

Advent #1: The Problem¹
Genesis 6:5-13
ABC 12/1/19

It just doesn't work to start in the middle of a story. You can't crack open a novel & begin reading in the middle & make any sense of what's happening. Neither can you walk into the middle of a movie & make sense of what's going on. Nor can you jump into the middle of a conversation & actually say things that are appropriate without knowing where that conversation's already been. & if you start Advent with the Baby in Bethlehem, you're not starting at the beginning of the story. You're starting in the middle & there'll be things that don't make sense. Why the joyous song of the angels? Why the fear of the shepherds? Why the journey of the Magi? Why the panic of Herod? You have to begin with the roots of the story, & that's what I want to do this Advent. Christmas is grounded in the grief of God's heart. If you don't understand God's heartache you won't understand the glory of the incarnation. With that being said, turn to Gen 6 & let's take a look at Noah's story. You may think this isn't a Christmassy story, but by the time we're done, you'll understand. As you turn there, hopefully, we all know that all the Bible is about Jesus. But the Bible is also all about sin. It's the record of sin entering into the world, its effect & impact. It goes from the entrance of sin to its final judgment. The Bible is the history of sin & of Jesus because Jesus is the only remedy to our sin. Read with me, **Gen 6:5-13**. PRAY

This is one of the most revealing passages of Scripture when it comes to the sinfulness of man. The point here is very clear: The judgment of God will fall on sinful humanity. God would wipe out the human race because it was so pervasively wicked. God cannot tolerate sin because He's absolutely & always holy. He always acts in consistency with His holy nature. Here we see Him looking at the earth & saying He's going to purge it of wicked humanity. Corruption has gone beyond the point of recovery & God is going to flood the earth. These vss unfold in a very simple way. 1st we see...

1. What God Saw 5

¹ Advent series adapted from Paul David Tripp's Advent sermons from 2010

When it says, **the Lord saw**, it has the idea that He was completely aware of everything at all times. It isn't as if His eyes were scanning the planet & He saw something He hadn't seen before. That's not it. Heb 4:13 says, **all things are open & laid bare to the eyes of Him**. Nothing escapes His knowledge. & what God saw when He looked at these people wasn't just their behavior but behind it to their thoughts. It wasn't that they were good people, well-intentioned, & messed up by their environment. That's a modern definition of sin, that man is basically good & he's corrupted by the people or circumstances around him. That's not the Bible's definition. The Bible says what's wrong with mankind isn't just his behavior, that's only a symptom. What's wrong is our nature. God **saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth**. & then He goes right to the core of the issue, **that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**. He repeats the same thing in chpt 8. **The intent of man's heart is evil from his youth** (21). God looked into the heart of man & saw everything conceived there, every idea, thought, philosophy, all of it **was only evil continually**. This isn't to say that everyone is equally as vicious, as murderous, as proud, as angry, & as evil, as every other man. It's that every human is a sinner, unable to conceive or design anything in himself that isn't wicked. This is a powerful statement on human depravity. Why did God drown the human race? Because of their sin. **11-12**

Everything about us & in us is corrupted by sin. Our mind is corrupted. Our heart is corrupted. Our emotions are corrupted. Our intentions are corrupted. Our hands are corrupted. Our mouths are corrupted. What happens when **every intent of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually**? Behavior becomes **corrupt & violence** breaks out everywhere. That's what God saw & guess what? It's what He still sees. It isn't any different today. The only people who aren't like that are those who've been saved by His grace. God saw man's sin & depravity. But it goes deeper than that.

2. What God Felt 6

Does it bother you to think about God's judgment? If so, there's nothing wrong with your heart. There's Someone else who actually experiences considerably more distress than you do at the thought of divine judgment. That's God Himself. What does God do when He sees what has to be

