars of day four, didn't, they don't need to be remade, right? They're still up there.

Nothing happened to them in the flood. They just need to be uncovered. And by this time, the sun is shining, separating the day from the night. And you see this in the narrative as the story progresses.

You get marked out days and months and years, right? Day four. So a bird is set loose from this floating cocoon to fly back and forth, literally above the earth, across the expanse of the sky.

One bird, then another, and another. Day five. And when all was ready, dried up and growing, God says, come out. You and your wife, male and female, created in the image of God, your sons and their wives, and under their dominion, every kind of living creature.

The birds, the animals, and the creatures that move along the ground. Why? So they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number. This is not new. God is recreating his world.

[15 : 33] So they can take up, they come out, so they can take up their place once again in God's new earth. Under God's new man.

God's new Adam. God destroys. God judges. And God ultimately saves so God can recreate.

Since the first time in history his judgment fell on his creation to the last time when it will fall again, and especially when it fell on his son who took the brunt of it while hanging on a cross.

God's single purpose has been that in judgment, through judgment, he might remake his creation once again. It is his purpose and it's woven into the very fabric of his story.

One new man through whom humanity is saved. One man spared that all in him might be spared. Recreated by the power of his spirit constituted by the renewal of his world.

[16 : 49] One new man through whom his people might be remade. God's single, solitary purpose purpose in judgment is to remake his world.

Well, what does that mean for us? And let me suggest three ways that this ought to change your life today. First, do not mistake God's timeliness, God's patience for God's lateness.

Because we live life trapped between our two eyes, behind our two ears, what we feel and smell and experience, it's very easy for us to look around and see all the loose ends of life and think God's story really isn't that great.

He's not really that great of a director. There's this part over here and that bit over there and I wouldn't have done it that way and we very easily can slip onto the critic's seat and think we somehow have the know-how to judge whether God really is as good a director as he's cracked up to be.

And the thing is, the movie's not even close to being over. There's a reason we see so much loose ends, but it's not because God's forgotten or somehow lost control of his creation.

[18 : 27] Well, one of my favorite authors is an essayist from the early 1900s. His name is F.W. Borum and to date, my favorite piece by him is an essay entitled The Conquest of the Crag.

In it, he reminisces of a battlefield he used to visit on breaks from his study. But this battlefield was unlike what you might think as it was not littered with dead man's bones, he says, but was the place where, in his words, a far finer and far fiercer fight than men could have waged was fought.

It is the battlefield on which the land has fought the sea, a rocky and precipitous coast. And the extraordinary thing the waters win.

The water seems so soft, so yielding, so fluid, and the rocks seem so impregnable, so adamant, so immutable. Yet the waters always win.

The land makes no impression on the sea, but the sea grinds the land to powder. I know that the sea is often spoken of, he says, as the natural emblem of all that is fickle and changeable, but it is a pure illusion.

[19 : 50] There are, of course, superficial variations of tone and tint and temper, but as compared with the kaleidoscopic changes that overtake the land, the ocean is eternally and everywhere the same.

And he says, is not this a picture of our patient, our ever-patient God? The quiet waters conquer the frowning cliffs at length. The walls of Jericho fall down.

This is the victory that overcometh the world. Our servants are often our masters. Life's loftiest authorities never derive their sanctions from rank, office, or station.

The soul has enthronements and coronations of its own. A little child often leads it. A carpenter becomes its king. Out of Nazareth comes the conqueror of the world, the pure and cleansing waters wear down the giant crags at the last.

This is the battle at which mankind is overcome. Our hearts are won because of God's patience. Don't ever mistake God's timeliness, God's patience for God's lateness.

[21 : 01] He doesn't work on our timescale. Second, and this is especially for those who have tasted and seen something of the Lord's goodness.

Don't ever interpret God's judgment as being in opposition to his intentions. If it's God's purpose to recreate through judgment, don't ever make mistake judgment for in some sense counterproductive to God's plans.

I imagine Noah very well could have felt at times there was a better way. The world's not all that bad or maybe this boat is a little much. Can't you just build it yourself?

And some of us are even prey to this in our own lives when we mistake discipline for in some sense contrary to who we think God is supposed to be. But God's not mistaken in what he's up to.

Not when he judges the world or disciplines his children. I'm reminded of one of my favorite hymns by a man of the name of William Cowper.

[22 : 11] Cowper was a close friend of the famous John Newton who wrote the hymn Amazing Grace. And Cowper and Newton they collaborated on a lot of projects together.

But Cowper was a man who struggled his entire life with depression, bouts that would last years at a time. The longest lasted eight years of debilitating depression.

But listen to the words out of that darkness, the words of the last hymn he ever wrote. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

He plants his footsteps on the sea and rides upon the storm. Deep in unfathomable minds of never failing skill he treasures up his bright designs and works his sovereign will.

ye fearful saints fresh courage take the clouds ye so much dread are big with mercy and will break in blessings over your head.

