

FATHERHOOD – Part Four
“NOAH AND HIS SONS”
Sermon 8/14/19

For the past several weeks we have talked about Adam and Abraham and the type of fathers they were to their sons. This week I want to look at Noah. As with the previous two men, we do not have much written in the Scriptures about the early life of Noah. What we do know is this:

Noah had three sons. Their names were Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Genesis 5:32). The Scriptures say, “*Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time*”, and that he “*walked with God*” (Genesis 6:9). Growing up with a father who was righteous and walked with God must have been an awesome experience. This was a father you could look up to, especially since he was “*blameless in his time*”, signifying that above all the other men living at that time Noah was the only one who was blameless in the sight of the Lord.

Noah followed the ways of the Lord and as such his home had the blessing of the Lord upon it. There would have been a peace in the house of Noah which was not found in any other home. It would have been a house of discipline and order but also a house of love. This would have drawn young men who did not have this same peace or love in their own homes to want to befriend the sons of Noah. The house of Noah is likely the house on the block where they, as children, most preferred to gather.

The Scripture does not tell us how old Noah was when his three sons were born. All we know is that by the time he was 500 years old he had become the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth; and that his three sons had married and had wives of their own. When Noah was 500 years old God said to him, “*The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth*” (Genesis 6:13).

As Noah’s heart begins to beat faster and his thoughts start to catch up to God’s words he hears God tell him to make for himself an Ark of gopher wood and that upon this Ark he, his wife, his sons and his sons wives would live along with two of every living thing of all flesh, two of every kind going with them into the ark. So Noah’s heart rate begins to slow as God makes provision to save Noah and his family, knowing that he is safe and that the animals which surround his home will be safe as well. Yet the magnitude of the destruction to come is still a horrible thing to consider. Every human being with the exception of Noah and his family will be destroyed in this colossal, calamitous, and cataclysmic catastrophe that is about to come upon the earth.

Though God had made the declaration of destruction He was still a God of long-suffering and patience, not wishing any to perish but to come to their senses and repent. And so it was that somewhere between 70 and 100 years passed between the time God announced the coming of the flood until the waters of the deep were actually released.

The Scriptures say that Noah did everything required of him, “*according to all that God had commanded him*” (Genesis 6:22), working diligently at building the Ark until the day came when the Lord told Noah that it was time to enter the Ark. From that day forward he had 7 days to make preparations to live on the Ark and to set up a daily routine to feed the animals before God would

send rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:4).

That day came and the Scripture tells us that *“Noah was 600 years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him entered the Ark because of the water of the flood....In the 600th year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were open. On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth the sons of Noah, and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the Ark”* as well as all the animals God had told them to bring. And then the Scripture says, *“The Lord closed (the door) behind them”*.

For 150 days the water prevailed upon the earth. On the 17th day of the 7th month the Ark finally came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat (Not on Mt. Ararat but on the mountains surrounding Ararat which are located in modern-day Turkey). The water decreased steadily until the 1st day of the 10th month when the tops of the mountains became visible. After 40 more days Noah sent out a dove which returned. 7 days later he sent out the dove again. This time it returned with an olive branch in its beak. 7 days later he sent out the dove for the third time, but it did not return.

Sometime later, on the 601st year of Noah’s life in the 1st month and the 1st day of the month, the Scripture says, *“the water was dried up from the earth.”* But it wasn’t until the 2nd month on the 27th day that the earth was completely dry, and God instructed Noah to leave the Ark and begin life anew. It had been approximately 370 days that Noah and his family, as well as the animals he had with him, lived on the Ark.

The first thing that Noah did after leaving the Ark was to build an altar to the Lord and offer burnt offerings on it. The Lord was pleased with Noah’s offering and made a covenant to never again destroy every living creature by the water of the flood as he had just done. The sign of this covenant was the rainbow.

After leaving the Ark, Noah and his sons began farming and planted a vineyard. Noah drank of the wine and became drunk and uncovered himself inside his tent. It is from this incident that we begin to see the difference between the sons of Noah and how their actions influenced their descendants for generations.