done? What's His response? His heart is filled with pain. You're upset about divine judgment? God is more upset. His heart was filled with pain. What a statement. How could this be? In Isaiah 54:6, God says, **the LORD has called you, Like a wife forsaken & grieved in spirit, Even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected.** Being deserted by your spouse is one of the most shattering, traumatic things you can go through. That's the kind of pain God felt. What does this mean? It means God voluntarily bound His heart to us. He didn't have to. He didn't need us, but once He made us, He knit His heart to us. His own joy must be so deeply tied to us that when He sees something go wrong with our lives He experiences pain. Not just sadness, but pain, the deepest & most shattering pain possible. In Isaiah 49:15, God says, **Can a woman forget her nursing child & have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.** God gives us the image of a woman looking down at her nursing baby. She experiences enormous, overwhelming physical & emotional love for her child. & God has the audacity not just to suggest that, but to say, *That's nothing compared to what I feel for you.* Obviously, deists are wrong. God isn't some aloof god that wound up the universe & stepped back to see what would happen. No, God desires a relationship, an intimacy with His creation, to commune & fellowship with us. God feels & can be grieved deeply. He isn't apathetic or indifferent. In fact, Ezekiel said God finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked (18:23; 33:11). Here in Gen it says God was **sorry**. What does that mean? It means He was sad, **sorry** He even made man. God can feel & He felt the disappointment of the horrors that occurred since He'd created the glories of Eden. Don't ever think that God is gleeful when He judges. He's not. Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem because He knew what was going to happen when judgment fell (Lk 19:41-44). He wept at the grave of Lazarus because He knew what death was going to do repeatedly throughout history & the pain, sadness, & sorrow it would cause (Jn 11). But His sorrow isn't just over the condition of man but also over the fact that He must do what He must do. When we sin we grieve God. He cares about us more than we care about ourselves. He is deeply & intimately involved. He knows our heart & is grieved by our sin. When we sin, reject His Word, His salvation, & live out life in disregard to Him, God has no choice. Judgment falls & that's a grief to God. He's so sad He

expresses it in the most extreme terms. He was **sorry** He made man on the earth. It's like saying, *I wish these people never existed*. This is one of most sorrowful statements in the Bible. God made us, blessed us, loved us, looked at us, & said, *I'm grieved that you exist, & there's nothing but pain for Me*. I have 4 kids that I love. As a father, how bad would those kids need to be for me to look them in the eye & say, *I love you very much, but I regret the day you were born. I'm grieved you exist, because you've been nothing but trouble & sorrow & shame. I mourn your birthday. I regret the fact I had you. This saddens me, but I'm sorry you exist*. Do you see what's going on here? These are deeply personal words: **The Lord was sorry... He was grieved in His heart**. What is it that would bring such grief to the heart of God? It suggests something personal, some kind of personal offense, insult, or betrayal. What could be so bad it would bring tears to the heart of God? What is it? Man's wickedness, evil, & sin (5). We don't really understand the great horror of these words. We don't understand the tragedy of God's grief if we don't understand these words relationally. If we don't understand the deeply personal aspect of what's being described here, we don't really understand the glory of the sending of the Baby to Bethlehem. We were created & hardwired to love God. That love of God was to be the thing that shaped every thought, motive, choice, decision, word, & action. Mankind was created to recognize & love God, to worship Him in His majesty. That's what we all were created to do. We were made for God & to love God. This is the calling of all humanity: Love God! &, believe it or not, we're all lovers! Everything we ever do is always driven & motivated by love. & the love that was to motivate us was a God-ward love. That's how we were meant to live. Obedience isn't some kind of forced submission to abstract rules. Obedience is rooted in our love of God. Because we love God, we find joy in bringing Him joy. We find joy in what He calls us to do. We find joy in serving Him. We find joy in pointing to His glory because we love Him. This is true in any relationship. When you love someone, you want to serve & please them & you find joy in their joy. That's how we're all meant to live. By the time we get to Gen 6 it's clear something's happened because there must be some other love that's claimed our hearts. How do we know? Because we're no longer delighting in serving God. We don't find joy in His joy & don't even want

to. We blatantly ignore God & willingly, purposefully, continually do what is evil in His eyes. Remember when Jesus was asked, *What's the greatest command?* He summarized the law & said, **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, & with all your soul, & with all your mind** (Mt 2:36-40). Since loving God is the ultimate command, then the greatest sin is the failure to love Him. But when humans no longer love God as they should, it doesn't mean they don't love at all. We always love. If you're not loving God, you'll give that love to somebody else. No one in this room is loveless. So what love is so seductive, powerful & deceptive that it has the ability to replace the love we were meant to have for God? Paul, as he's making a comment on the reason for the incarnation of Jesus, says, **Jesus was born & died so that they who live might no longer live for themselves** (2 Cor 5:15). The thing that always replaces love for God is love of self. We all put ourselves on His throne. We're obsessed with our will & our way. We want to be in control of our own lives. We want to set our own rules. We're obsessed with our own comfort, pleasure, & happiness. When we live for ourselves, we step outside of God's boundaries because our heart isn't motivated by love for Him. Just look around & you see evidence of this dominating, controlling, enslaving self-love everywhere. But don't just look around, look within yourself & you'll find the exact same thing. What is it that makes a marriage so hard? Selfishness. I marry you because I love you & I have a wonderful plan for your life. You just have to conform to my will! What is it that makes parenting so hard? Because children want to be self-sovereigns. They want to write their own law. They want to set their own rules.

