Genesis Sermon Series (5)

**“****Be Fruitful, Increase in Number, & Fill the Earth”**

Genesis 9:1-2, 8-17 / January 2, 2022

 **Introduction**

 Genesis can be largely divided into two parts. The first half is titled ‘Pre-History’ up to chapter 1-11, and the second half is titled ‘Patriarch’s History’ up to chapter 12-50. The first half introduces the creation story, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah’s Flood, and the Tower of Babel. Among them, Noah’s Flood story, which introduces up to chapter 6-10, accounts for half of the first half. Why was Noah’s flood story so important?

 This is because Noah’s flood story has the message of ‘the second creation.’ God once again created the world after washing it all away with a flood. It can be seen from the words God told Noah after the judgment of the flood, **“Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.”** This was originally what God told Adam after the first creation in the beginning. What does it mean? This means that the world has begun again. Noah's flood story is for those who begin again.

 In addition, the story of Noah’s flood contains all the fundamental teachings on ‘sin, judgment, and redemption,’ which are the core doctrines of the Christian faith. So, today we are going to rethink the teachings of ‘sin, judgment, and redemption’ through this story, and think about what we should keep in mind at the time we are about to start again in the New Year. Also, we are going to try to think about how we can be fruitful and increase in number and fill the new created earth, which is 2022.

 **Sins**

 The story of Noah’s flood begins with a very strange story. It is said that the sons of God saw the beautiful daughters of men and they married any of them they chose. This description is truly bizarre, and so strange that it is hard to find anywhere else in the Bible, but what it is trying to say is that the heavenly beings have been corrupted enough to combine with the earth's beings, and that God’s creative order has collapsed due to the breaking down the boundary between heaven and earth.

 Genesis 6 describes how God's creation order was collapsed in the days of Noah: **“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.” (6:5); “Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.” (6:11); “God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.” (6:12)** This is not the fall of any one person, but rather describes the fall of the whole world out of God's creative order.

 What we should note is that when God saw the corrupt world, **“the LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.” (6:6)** God was not angry but grieved. Human sin does not make God angry but make him grieved. The saying that God was grieved because of humans means that God and humans were connected to each other and influenced each other. God is the one who is grieved and hurt. Only the loved one is grieved and hurt. God's regret and pain do not mean that he is a weak being, but that he is the one with deep love.

 **Judgement**

 God asked Noah to build an ark, and Noah built it as God told him. Noah's family and all the animals entered the ark one by one. And finally, a 40-day long flood began. The number ‘40’ in the Bible means that something is completed as the time is ripe. 400 years after living in Egypt, the Israelites began their exodus, and it took 40 years to enter Canaan. Before starting his public life, Jesus fasted and prayed alone in the wilderness for 40 days.

 In this way, the number 40 in the Bible appears just before something new begins. Therefore, the rain for 40 days does not just mean that the world has been swept away by floods, but that something new will begin. In the Bible, judgment always means a new beginning, not an end. Therefore, being only interested in the plot of judgement can be a way to miss the point. We need to look at how the Bible describes a new beginning and where the buds of a new beginning sprout.

 The Bible not only shows that God was planning to wipe out the corrupt world by flooding, but at the same time it shows that Noah was a righteous and flawless person.

Not only was the judgement project in progress, but also the sprout and possibility of salvation were in progress. We could miss that the Bible repeatedly emphasizes Noah's righteousness (6:8-9, 6:22, 7:1, 7:5, 8:20-21) because of the tension that the flood judgment will begin soon. Why could Noah be the possibility of salvation in the face of the collapse of the whole world?

 The core of Noah's righteousness can be summed up in one word, ‘obedience.’ Obedience does not just mean unconditional submission to God’s order. True obedience is the attitude of acknowledging that one is created by God, and the attitude of accepting God as God. This was what the fallen people of Noah’s day did not have. They lived as if they were creators rather than creatures. Sin is any kind of attitude that does not acknowledge that they are created by God. Who will save the world? A person who acknowledges that he is a creature, not a creator, has the potential to save the world.

 **Redemption**

 Finally, the rain stopped. Interestingly, if you read Genesis 8, it describes in great detail the process by which the rain stopped, and the water drained from the ground. It describes in detail the day the ark stayed on Mount Ararat, the day the mountain peak was first revealed, the day the ark opened its window and sent a raven and a dove, the day the water dried up and the door of the ark was opened, the day the whole family and animals went out of the ark, and the day Noah offered sacrifices to God in a new land. Why does the Bible introduce this process in such detail? This is because the process of stopping the rain and draining the water itself is the process of new creation.

 When Noah's family came out of the ark, God declared that a new creation had begun by saying, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.” After accepting Noah's sacrifice, God decided that He would never again destroy the world. In a way, the flood event did not change mankind, but changed God’s mind. God made a covenant with Noah to confirm that decision. The content of the covenant is, in a word, that God will never destroy the world again.

 There is something we must know from the contents of this covenant. It is a fact that God is not ‘the One of cause and effect,’ who punishes people every time they commit a sin. God is not the one who rewards us for what we do good and punishes us for what we do wrong. It is a pagan belief. According to the covenant made with Noah, God is the One who is persevering for a long time, forgiving, and being gracious. Please do not think that the tragedy that has happened to us is God’s judgement or punishment.

 It is very important to have a proper understanding of who God is and how He brings salvation. Who is the God in the event of Noah’s flood? He is the one who regrets, hurts, and sighs. He is the one who changes his mind on his own as he goes through the flood judgment process. And he is the one who repeatedly vows never to destroy the world again. God is not the one who comes to rescue us when we are in crisis like a Superman. But He is long-suffering, forgiving, and giving us another chance through His amazing grace. That is how God saves us.

 **Wrap Up**

 I think that the Covid-19 that we’ve been experiencing for the past two and a half years is a kind of ‘Noah's Flood’ that swept the world. This flood has given us an opportunity to unintentionally rethink the whole way of life we have lived inadvertently. Wearing a mask and speaking less has made us reflect on our speaking habits. Keeping a safe distance from each other got us to check our relationship. Washing our hands frequently makes us reflect on the bad things we have done with our hands.

 I believe that God chose us as a possibility to save the world. Then, during the time of this great flood of Covid-19, we must remember that we are creatures and that God is the creator. Our God, who has endured, forgave, and gracious for a long time, will end this flood and give us another chance. And God will tell us this. “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.” Let us remember these words of giving us a chance to begin again.