The Scripture says, *“Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father’s nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine he knew what his youngest son had done to him”* (Genesis 9:22-24).

So, what had Ham done that so disturbed his father? Some commentators suggest that it was an incestuous act between a drunken father and his son. Perhaps something as simple as Ham leering at the exposed body of his father or something more serious such as indulging in sexual indecency with him. This comes out of the phrase that says Ham *“saw the nakedness of his father”*. The act of uncovering nakedness is prohibited under Mosaic Law. The general principle is found in Leviticus 18:6 where it says, *“None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness”*. This is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. The phrase *“To see the nakedness of”* is used in Leviticus 20:17, again as a euphemism for incest: *“If a man takes his*

sister...and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace”.

Now the first act that Moses forbids is found in Leviticus 18:7 and is incest between a son and his mother. But the Law is written in this manner. *“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness.”* So what other commentators suggest is that Ham took advantage of his mother while his father was too drunk to notice or care.

But this is all speculation and this particular explanation seems to stray a bit too far from the text itself. It’s actually impossible to know what Noah’s youngest son had done to him because it is neither explicitly mentioned nor even hinted at. So we don’t really know what was done in that tent. All we know is that Shem *“saw the nakedness of his father”* which was considered in itself a shameful thing. Whatever it was it had consequences; for when Noah knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said,

GENESIS 9:25-27

“Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brothers.’ He also said, ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.”

As a result of what had been done to him, Noah declares that Ham’s son Canaan will be a servant of servants to his brothers. He will be a servant to both Shem and Japheth. And Canaan himself will be cursed. After this we read that Noah lived 350 years after the flood and died when he was 950 years old. As for his sons, what effect did Noah’s blessing and curse have upon them and their descendants?

- Shem became the father of the Semites including the Israelites (which is where we get our term anti-Semite). Abraham was descended from the line of Shem as was both David and Jesus. The blessing given by Noah to the tribe of Shem came to fruition through Abraham and to his descendants after him.
- Ham, Noah’s second son, was the forefather of the Hamites which included the Ethiopians, the Libyans, and the Egyptians, who would later enslave the Israelites. One of his descendants was Nimrod who ruled in the town of Babel famous for the tower of Babel and the confusion of languages there.
- Ham’s son Canaan was the forefather of the Canaanites who were the idolatrous pagans who inhabited the land that the Lord God would eventually promise to Abraham and his descendants. He also gave birth to those who dwelt in the land of Sodom and Gomorrah which God eventually destroyed because of their exceedingly great sin.
- Japheth, the third son of Noah, was the father of the Philistines who would later be allowed to live in the land of Israel fulfilling the prophecy of dwelling in the tents of Shem. He was also the father of those who would live in Russia, Afghanistan and Turkey, among others.

From the three sons of Noah - Shem, Ham, and Japheth - the whole earth was populated. Everyone here today is a descendant of either Shem, Ham or Japheth. If we took one of those DNA tests that Ancestry.com offers it would be interesting to see how many of us are related to the same son of Noah.

As we can see from the different nations that came from them, each of the sons of Noah

had distinct personalities which developed into distinct nations, especially after the dispersion that occurred at the tower of Babel. This dispersion was most likely the main catalyst for the separation of families into the different areas of the earth. Some moved into what we call Africa today. Others remained in the Middle East, while the remainder moved north and east into Europe and Asia Minor. Though all descended from Noah, after the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel they formed communities with those who spoke the same language.

From Noah, *“a righteous man, blameless in his time”*, came three different sons. We have no indication of any unrighteous behavior by Noah and yet we see that the impact of Adam’s sin still residing in the hearts of Noah’s sons. The flood may have cleansed the earth of those whose *“every intent of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually”*, but it did not cleanse the human race. After the flood sin reentered the world through the sin of Ham, whatever that might have been. And it gave rise to paganism, idolatry, slavery, oppression and further corruption of God’s creation.