Pastor Paul David Tripp tells this story: We were heading out on a family road trip. If you want to experience the depravity of the selfishness of sin, go on a long family road trip. You'll not only experience your children's, but yours. Our son had some polyps in his nose & he'd wheeze when he breathed. It was a bit distracting. He's sitting in the back seat next to his sister, & she says, *Dad, he's bothering me.*

I said, *What's he doing?*

She answered, *He's breathing.*

I said, *What do you want me to do?*

She told me, *Tell him to stop.*

Did you catch that? In essence, *My brother is breathing; if he'd stop breathing my life would be better.*² We laugh but think about it: Every act of hatred, murder, greed, bitterness, & violence is rooted in self-love. Every word of gossip, every act of disobedience, every harsh & cutting word is rooted in arrogant selfishness. All the evil in the world has happened because we no longer love God as we should. The world was designed to love God & when we don't, evil & wickedness reign. But we know God loves the creatures He made by the fact that His heart is broken over our lack of love for Him. If you love someone & they turn their back on you, betray your love, & set their love on someone else, your heart is broken. God proves Himself, not just to be the almighty, sovereign Creator, but to be a God of marvelous love as He weeps at mankind's betrayal because we were all created to have a beautiful love relationship with Him. As we read this passage, we should let our mind's see tears in the eyes of God & our ears hear weeping from the voice of God. God's grieved. Because not only has that love been taken from Him, it's been turned into self-love instead. It's the ultimate of betrayals. His sadness is also tied to the fact that He has no choice. His holiness demands destruction. It's necessary & consistent with who He is. His holy nature has no choice but to punish sin, & that brings Him grief. We've looked at what God saw & what He felt. Now ...

3. What God Said 7, 13

Doesn't sound promising, does it? But God isn't only just, He's also patient & merciful. God always warns before He judges. In vs 3 God says man's days shall be 120 years. There's 120 years until the flood. What did God do during those 120 years? He had Noah preaching righteousness (2 Pt 2:5). God said He was going to destroy mankind but He gave 120 years of warning. God is patient, so patient that sometimes people think He isn't there & doesn't care about our rebellion, self-love, & sinfulness (1 Pt 3:5-6). The major message of the Bible isn't God loves you & has a wonderful plan for your life. Its message is that God must & will punish sin. His holy nature requires it. But He always warns 1st. He'll extend patience, but He'll act sovereignly in judgment when iniquity is full. God knows that every sin is vertical. We've never sinned a

² Sermon titled, *Advent-The Need*, preached 11/28/2010

purely horizontal sin. Every sin is forgetting Him, refusing to love Him, & rejecting His presence, glory, & authority. That's why David, in confessing his sin of murder & adultery says, **Against You, You only, I have sinned & done what is evil in Your sight** (Ps 51:4). He's saying, *My failure wasn't just that I didn't love Bathsheba & Uriah as I should. God, my failure was I didn't love You as I should. & when I didn't love You as I should, I was able to do these horrendous things. My sin is against You!* How would you respond in the face of such a betrayal? More importantly, what's God going to do? How will He respond to this betrayal? **7a**

He has no choice. His holy nature demands He have a righteous reaction to sin. This sounds like a sad & horrible end to the story. Don't you hate it when you watch a movie or TV show or read a book & you're hoping for a great ending, & it ends in disaster? That's how this appears. That God, not in an act of ugly vengeance, but in holy, righteous justice says, *Enough! I made you. I owned you. I provided every good thing you could ever want, & this is what you do? You turn your back on Me? I'll blot you out!* God has every right to do that. & it's not unrighteous anger. It's holy & righteous justice that will send the waters of the flood to wipe the earth clean. It would seem this is the end of the story. & it would have been if not for vs 8. Where we see...

