

Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup>“Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. <sup>17</sup>Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it.”

<sup>18</sup>So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. <sup>19</sup>All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on land—came out of the ark, one kind after another.

<sup>20</sup>Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. <sup>21</sup>The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

<sup>22</sup>“As long as the earth endures,  
seedtime and harvest,  
cold and heat,  
summer and winter,  
day and night  
will never cease.” (Genesis 8:15-22)

### **We Have So Much for Which to Be Thankful**

“We have so much for which to be thankful.” As he puts one stone on top of another to build the altar, selects the animals for the sacrifice, sparks the fire and burns them up completely to the Lord, I can imagine Noah standing there with the only other 7 people left in the world, thinking maybe even saying something like, “We have so much to be thankful for.”

It had been over a year since the Lord told Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, along with all those animals...**I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made**” (Genesis 7:4). And here they are, after all of that and now a year later, safe on dry ground. There was so much to be thankful for.

It had been 120 years before that when God told Noah his plan. The wickedness of mankind had become so great, every inclination of his heart was only evil all the time (Genesis 6:5). The crown of his creation, the prized jewel, was so evil, so bad, and so corrupt, the earth was so filled with violence we’re told the Lord’s heart was filled with pain over what they had become. God’s plan for salvation of sending the one to crush Satan’s head and, therefore, to save you was in jeopardy! So God told Noah to build an ark because he is going to destroy all mankind and the earth with a world-wide flood. Still, there was so much for which to be thankful. The Lord gave the people time. For 120 years Noah’s hammer rings out and the ark goes up—a call to repentance to a wicked world.

After those 120 years the ark is closed. The rains come down and the waters rise. Every living creature—every animal of land and sky—was wiped out. Every human being—some estimate the population was 10 billion at the time—every man, woman, mom, dad, baby, child was wiped out except for eight. How terrifying that had to have been. The waves crashing against the sides of the ark. The rains pouring down from above. Day after day, night after night, no sun, no moon, no stars to be seen, only more rain for forty days and forty nights. And, yet, Noah knew he had so much to be thankful for. The Lord had rescued them. Those waters had saved Noah and his family from the wickedness, evil, corruption of this world. Though the waters roar and foam, God was his refuge and strength.

Eventually the rain would stop and Noah still has much to be thankful for. He had plenty to keep him busy, so many animals and critters to take care of, things that needed his attention on the ark. As he peaks his head out of that window, lets out the raven and the dove, he probably sees how the waters are receding, the ground eventually drying, green growing, Noah sees he still has so much for which to be thankful. Finally, God speaks to him: **“Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. <sup>17</sup> Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it”** (v.16-17).

And Noah leads them out, each according to their kind. All eight humans along with the all the animals take a giant leap for all mankind onto this new earth. Everything is different. The landscape of the earth completely changed. It’s not hard to imagine the reality of the entire situation crashing down: they are the only ones left alive. Everyone they knew was dead. Their home, gone. Everything they knew and were familiar with, wiped away in those waters. As Noah looks around at everything rejuvenating and growing there were a lot of things that he could have done. There’s a whole new world to explore! There was a lot of work to do to resettle this new creation. God had given him this responsibility after all! Instead, he stops and takes time to build an altar. He selects the correct animals and sacrifices them as burnt-offerings to the Lord. Noah knows the love the Lord showed him and his family wasn’t deserved. He knew that the Lord wasn’t a wicked tyrant but the gracious and compassionate Lord who keeps his promises. That God chose them was purely grace! They had so much to be thankful for.

We know that too. We say that often enough: **“We have so much to be thankful for.”** At the same time, there is much trying to rob us of that thankfulness. There are so many of your personal life goals and dreams that go unfulfilled and not realized. We find ourselves caught up chasing after having more things, different things, newer things, nicer things. So easily we focus on how things could be better. Yes, we are thankful for *this*, but it would be nice to have had *that*. Yes, we are thankful for how God has blessed us, but we can’t

help but notice what she gets to experience and do, the family life she seems to enjoy, the relationships that she has. Instead of thankfulness, frustration wells up, jealousy seeps in, and resentment grows.