A parent never knows what type of person their child will become. Nor what their grandchildren will become. All a parent can do is do the best they can in the moment and to live a life of holiness before the Lord as Noah did and to be found blameless in their time. We are responsible for the upbringing of our children, but we are not responsible for the choices they make as adults. We can give them guidelines and instill a moral compass within them, but that does not mean that one day they will not color outside the lines and ultimately find it more exciting to stray than to stay within the lines that others have drawn. Our responsibility is to adhere to the tenants of the Lord and to teach our children to do the same. But each of us have been given a will of our own – the will to choose right from wrong. If we teach nothing else to our children, we must teach this: all have gone astray and each of us will go our own way at times. But the Lord has made a way back to Him and has provided a covering for sin through repentance and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As for the sons of Noah, it appears from their willingness to work beside him that they honored their father and were a great help to him. They do not appear to be rebellious children during the many decades it took to build the ark as did those around them where every intent of their heart was evil. It was not until the earth was cleansed of these people that one of the sons of Noah begins to display the same tendencies as those whom God wiped from the face of the earth.

Whatever it was that Ham did to his father Noah, it set about a chain reaction of sin that impacted generations of Noah’s descendants for centuries, eventually arriving at the very doorstep of his brother Shem’s relatives, the Israelites. The sin of Noah’s son Ham is not a reflection of Noah’s parenting skills, nor does it cast a poor light on Noah himself. No, what the sin of Ham really displays is the sin of Adam being reflected forward through the centuries. One righteous man does not a righteous family make. Each one, man and woman, husband and wife, mother and father, sons and daughters, must themselves decide to follow the Lord and to pass down their knowledge of Him to the next generation. Each successive generation is being asked to do the same.

My wife’s family is an example of parents and children passing down their faith to succeeding generations. They are known as the MacLennan clan because their parent’s parents originally came from Scotland. They also descend from a line of godly parents who loved the Lord. As of today, there are 137 descendants of Wendy’s parents Rod and Ruth MacLennan, Do all follow

the Lord? Do all profess faith? No, but less than 3% of those who are old enough to decide for themselves do not; Another 5% are too young to make that decision.; which means that over 92% of the descendants of Rod and Ruth Maclennan have made the decision to continue to follow the faith which their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents professed and lived. And in every branch of that family tree there are strong limbs which carry the Lord's message through their lives and through their words. The prayers of Wendy's parents continue to be heard and answered across four succeeding generations and nearly 3 decades after their deaths.

A parent is only responsible for training the child. It is the responsibility of the child to heed that training. Any family can have a son or daughter who disappoints and falls away from the family's legacy of faith. It is not unique to Noah. But each child must stand before the Lord and give an account for their own behavior and their own choices.

The Scriptures tell us that we have all gone astray, each of us to his own way (Isaiah 53:6). Even as parents seeking to be godly examples to our children, we find ourselves going astray from time to time as we pursue a life of righteousness. But knowing the God who forgives, the God who guides us back to Himself, we seek to show this example of God's grace and forgiveness to our children as well. It is this same God to whom we as parents pray to bring our children back onto the fold, to help them remove the blinders of their stubborn pride and to seek help from the One who loves them with an everlasting love. Even as they reject Him God is seeking after them, wooing them back to the God of their parents.

I don't know if you have wandering children in your family, but we have had some in the Maclennan family line. However, the persistent prayers of their parents and the consistent love shown to them, even in their rebellion, has caused them to return and finally surrender to the Lord's goodness. If you have a son or daughter who has chosen a different path than the one they were taught know this. "It ain't over 'till it's over." As long as they have breath in their bodies there is hope for redemption.

Proverbs 22:6 says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."* How old "old" is I do not know. But I do know this. Your child is never too old to return to the truths taught to them by their parents. James says that the effective prayer of a righteous man (or woman) accomplishes much. Keep seeking and keep knocking in hopes that someday the door to your child's heart will be opened.

But even if they continue in their rebellion for years, know that God loves them and does not give up on anyone until there is no more time left. If there is any hidden thing that holds the key to your child's heart, the Lord knows what it is. But it is still the responsibility of the child to respond. God never has and never will force His salvation on anyone, even though He desires it of every man (1 Timothy 2:4).