4. What God Gave 8

Do you see the problem we have here? God is an infinitely holy & loving God. Humanity is evil. Sin must be judged. What's the solution? Noah & the flood show us it. By an act of sovereign grace, God placed His **favor** on Noah & his family & they were chosen by God's grace to survive the waters of the flood. Did they deserve it? No. They were sinners too. But in God's mercy He gave them the grace to repent & love God. What did God give? He gave grace. He gave **favor**. The Lord looked down on Noah & He gave him grace. **Noah found favor or grace in the eyes of God**. Not because he was good but by God's choice. Because of God's grace, what do we see in **vs 9?**

Don't think Noah was saved because he was a good guy. That's not true. He was a sinner before the flood & a sinner after the flood (Gen 9:20ff). But he escaped God's wrath & judgment. Why? How? Remember Heb 11? The heroes of the faith? **By faith Noah, being warned by God about**

things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, & became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Noah & his family weren't saved by their works or their own righteousness. They were saved because God's grace was given to them. **By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen.** What hadn't been seen? Rain & flooding. He was warned by God about things not yet seen. I love this: **In reverence he prepared an ark for the salvation of his household.** There never had been any rain but God said it's going to rain & you're going to have to have a boat to float above the water or you'll drown. & Noah believed God, acknowledged the warning, & started building. Noah believed God & **in reverence**, in worshipful love, **prepared an ark for the salvation of his household.** His faith stood as a stark condemnation of everyone else, while they mocked & laughed & ridiculed this stupid man building a boat for 120 years. But because of God's grace, he faithfully stood against a condemned & sinful world & **became an heir of the righteousness which is according to what? Faith.** How were people saved in the OT? By faith. Noah believed what God said. He didn't yet know about the Messiah & the cross & the resurrection, but by God's grace he believed what God said. & God counted his faith as sufficient & gave him righteousness. God clothed him with His own righteousness because of Noah's faith.

What happens after the waters of the flood recede & the earth dries out? God makes a covenant with Noah, & God says, *Noah, I'm going to bless you & not only bless you, but I'm going to bless your descendants* (Gen 9:1-19). If you read through the genealogy that follows (chpt 10, 11:10-32), you'll read a lot of names you'll probably quickly forget. But you'll eventually come to the name *Abram*. Abram was one of those descendants & God made a covenant with Him & said, **I will make you a great nation, & I will bless you, & make your name great; & so you shall be a blessing; & I will bless those who bless you, & the one who curses you I will curse. & in you all the families of the earth will be blessed** (Gen 12:2-3). Who is this descendant of Abraham through which all the world will be blessed? Jesus. The only way this horrible brokenness of our relationship with God could be cured is for God to send His Son. In God's grace, Christmas came. God granted to Noah faith & his faith was counted as righteousness. Why? Because God placed

all of Noah's sins on Jesus who would suffer on the cross in Noah's place. Noah was justified & therefore was blameless in his time. Everybody else was blameworthy, but God didn't blame him. When Jonah was in the boat & a terrible storm came up, Jonah said, *There's only one way for you to be saved: Toss me out & you'll be saved.* He was thrown into the water, & when he was in the belly of the fish he says to God, **All Your breakers & billows passed over me. So I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight'** (2:2-3). Jesus comes along, & in Mt 12 says, **something greater than Jonah is here** (41). What was He talking about? What he's saying is, *There's a greater storm coming, & I'm going to be at the bottom of it. I'm going to be crushed by it, & I'm going to be saying, 'Father, all Your breakers & billows have passed over me. I have been expelled from Your sight.'* My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *It's going to be an ocean of wrath & justice. What's going to come down on Me is everything the human race deserves for all their sin.* He says, *My sinking will be your salvation if you believe in Me.* Here in Gen 6 we see God's heart breaking, but on the cross we see His heart completely broken. Here we see God beginning to suffer for sin, but on the cross we see the ultimate example, because on the cross we see His justice & love utterly satisfied. On the cross Jesus had to die. That's how committed to justice God is. Jesus had to die, but He was willing to die. That's how committed to love God was. Through His judgment we're saved. Through His sinking, we can be saved. All the rain, waves, & billows, all the lightning & thunder are pummeling Him. He takes it. That means there's now no more judgment for those who've placed their faith in Him. If you believe that, & you see Him dying on the cross for you, what does it do? It allows you to love God as you were created to do. This is the story of Christmas.

