

Genesis 6:5-6, 11-19 John 1:14-19
The Ark, The Church: God Incarnates Love
Sunday February 4th, 2018

As an introduction to today's message I want to tell you a bit about myself. My undergraduate minor was "Art, Architecture and Man". It was a combined group of history, art and architecture courses. And between those and my Master of Theology courses I studied the history of Western Civilization from 4 different perspectives: Art, Architecture, Humanities and Theology. So this series when the idea came to me of "Buildings in the Bible" was very appealing.

Our **New Vistas Building Program** has caused me to return to my "first love" as they say, which is architecture, to consider the many buildings and structures in the Bible that God instructed human beings to build. Through these many structures we see common themes which carry through the entire Bible, which I noted last week.

1st- Protection, Providence and Sanctuary.

2nd- Perfection, Holiness and giving our absolute best to God.

3rd- Incarnation of the will and work of God

4th- Symbols of relationship

5th- Details

This week in particular we will be looking at **Protection, Providence and Sanctuary along with the Incarnation of God**. We will see our relationship to God as our Savior.

The story that was read today of the Ark is a disturbing story.



It is not just a bunch of happy animals on an Ark as it is most often portrayed, but a story of depravity, death and judgement.



It is a story of the salvation of a remnant who though portrayed as “righteous” still shared the sinful nature of all those who passed away in the flood. You might notice sin existed before the flood and after the flood for the nature of human beings did not change.

It seems harsh to our ears today, but one of the major doctrines of the Bible is first made explicit here, “The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.” In classic Christian theology this is called the “totally depravity of Man”.

In modern terms we ask the question, “Are human beings basically good or bad?” If we reply they are basically good the discussion is done. I’m ok, you’re ok, and so we don’t need a Savior, because in the end we will muddle through. But if we say, “Basically bad”, then we need a Savior for we realize we can’t muddle through on our own, because when left to our own devices we turn to evil. That is the point of that book almost all of us read in Junior High, “The Lord of the Flies.”

So this is a foundational story in the Bible. It introduces themes that will be seen all the way through. **First the nature of human beings is sinful.** We tend to turn from God. **Second, our evil grieves God’s heart.**

Third, God judges that evil. God cares enough about us and how we treat each other that he condemns and judges evil. **Fourth, God will always save a remnant.** God saves us through the floods of life. God provides and protects us. God grants sanctuary. **Fifth, God makes Covenants with us that outline God’s relationship with us.**

This story disturbs people on other levels too. There are some to this day who are still looking for the Ark on Mt. Ararat and attempt to

collapse all of Creation's history into the last 6000 years. They take the story literally and believe the entire world was deluged by a worldwide flood. Second there are those who think it was only a local flood Noah prepared for and survived, because for him "the world" was only the part of the world he knew. And third, this story is a parable.

In the end, to me, it doesn't matter what position you take because the point is the same:

1st, God hates and judges the evil and violence we commit.

2nd, we need a Savior.

3rd, God incarnates salvation: an ark, a Christ, a church.

4th, a remnant will survive. We will survive the storms and floods that life brings.

The Church has historically been referred to as an Ark, more specifically as "The Ark of Salvation". This idea has often been reflected in local church architecture. Here are some pictures of the structures of wooden ships. Note the ribs of the boats.



You would think you were in a church rather than an upside down ship.

This is often seen in the ceilings of churches especially since we learned the process called, "glulam". This is the process by which long relatively thin pieces of wood are bent and glued together in some

incredible wavy shapes. The roof of this sanctuary is held up by glulam beams. Here are various church interiors that show the church as an ark:



Here is the funniest picture I found of the Church as an Ark. It is from Russia.



Just as God incarnated his love, his providence, his protection in the Ark; God has called us to build, to incarnate his love in physical buildings here at Vista Church.

Again, here is phase one which is classrooms, and meeting rooms for children, youth and adults.



In phase one all the rooms in the new Education, Administration building will be shared. We will remodel the Patio room into a Nursery & Toddler room. All the current groups and choir who meet in Ed's building, the Admin building and the patio room will move to the new building.

Later in phase 2 we will have separate classrooms for the children and a choir room.



The Admin side of the building will have offices, a reception area that can also be used as a classroom, a Stephen's ministry room, finance area etc.

Last week the "Fly Through" didn't work. This week we pray that it does. Also captions have been added to show which building is which.

Fly Through Video

And the Word that is sung, preached, read and worshipped here in this space, this sanctuary, will through the technology of the internet, be brought to other locations through Satellite Fellowships. And most importantly it will be brought to others through our relationships of love as we reach out and befriend those in our lives and invite them to find the love of God here.

The point is, whether you literally believe in the great flood, or it was a localized flood, or a parable, or right now your own life is under water—God will provide! God incarnates his providence, protection and love, and works through you and me to do it.

In the story of the flood Noah did not close the door of the Ark, God did. In the end God opens the door of our salvation, which is assured through faith in Christ, and closes the door of our sin.

The floods in our lives will always end.

Judgements will come to an end.
We will survive!

There is a contemporary song out called "Do Something" by Matthew West. I believe it sees the world as God saw the world in our story and calls us to action. The words read in part...

*"I woke up this morning
Saw a world full of trouble now
Thought, how'd we ever get so far down
How's it ever gonna turn around
So I turned my eyes to Heaven
I thought, "God, why don't You do something?"*

*Well, I just couldn't bear the thought of
People living in poverty
Children sold into slavery
The thought disgusted me
So, I shook my fist at Heaven
Said, "God, why don't You do something?"*

*He said, "I did, I created you"
If not us, then who
If not me and you*

*Right now, it's time for us to do something
If not now, then when
Will we see an end
To all this pain
It's not enough to do nothing
It's time for us to do something"*

I stay home on Wednesdays, because usually it is very quiet in my home; so I can think and create these sermons being uninterrupted. Not this last Wednesday. I got phone call after phone, and then a bunch of texts from my son who had a spark plug failure on the way to his office

after visiting one of his disabled clients. He works for DDD. He wanted advice and help and lots and lots of tools.

I got out the tools, opened my garage for him to work and he proceeded to replace all his spark plugs. He then found out he had no oil and went to the place he had a lifetime oil fill-up contract and they refused to fill it up. So back he came and he finally found out where you put the oil in. It is amazing what you don't know if someone else does it for you.

Anyway, in a very concrete way I showed him my love and care. I incarnated my love and care by letting him use my garage and even my tools. As he was leaving I told him, "We are a port in the storm where he can always land when he needs help." He said, "Yes, I know and thank you!"



My friends, we are the Church. We are the port where people can land in the storms of life. We are the Ark of Salvation where people can gather in the storms of life!

Get ready to build a bigger Ark and to extend ports of God's love into the world.

What is God saying to you and what are you going to do?

In Jesus' name amen.