

*... May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing and of you, who are ROCK, REDEEMER, and COMFORTER of us all. Amen.*

Genesis 6:5-6,13-14a ...Each week we are visiting with a familiar biblical story...which invites us to hear and respond with courage, trust & hope. Today the focus is with a very well known story...Noah and the directive to build The Ark. <So let's all Rise, and Shine...!> Whoops, no singing!

God is heartbroken by the evil and violence humans inflict on one another. So God's response is to cover the earth with a flood, to cleanse the earth from evil and to begin anew... a fresh start.

There is, however, one person that stands out as being righteous and faithful; moral and walked humbly with God... Noah. God gave Noah the directive and explicit direction on its construction... and Noah did everything exactly as God commanded. Floods come, water rises, and everything on the planet is destroyed, except for the animals & the people on the ark. God saw.. God acted (meted out justice) and God's plan included salvation... new life in God's grace.

(We'll come back to this another time... biblical justice, mercy & grace.)

There are many layers to peel back with this story, but I want to focus on what the early Christians spoke as truth as they heard this story.

The ark provided salvation. The ark gathered all God's creatures together in one place for safety. And so, for the early Christians, the ark was a metaphor for the church. The church symbolized a 'ship of shelter'... shelter from storms, provided safe harbor, carrying the people to safety and salvation for humanity.

God provided shelter & salvation and Jesus is the captain of the ship to which people come. Baptismal waters flow over the believer who is received within.

As construction of structures for worship evolved, the place where the people sit was known as the NAVE, (Latin, *navis*, = ship).

Here's the challenge for us...particularly (I think) westerners & Americans. When the floodwaters rise, we try to go it alone. God, however, intends for the ship/church to be a refuge, a vessel to carry us, to speak to us, and to deliver us.

I am beginning my fifth year with this congregation. In these years I have witnessed how the faithful of SJ have gathered round to celebrate, to carry, to walk with various people and families... in good times and in hard, painful times.

Noah was a vine grower, not a ship builder. The ark worked perfectly well, but may not have been the most beautiful ship ever made. As I said yes to my call, this story is one I looked at and said, if Noah can build an ark as a Vinegrower...I guess God can provide for me to do this pastoring thing. Sure enough, God's church affirmed and surrounded me. God works through the people around us.

This season of COVID19 is a little bit like hanging out on the ark for days unending. The promise is that the period of separateness will end... but we need to stay together...no matter how stinky it gets...cause we will be able to walk about again. It will however be a whole new world. Together, we will get through.

**As an act of communion with each other, we will celebrate The Lord's Supper... giving thanks to God for the bread of life and the love poured forth for us.**

Let's pray...Lord when floodwaters rise in life, help me find safety in your lifeboat, the church. When all is well in my life, help me hear your call, as a part of the crew, to rescue those being tossed by life's tempests.

We remember how on the night.... Short Communion liturgy...

Amen. Amen. Amen.

The wafer/cups will be available to pick up as you leave. Please partake of them at your vehicle.