We all need to be rescued like Noah was. Someone needs to do for us what we can't do for ourselves if we're ever going to be one of those people that loves God in the way He was meant to be loved. We have a sin & self-love problem. We need to be rescued. So God sends His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be exposed to all the harsh realities of life in a fallen world, but to live in all the brokenness & all that temptation an utterly perfect life which flowed out of His love for God His Father. He said, *I came to do Your will, O Father* (Heb 10:9; Lk 22:42). In every thought,

desire, word, & action, Jesus perfectly obeyed. He did what we're unable to do. & He died an atoning death. He took our sin upon Himself & paid the penalty for our sin with His death so there would be hope for us. Love of self was defeated & replaced by the love of God. So that someday we'll stand before Him & every cell of our beings will fully love Him so that every word, thought, & action will be pleasing in His sight. That's the hope of redemption. Jesus is our ark, isn't He? & in Christ we rise above the final judgment.

Sin left us in a desperate condition, unrighteous in every way, which grieved God's heart. By Christ's work on the cross, the power of sin has been broken. Therefore, we don't need to live under the slavery of sin any longer. But the presence of sin still remains & is being progressively eradicated by His sanctifying grace within us. There are times when our thoughts are shaped by our love of God, but not always. There are times when the things we desire flow out of love for God, but not always. There are times when the words we speak are formed by our love for God, but not always. You gave evidence this week in your own life that the war of love still goes on in your heart. How do I know? Because there's evidence in my life of the exact same thing. Maybe that struggle was even this morning getting ready for or on your way to church. Outbreaks of self-love create anger & division & conflict. Everyone in this room still needs to embrace the sad reality of this betrayal & the glorious celebration of the hope that is ours represented by the Baby in a manger who has come on this mission of rescue & deliverance. & because He came, there will be a day when there'll be a company of people who will be completely controlled by their love for God, & they'll live for His glory forever & ever. The ark of Noah's is a symbol of salvation. It was invented by God. Noah didn't come up with the idea. No, it was God's idea, His blueprint, His design. The only way to be saved from God's holy judgment is by God's plan, not ours. There's only 1 way to be saved from His judgment. There weren't many ways. It was on the boat or die. If you were outside the ark saying, *I don't believe there's only one ark; I believe there must be many.* You can believe that all the way to your death. There was only 1 door to the ark. Jesus tells us He's the only door to being restored to our Father & escaping His judgment.

Maybe you've placed your trust in this Jesus, but you can still say, *I see that war within me & I need the resources of grace that can only be found in Jesus*. But maybe you're here this morning, & for the 1st time, you've realized, *I don't think I've ever lived for anybody but me*. Confess that to Jesus this morning & seek His forgiveness & His grace.

In Noah we see the pattern by which God would deal with sin: judgment & redemption. He'd wipe out people from the face of the earth in an act of righteous judgment, but He'd redeem one man & his family & make a covenant to them. The redemption of Noah was to be a finger that pointed to another redemption, one following the same pattern. God would send His Son. Jesus would be righteous in every way, yet judgment would fall on Him. He'd experience the full weight of God's anger over sin, even to death, so that we wouldn't have to. His death would satisfy God's wrath. His righteousness would be credited to us. His resurrection would guarantee us life. His righteousness is our only hope. We need Christmas because we need to be freed from the death sentence that hangs over us. Jesus came to be blotted out in our place so we can be saved. The good news is that just like Noah received grace, we can too. Just like Noah took refuge in the ark, we can take refuge in Jesus who lived, died, & rose to free us from the penalty & power of sin in our lives. PRAY MEN COME

Note the contrast between Noah & the rest of the world. Noah is righteous & blameless. But he's not just a goodie-two-shoes. He walks with God, which means his way of life is characterized by a relationship with Him. The world, however, is corrupt, in a state of utter spiritual & moral decay. The world is a cesspool; Noah stands alone. Righteousness vs corruption. How are we to think about this contrast as we approach the Lord's table? The Bible says:

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him (Jn 3:16-17)

It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go & learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, & NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Mt 9:12-13)

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.... God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Rom 5:6-11)

God gave grace to Noah & pulled out the one righteous man from the corrupt world. In Jesus, God sent the one Righteous Man into the corrupt world. In the days of Noah, there was safety & refuge for those who entered into the door of the ark. In Egypt there was safety & refuge for those who were gathered behind the doors that were sprinkled with the blood of the Passover lamb. For you & me, there is safety & refuge from eternal judgment, but only if we enter through the death & resurrection of Jesus Christ alone. **PRAY PASS**

Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; & when He had given thanks, He broke it & said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor 11:23-24). We eat of the bread thankfully, remembering the salvation we have only through Jesus.

He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor 11:25). God's wrath was poured out on Him for our sins. We remember the salvation we have by His grace as we drink together.