We have so much to be thankful for, but what if...Yes, things might be going smoothly now, but what happens when it inevitably will change? You remember how things were tight in the past, what if that happens again? Instead of hearts that joyfully serve and generously give, we wonder whether or not God will give us enough. We want to see the numbers and the facts and alongside thankfulness weeds of doubt and worry can start to grow wanting to choke it out.

We have so much to be thankful for and, yet, so often I see myself like the other 9 lepers who were cleansed. We have life to get back to and responsibilities that need your attention yesterday. Why is it so difficult for me to take time, to stop, and to just be thankful? There's so much running through my mind and my attention is on what's next and what needs taking care of later. Why is it so hard sometimes to just stop, take time to sit in God's house, to sing his praises, to rest in God's goodness? Why do I have to keep being reminded to be thankful? Is it because deep down I feel I should have this stuff in my life? Is it because I feel these gifts are pretty good but could be better? Is it because I fail to understand that everything that I have in my life, who I am, is purely because God opened his hand and gives them to me?

You think about how we react when someone is not thankful to us when we have given even a little thing? "Fine! No more for you. I'll find someone who will better appreciate it." That God gives any good gifts is truly undeserved.

Thanks be to God he does not give to us in proportion to how thankful we are. He always gives more. Even when we give out of thankfulness for what he has done, he promises to open the flood gates of heaven to bless you. You cannot out-give God but he wants you to try. He says test him on this!

We don't know what's going through the mind of Noah as he steps off that ark; maybe he is wrestling with similar issues as us. That big, "What if?" may have been weighing heavily upon him as he knew what the world had been and sees what he is called to do. And, yet, faith trusting in God's promises responds in thankfulness. When Noah makes these sacrifices to the Lord we are told the smell of the sacrifice pleases the Lord and he says, **"Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done"** (v.21). Notice: the state of mankind never changed—Noah included. The very same reason the Lord gave for destroying the earth in the first place is still there: every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. The human heart is opposed to God, under his wrath, and cannot free itself of this evil by

its own power. It cannot please God nor does it want to. But never again would the Lord destroy it like he did.

Instead, of destroying the Lord follows through with his promise to save it. From the line of Noah a Savior would be born, one of human flesh and blood. He would be the one sacrifice—the Lamb of God—that takes away the sins of the world. After all, without the shedding of blood there cannot be forgiveness of sins. So Jesus, with his holy precious blood whose only inclination was always to love and serve God in perfect thankfulness all the time, offers himself up for us. His body and life, his suffering and death would be sacrificed on the altar of the cross. There he would endure the torment of hell. There he would not be spared any suffering but giving himself wholly and completely. He is forsaken by his Father for our sinful, corrupt hearts that he claims to be his own. But on that cruel cross is Christ's glory. The Father punishes Jesus so that the Almighty does not punish you. God's wrath is appeased and God's peace with mankind is achieved. We have so much for which to be thankful because God would not let his Holy One Jesus to rot in the tomb. He raised Jesus to life so we have no doubt: sin really is paid for and taken away—Jesus lives!

As the Lord did for Noah, so he did for you because that evil wicked heart was yours by nature. The water saved Noah and his family, lifting them up from the wickedness and corruption of the world. Those floodwaters symbolize baptism that now saves you. With water and the Word God wipes out the sin and wickedness within you giving you a clean conscience before him. By Jesus' rising from the dead, baptism saves you from death and gives you life with him. In those waters God drowns your sinful flesh and you rose with Jesus a new creation. He lifts you up, sets you apart from this world, and declares in His name you are God's own child. Satan holds no claim on you and sin has no control over you. You are forgiven. You are baptized. We have so much for which to be thankful.

As his new creations Jesus sends us out as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This isn't just one part of your life that you do with church or at church. No, he set apart our entire lives to live and serve him by loving and serving our neighbor. With eyes of faith and hearts of thanks we see him generously pour out his gifts on us so that we are rich in every way to be generous towards others so that they too may come to know and believe what Jesus has done for them! Why? Because the Lord still patiently waits for more to be brought to faith until the Last Day when Jesus will come again to take us into glory. Until then we have God's promise that as long as the earth endures, the seasons will keep rolling, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease for all of creation. We really do have so much for which to be thankful. Amen.