Give praise to the Lord for He is good!

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”*

 Job 1:6-7

Perhaps the first thing to notice about this passage is that God asked satan a question. He asked satan where he had been. Now, the obvious thing is that God didn’t need to ask a question; He always knows exactly where satan is. So, why does God ask?

When God asks questions, He wants to teach us something, He wants us to think about something. In this case, we learn that satan has access to the earth and that he moves around from place to place. Elsewhere in the Bible we learn that satan isn’t simply out for a stroll, he is up to no good. *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* (1 Peter 5:8)

Satan himself can’t be everywhere, but he has millions of helpers in the fallen angels. These evil spirits are real and they have no mercy. Their only goal is to kill and destroy and we are fools if we take them lightly.

But we need not be incapacitated by fear. Their actions are severely restricted by God; we are given spiritual armor to wear; and we have the constant presence of the Holy Spirit to help us. Like it or not, we are in a constant battle with these beings, but we are called to persevere. We know that the war is won and the victory is ours in Jesus Christ.

In Christ’s love

John

 7-31-22

Genesis 9:24-29

As we saw last week, Noah, as faithful to God as he was, was still a sinner. He engaged in the sin of drunkenness, and because of that, shamefully exposed himself in his tent. Satan took full advantage of the opportunity to escalate sin by bringing Noah’s son Ham into the tent. Ham then committed the sin of disrespecting his father; both by not helping him and by telling of the shame to others.

Noah awoke from his drunkenness, learned what all had happened, and was angry about it. I think all of us would have been. There is great lesson for us here in dealing with the sin of others. The last thing we want to do is add sin to sin; and that is the easiest thing to do. Dealing with the sin of a fellow Christian is delicate and needs love, gentleness, and self-examination. Recall what Jesus said about removing the log from you own eye before removing the mote from your brother’s.

Most of the time, when a Christian sins, they know it. They are convicted by the Holy Spirit, repent, make amends if needed, and move on in the forgiveness of Christ. In this case, nothing needs to be said; ever; to anyone. Intervention is necessary when we notice a fellow Christian falling into a pattern of sin. In other words, they begin living in sin. This could be something as simple as pride or gossip.

Speaking gently and privately to a fellow Christian who is becoming ensnared in sin can be lifesaving if done properly. Jude 22 and 23 lets us know that it is appropriate to do so. *And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.* Now, this verse has lots of applications for dealing with others who are in sin; but one of them is certainly fellow Christians. It is easy to picture snatching a fellow Christian out of the fire; not out of the fire of damnation, but the fire of being alienated from their beloved Saviour.

Only in the rare cases of necessary church discipline should others become involved. Jesus spells all these things out in Matthew 18:15-17, “*If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*” Always remember that the whole point of discussing a sin with a fellow Christian is to bring them back into good standing with Christ and the fold of the church.

When dealing with the sin of a non-Christian, the important thing is to share the Gospel. Unless a person is first brought under the reign of Christ, their whole idea of sin is on a shaky foundation. Again, dealing with the sin of others is a very delicate situation; and truthfully, most of us have enough problems dealing with our own sin.

Verses 25 through 27 record the only words spoken by Noah in the Bible. They can be a little confusing unless we have a good understanding of what is going on. The primary question might be why did Noah pronounce a curse on Canaan instead of Ham when Ham was the one who disrespected him? Another question might be why was Noah able to pronounce a cruse in the first place? Did his pronouncing it make it come true?

The main thing to understand is that Noah is actually speaking a prophecy. No human-being can pronounce a curse or a blessing and make it come true.

God is able to bring about blessings and curses. He is the only one who can actually bring these things about. In fact, He was even able to absorb the curse we are all under. Jesus became a curse for us and took the punishment in our place; He removed the curse we were under due to our sin.

Now there are several times we read of blessings and curses in the Bible. Isaac blessed his son, Jacob. Jacob blessed his sons. Balaam was hired by the Moabite king to curse Israel but ended up blessing them instead. Here Noah pronounces a curse on Canaan. In each of these cases, whatever was pronounced came true. But they did not come true because of what the person said. They came true because they were speaking a prophecy from God.

It will be helpful to us if we consider chapter 10 as we go through Noah’s prophecy. Chapter 10 is known as “the table of nations”. It gives a general picture of how the offspring of Shem, Ham, and Japheth spread to different parts of the earth. There are lots of names that are hard to pronounce, but in reading through them, we often find a name that pops up somewhere else in the Bible and is significant. I invite you to read through this chapter at your leisure.

The word “nations” is used throughout chapter 10, but these aren’t nations as we think of them. The word is closer to “ethnicity”. These are tribal families that would eventually become all the people groups of the world. Remember that there is only one race; the human race.

Noah begins in verse 25 with “*Cursed be Canaan*.” Canaan was one of the sons of Ham. Canaan’s people settled in what is now Israel. The land was appropriately named “Canaan”; and this area is what became the Promised Land that God promised to His people. Verse 19 spells out the boundaries of this territory.

Verses 15 through 18 of chapter 10 name the sons or families that were born to Canaan. These became the people groups that populated the area. As we read the Old Testament, we see these names mentioned over and over: Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, and Hivites. These are the peoples God promises to drive out before the Israelites when they enter the Promised Land.

So, what went on with the people of the land of Canaan? The Bible lets us know that they turned completely from God. They engaged in all kinds of abominable practices and worshiped false gods. All these families came under God’s wrath; under His curse. Consequently, God sent judgement in the form of Israel. Israel was to be God’s instrument of judgement against the people of Canaan. When Israel invaded the Promised Land, they were to kill everyone.