We pray for our wandering children because we cling to the hope that they will return. But in every prayer the Lord impresses upon our hearts to release our child into His hands and let go of the worry and the stress we experience when we cling so tightly to our wandering child. The Lord knows what it is to wander, and the Lord knows how to take the wandering ones into the Promised Land. Never stop praying but never stop releasing them into His hands either. God hears your prayers and understands your need. You are not alone in this fight. God is doing battle with you.

As for Ham, the wandering child of Noah, we have no record of him ever repenting of his deed. As a result, we see a continuation of sin in his family line leading further and further away from the Lord. Perhaps that is why, when Noah understood what Ham had done and saw no humility or repentance, that he placed a curse upon his rebellious son and sentenced him to be a servant to his two brothers.

All sons rebel against their parent's authority at one time or another; but it is rare, even in Scripture, for a son to be cursed by his father. Surely this had an impact on Ham and on his descendants as well. Like the rejection of Ishmael by his father Abraham, Ham's curse would have been felt in every generation, finding its ultimate fulfillment in the destruction of the Canaanites (descendants of Ham's son Canaan) and all the other "ites" who descended from them who lived in the land of Canaan when Israel came to claim their Promised Land. Most of Canaan's descendants were killed by the sword. But those who were not became slaves to Israel, a descendant of Ham's brother Shem, just as Noah had declared.

Like Adam and Ishmael, Ham is another example of something happening in the family line that causes a ripple effect throughout the family of man. One man, one incident, birthed a generation of consequences; one man, one incident, created a curse lasting for centuries. But there remains good news for any and all who have been cursed. A curse can be removed by a higher authority.

The Scripture says, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.*" (Deuteronomy 21:23). It also says, "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us (by hanging on the cross)*" (Galatians 3:13). The Law of Moses was given to the sons of Israel. But the Good News of redemption was given to all through Jesus Christ. Even the sons of Ham through Christ have the ability to be redeemed from the curse in their family line. Jesus has removed the curse of sin from all of us. All we need do is believe and receive this truth. Even our own children who seem cursed because of our family history can be redeemed.

There are things which have happened in each of our family lines that we are not proud of. Some of the acts committed by us or our ancestors continue to resound with negative tones to haunt and define our descendants, causing some to turn away from the Lord. But no one is beyond redemption. Not even those who have been cursed.

Through the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus revealed to all who wander away that there is a Father who never stops looking for their return. And when they finally do return He welcomes them with open arms (Luke 15:11-32). If you have a prodigal in your family line, our heavenly Father knows the ache in your heart, for your prodigal is His prodigal too. And He is watching with you for his return, eager to run with you to that prodigal with open arms and bring him back into the family, fully restored and freely forgiven.

If you are a prodigal yourself, know that Your heavenly Father is also eagerly waiting with open arms for your return. All He asks is that you come with a repentant heart so that His love, grace, and forgiveness can wash over you and make you clean. But like the prodigal in the story you must first come to your senses, forsake your rebellious ways, and return home to Him. When you do, He will take your heart of stone and turn it into a heart of flesh, cleansing you of all unrighteousness, and take away the stain of your sin forever (Ezekiel 36:26).

WASH ME, LORD

I thought I was so clever, I thought I was so wise
Surely You could never see inside this darkness.
I thought that I had fooled You, now I see I was the fool
Thinking that I could hide this darkness in my heart.

So, wash me, Lord, in Your presence, wash me, make me clean.
There's a stain in my heart that only You can see, wash me, make me clean.

I brought You sacrifices, my silver and my gold.
In my selfishness I tried to buy Your pleasure.
But Your holiness requires, the offering You desire,
Is that I bring to You a broken, humble heart.

So break me, Lord, in Your presence. Break me, set me free.
There's a stain in my heart that only You can see, break me....
So, wash me, Lord, in Your presence, wash me, make me clean.
There's a stain in my heart that only You can see, wash me, make me clean.
Wash me, make me clean.

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