

Read also Romans 1:18-32, 16-17; 1 John 5:10-12; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 2:9, 12

If you were able to stay with Doris and Sean's readings from the New Testament this morning, you will have noticed quite dramatically that there are two ways of thinking. One way the Old Testament defines as "wicked." It's sort of a strange word in 2011. It makes me think of the hit Broadway musical, "Wicked," the story of Oz from the Witches point of view. The Wicked Witch of the West is green and different; she doesn't fit in. She is misunderstood and victimized. That's why she is evil.

Then there is the popular witch, Glinda, who is perfect, and whom everyone loves. She becomes friends with Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West, and as they work out their differences, their lives become better. It is kind of different from the original story. Good and evil take on an entirely different hue.

Evil is not really evil; just misunderstood.

So the Bible's use of the word "wicked" is quite different. It talks about people who have turned from God; and having done so, lose all thought of God. It is kind of hard to hear what they have filled their lives with, but the most prevalent word in the Old Testament is "violent." And God is deeply grieved. God is crushed. Pastor Steve talked about that last week. God is like a parent whose children have abandoned everything they were taught, rejected everything they were given, and squandered the talents and gifts that are inside.

The world has betrayed God's intent.

The pot which God lovingly molded cracked and broke beyond repair.

The people God hovered over, entrusted with His garden, the men and women He brought together as a gift to one another have abandoned all thought of God, refused to honor Him, and turned away. It is a devastating circumstance.

What was God to do about this devastating situation?

Romans 1 talks about the wrath of God. Now considering how we feel about evil these days, the wrath of God is most likely a fairly distasteful thought to you. He calls these children rebels. We define them as "misunderstood and victimized." And perhaps they are. But those terms are actually bondage. When you are a rebel, you can simply stop. But people defined as victims might think they can't change.

It might be hard for you to wrap your mind around it; it might make you mad, actually, or perhaps you dismiss the idea of the wrath of God.

Except there's one . . . one man by the name of Noah, and he has a family, a wife and sons who are married, so really there are eight. Noah walks with God. He is quite different from the others who are described there.

If you had lived at that time, which group would you want to be a part of? There does seem to be some choice, some say-so, although there is not much choice in being victimized.

Let's talk about what it means to walk with God. Here's a video¹ about a young girl, Akiane. "The most important thing in this world is faith, and without faith you cannot communicate with God," Akiane says.

The Bible says it takes faith. Did you hear what Sean said?

This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." (Ro 1:16b-17)

Noah had faith. Noah heard God's voice. Thus he was righteous, or right with God. He heard God's voice and he obeyed. He acted.

Noah knew the truth about God.

You have learned some truth about God. Do you remember it?

- God gives pleasure (gifts) – The beautiful garden, the woman, marriage
- God gives prohibitions – "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree . . ."
- God gives a call – Tend the garden and name the animals

That is, the man and woman were to go into the world and do something.

Jesus carried on this tradition of His Father. He said,

- "I will make you fishers of men."
- "Go into all the world and spread the good news."
- "Love one another, and if you see someone in need, don't ignore it, *do something*."

Which type of person do you want to be? The one who ignores God's gifts, tramples on his prohibitions, and runs away from his call? Or do you want to be part of the crowd who hears God's call?

So God told Noah to go build a big boat.

God is the great interferer!

Sometimes the call looks so dumb! Build a boat when there is no rain? Go out and tell people it's better to deny themselves and take up a cross?

It's not always easy to follow God's call. Having faith takes learning to live with a God with expectations.

¹<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmm-0-Rdxo8&feature=related>

But it's also being led onto a boat where you find the greatest protection when the storms come. Noah had no idea that boat, that command, would save his life and the life of his family. But God knew.

He had to trust God with what he could not see or envision.

When the storm came he was okay. But the wicked, or faithless people did not have a future. Listen to the story. READ Genesis 7:1-5, 11-24.

Did you notice that God shut him in?

Did you hear that "As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface" (v. 18).

All those in the boat were okay.

Noah walked with God. He honored God's prohibitions. He experienced God's good gifts and a call.

You will not be whole without those three elements.

We are pretty good about receiving God's gifts and obeying God's commands, but we might balk at the call. Because it really means, "How do I then live?" Do I live for myself? Do I reduce my relationship with God to simply the dos and don'ts?

No, like Noah, walking by faith means to do the work of God.

Remember back in Genesis 2 after God planted this beautiful garden it says, "There was no one to tend it" (v. 5).

Today we might say, "Who will tend the church?"

Shall it be said, "There was no one to tend it?"

The Bible says about the wicked, "Each had turned to their own way. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie."

This story teaches about two types of people with two different outcomes. Where do you want to be? I want to be IN THE BOAT!

Paul says, "I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

AMEN