We all know that Israel didn’t do what they were supposed to do; they did not wipe out all the people of Canaan. But at the height of Israel’s power, the people of the land were forced into servitude. Thus, Noah’s prophecy regarding Canaan becoming a servant was fulfilled. What we see here in the lines of Ham and Canaan is the continuing of the seed of the serpent. These are people who choose to reject God and follow satan.

Next, Noah blessed the LORD. We can do that. We bless the Lord by worshiping Him and doing the things that are pleasing to Him. We bless God by becoming followers of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Noah blesses the LORD, then he calls Him “*the God of Shem*”. This is important because Shem is where Israel comes from; and Yahweh is the God of Israel.

Noah’s prophecy indicates that God will have a chosen people in the offspring of Shem and we know that this is what happens. We also know that this is the lineage of Jesus; the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

And certainly, Canaan became the servant of Israel. These people already had the land prepared when Israel came in. They had already built cities, planted gardens and orchards, cleared out wild animals. All their work was to be for Israel’s benefit. Additionally, survivors became slaves to Israel once Israel took over the land.

Lastly, Noah blesses Japheth. There is a play on words here: Japheth means enlarge. So, Noah asks God to “enlarge Enlarge”. We learn from chapter 10 that Japheth’s people groups populated what we now call Europe and Asia minor. It is likely that most of us in here are descended from Japheth.

Noah requests that Japheth dwell in the tents of Shem. This is such an interesting prophecy. A tent is a dwelling place. Consider that to come into someone else’s tent would be to obtain protection. Think about how Israel made a tent in the wilderness that was called the tabernacle. And consider that Jesus came to dwell, or tabernacle, with us.

Jesus was an Israelite from the line of Shem; but all the Gentile nations from the line of Japheth may come to dwell in the safety of Jesus. We may metaphorically dwell in the tents of Shem. And that invitation is actually open to anyone now no matter their lineage. God is truly merciful.

Glancing at some of the high points of chapter 10, we start with Japheth. We already mentioned that his people groups moved mostly in a northerly direction into what is now Europe and Turkey. Several of these groups show up later in the book of Ezekiel in chapters 38 and 39. These chapters describe a great war that takes place as a huge number of troops invade Israel from surrounding countries. In Ezekiel, these armies are miraculously defeated by God’s intervention.

The descendants of Japheth who show up in Ezekiel are Magog, which is probably central Asia; and Gomer, Tubal, Meshech, and Togarmah which are all in modern-day Turkey. It is amazing to see how these ancient people groups who have been harboring the seed of satan will rise up in the end times to meet their end. God is fully aware of what is going on and He will work out everything for His glory.

Starting in verse 6 is the genealogy of Ham. Along with Canaan, his sons were Cush, Mizraim and Put. Put is Libya, Mizraim is Egypt, and Cush is Sudan. It is interesting to note that Libya and Sudan are also part of the war that is mentioned in Ezekiel.

We know that Egypt was used by God for the benefit of Israel. Egypt was a place where the Hebrew people could grow strong in number while being relatively protected. They became slaves of Egypt for a while, but God delivered them through Moses. God delivering Israel from bondage to Egypt through the mediator Moses, is a picture of God delivering us from bondage to sin through the mediator Jesus Christ.

As Japheth’s people spread north into Asia minor and Europe, Ham’s people spread through the middle east and into north Africa. This brings us to verse 21 and the people groups who came from Shem. These tribes spread through the region of Mesopotamia.

It is interesting to note that although Noah blessed the God of Shem, there are a number of nations that came from him that were far from Godly. The Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Syrians all came from the line of Shem. But so did the Hebrew people.

Think back to the genealogy of Seth, the son of Adam and Eve. He had sons and daughters, but God maintained a single line, one generation at a time, until He came to Noah. God is doing the same here with Shem. He will maintain a single line continuing from Noah to Abraham; then, of course, on to Jesus. Be amazed at God, who had been able to ordain and track an unbroken line over thousands of years from Adam to Jesus.

Back in chapter 9, it closes with these verses: *Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood. So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.* This should bring us back to the verses of chapter 5. With the exception of Enoch, this is the ending of each life mentioned: *and he died*. We’ve pointed out several times that sin did not go away; it came along on the ark. The consequences of sin didn’t go away either; in the book of Hebrews, it tells us: *it is appointed unto man once to die*. (Heb 9:27)

But death isn’t the end. The rest of that verse is “*but after this the judgement*.” The flood of the earth was just an example of what God’s judgement is like; it is total and all consuming. Nothing will escape it unless they take the way that God provides. In the same way that God provided Noah with the ark to escape judgement, He provided us with Jesus Christ. To stand before God in Christ is to be declared “not guilty”. To stand before God without Christ will be to bear your own guilt. Noah made his choice during his lifetime; we have to make our choice during ours.

Prayer

Lord God, Your word makes it clear that nothing takes place that escapes Your notice; nothing happens that will thwart Your plan; You are all-knowing God who has created all things and maintains the universe by Your will. How can we, Your sinful rebellious creatures, ever hope to stand before You righteous? What claim do we have to Your mercy?

But it is because of Your great mercy that we can cling to Your grace that You offer in Jesus Christ. It is hard for us to accept that we can do nothing to win Your favor. It is in our nature to try to earn our salvation. Help us, Holy Spirit, to bear in mind that these are themselves rebellion against our God. Help us, Holy Spirit, to humbly seek salvation through Jesus alone; confessing that He is the only way to the Father.

Jesus, You are Lord of all the nations. And even though most now reject You, the time will come when every knee will bow before You; a time when Your glory and majesty will be revealed. We proclaim that Your Kingdom is here now; in Your church, in the heart of every believer. We also proclaim that Your Kingdom will visibly appear one day; and all creation will recognize it. Come, Lord Jesus.

In Your most holy name we pray

Amen