

BY FAITH, NOAH PREACHED LAW AND GOSPEL

His Law preaching was vivid and powerful -- His Gospel message was hidden in Christ.

Hebrews 11:7

TEXT: *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Put yourself in Noah's shoes. Imagine what it must have been like to have been given the command to build an ark with such size and dimensions so as to house God's selected representatives of the entire animal kingdom and enough food to keep them alive for an entire year!

The Lord was about to bring an awesome judgment upon the earth. And whenever the Lord brings about a judgment, he does two things: he punishes sin and he saves His Church. Noah and his family would witness the destruction of the world as it had originally been created, along with all humanity and all animal life. This amazing piece of world history is so awesome that it is hardly believe except by those who believe God's Word.

What is often overlooked, however, is that in addition to building the ark, Noah was compelled to preach. He boldly explained the truth about what the ark was about. And he urged everyone in his preaching to repent and to believe the Gospel of salvation through faith alone in the Savior God had promised to send. We know this, for in his second Epistle, Peter describes Noah as *a preacher of righteousness...* and our text today says: *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.* To put this in more familiar words: BY FAITH, NOAH PREACHED LAW AND GOSPEL. His Law preaching was vivid and powerful; and, His Gospel message was hidden in Christ.

Noah is listed as the third patriarch in the Messianic line from Enoch, the man of faith of whom it is said, *walked with God...* and *...was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death...* He 11 Noah's father, Lamech, may have spent the first 50 years of his own life being personally acquainted with Adam's son, Seth. With these long life spans of 800-900 years, the Gospel promise that God was going to send a Savior, the Descendant of Eve, into the world could be proclaimed and passed down orally and with simple truthfulness and accuracy.

But by the time of Lamech, Noah's father, the world had become so wicked, that Scripture tells us that when baby Noah was born, his father held him in his arms and said: *He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed...* Ge 5 That's what "Noah" means, and it suggests that Lamech himself may have thought like many of us do today: "God just can't let things get any worse! Then End must be near." Lamech may have even hoped that HIS little Noah might be the promised Savior.

But Noah was not the Savior. Instead, Noah would be a PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. He would be called by the Lord to preach one of the most powerful judgments the earth would experience before the Last Day when the Lord Jesus will come again to destroy the heavens and the earth with fire.

There are two descriptions of the conditions of the world in Noah's day. One is that of the Old Testament when says: *The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time...* Ge 6 It refers to great violence among powerful and violent men. This is not unlike what the world is experiencing yet today. The other day our world was shocked by Islamic terrorist destruction of life in Nice, France.

In the New Testament, however, Jesus describes this same period of time from a different perspective. He said: As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. *... in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.* Mt 24 This means that while there was great violence and immorality, there also was great spiritual apathy. While Noah was a preacher, no one cared to listen and believe that they needed a Savior.

So, God told Noah to build an ark, and he did. God has told us to preach the Gospel. Do people listen? It doesn't take a great theologian to see that our world today is like Noah's world insofar as there is great violence, sin and immoral living. Even the ungodly are alarmed at how societies world-wide have devolved

into such shameful immorality. It is, however, the more dangerous situation when the spiritual apathy of our time is demonstrated by the general disregard of God's Word that is so evident today. People are sick and tired of preaching. Referencing the days of Noah's Flood, Jesus said: ***That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.*** Mt 24 On that day, "the door of the ark" will be shut.

What does it take to get people to listen to God's Word? Even Isaiah wondered when his preaching was ignored. He cried: ***Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*** Is 53 But Isaiah kept on preaching the message, as did Noah even as he kept on building, for God's Word is true. So we keep on preaching, for the day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, comes closer and closer with every tic of the clock and with every heartbeat of every soul still on the face of this earth.

Noah's Law preaching was vivid and true, but no one listened. So no one cared about the precious Gospel message of salvation that he also preached, hidden in the name of the Lord's Christ. But God's Word says: ***By his faith (Noah) condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*** What does this mean? It means that while Noah could see the sin and wickedness in his world, and how they despised worship and God's commandments, while he would see, hear and feel the painful ridicule of those who came by to laugh at the ark he was commanded to build, what he COULD NOT SEE was what God had promised in His grace hidden in the Savior who was to come. But through faith in God's promise, faith in the Jesus whose day of being born of a virgin, crucified for our sins, and raised for our justification, was still some 3-4 thousand years in the future, Noah ***became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.***

Blessed are you if you have heard and so believe! For as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians concerning God's Elect, his chosen ones, those predestined for salvation: ***...you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-to the praise of his glory.*** Eph 1

The building of that huge floating zoo must have sickened him. Among those who did not believe were neighbors, friends and relatives. Probably those who liked Noah refrained from ridiculing him, but secretly housed their personal feelings of embarrassment at what he was believing, preaching and building. But Noah kept building, preaching and hoping that others might listen, believe and enter the ark with him. But in the end, as Peter writes: ***In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water...*** 1Pe 3.

In that same passage from Peter goes on: ***In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...*** All who are baptized are invited to enter this ARK that is saved by water. Do you see this salvation hidden in this plain old everyday water has the power of God's Holy Spirit. This same water that is able to down human life, is with God's power and Word and "water of life" the washing of renewal, of forgiveness, life and salvation.

Do you see this? Of course not! For it is BY FAITH -- the same faith of Noah, that these blessings are seen. And just as it was with Noah, so it is with EVERYONE who has been baptized and who still believe what God says about our baptism. Like Noah, who by faith ***became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith...*** so are all who hear this Word that we preach and believe it.

A tradition in church architecture is to build the main sanctuary of a church to resemble the inside of a boat, and from the Latin word for "ship" call it "the nave." Here, in this "nave" the Law and Gospel has been proclaimed to you exactly as the Lord has commanded for over 125 years. The water of Holy Baptism has brought many to faith, and the Lord's own body and blood has been fed to hundreds upon hundreds of souls. What a blessed "ark" this has been for those so blessed to be in it! May God always keep this blessed "ark" afloat by the power of His Word and Sacrament until He comes again, in Jesus' name. Amen