[23 : 11] Judge not the Lord by feeble sense but trust him for his grace behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face. His purposes will ripen fast unfolding every hour.

The bud may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the flower. blind unbelief is sure to err and can scan his works in vain. God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain.

Don't ever interpret God's judgment or God's discipline as being in opposition to God's soul intentions to recreate his world for his glory.

God is his own interpreter and in the end the end will make it plain. Lastly if you've experienced something of God's creation wide renewal in your own life don't ever fail to join God in his work of recreation.

creation. We picked up a thread that runs through this story when we read at the beginning of our time the account of God's creation of the world.

[24 : 36] We worked our way back to that but we just as easily could have followed the thread in the other direction and picked it up at any number of points along the way because Noah isn't the final episode in this great drama God's directing as much as it's the first time God recreates his world through judgment it's certainly not the last.

The themes and language of the flood and before it of the creation are picked up again and again and again as the story steadily moves towards its peak.

The themes and language of the flood and creation are picked up again and again and again. Moses will be a new Noah.

I shared some of that with the kids this morning. He writes himself into the story as a new Noah. God's wind will blow again and dry land will appear for his people to plant their feet on and then the wicked will be washed away when it collapses back.

The promised land will be a new garden where God will walk with his people and the temple will be built as a new home for God and everything will point to the day one comes to crush the head of evil and be the new Adam the new Noah the new Moses the new man and when judgment falls on Jesus that new man's shoulders the way is opened for the world to come back to God.

[26 : 16] The themes the language are picked up and woven in at every point it repeats itself over and over we're meant to see the threads by which God is making his masterpiece and that's what he's doing in his people he's setting up home again and in his people he's setting up his throne ruling and reigning having his way our homes ought to reflect that here God reigns I'm not the king of my castle I'm not the captain of my soul I'm a servant to the king every aspect of life should point to that my kids have to know that my wife has to know that that has to change what we do in our homes that has to change what we watch on television and the games that we play and how we spend our money and how our kids spend our money and what we do with our time and how we leverage our influence and affect our community so that it better reflects

God's reign in our life and I'll just end with a story to illustrate what that might look like I don't talk about my dad all that much I don't talk about him but in many ways he is a great man in my eyes not least of all because he demonstrated to me what it meant to live under the reign of King Jesus my dad had a real burden for our community growing up and one of the ways this translated into everyday life was he used to invite people from our community who had worked themselves into a predicament to come and live with us some of you will know this story I've shared this and I remember a dozen or so of these families coming through our home for a period of time and you'd lose your room for a while and you'd lose your place at the table and if you were too young on the scale the pecking order you'd be pushed out to the countertop for dinner but I remember this as a child and the crowning experience of this routine that we went through as children was when he invited a family of nine to move in with us now we were already nine by ourselves so he invited a family of nine to come and together we were 18 so this was such a problem in the community the community had to go out and reroute the bus system so that they could pick us up at our front driveway before school you do things like this the kingdom has an impact on your life and publicly you can't hide that the bus system has to now be in route with the kingdom and I remember this the family that moved in weren't believers at the time but within a week that all changed within a week they were a

Peruvian family with the girls were at the top of their pecking order all hair down to their belts and within a week two things changed they all got their hair cut because they were taking far too long in the shower and they all came to Christ I don't know if anybody else in the history of mankind will ever do that my dad did it and the world has been changed three of them went on they're in ministry the father took up and went on to seminary and is now a pastor just outside of New York City at a bilingual church and not only that the bus routes were rerouted the kingdom changes the community you can't hide that if that's the impact that it has on your life it will change the world don't ever fail to join God in his work of recreation in his work of bringing his reign to bear on life and know that when you join him at that level when your little world is defined by the reign of

Jesus and what you do is shaped by what he is doing the world is going to sit up and take notice your kids are going to sit up and take notice and start asking questions and the community you live in is going to sit up and start asking questions of what on earth are you doing God is in the business of recreating this world he's doing it now when he judges again he will do it definitively don't doubt it don't forget it and don't miss out we're going to conclude by singing from Psalm 106 it's found on pages 140 and then again on 143 because we'll be singing the beginning two stanzas and then the final stanza to the tune of St.

Leonard Psalm 106 verses 1 to 5 and then 47 to 48 would you stand and sing praise the Lord extol his goodness for his love endures always who can tell his mighty actions or in full declare his praise blessed are those whose way is right but in justly in his sight when you show your people favor then oh

[33 : 16] Lord remember me help me when you come to save them let me know prosperity glory joy joy with your chosen race joining them in giving praise gather us Lord from the nations save save us and your name will praise blessed be the God of Israel may his glory last always let the

Lord be praised again let the people say amen may you go tonight knowing God's intent for his world and may you reflect that by living under his reign amen