

Through The Storm Part 3

Quarantine Blessings

Genesis 8

Memory Verses: Romans 5:3-4

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

The Storms of life present us with many opportunities. How will we respond when everything seems to fall apart? Who will we turn to when things take a turn for the worse? Who will we become and who will we be when the dust settles? Can we still trust God when we can't see him working? Is God good even though he may allow and even cause bad things to happen to us or around us?

Over the past two weeks we've tried to answer some of these very difficult questions... but when it all boils down, the answer remains the same. Faith. Simply have faith. Listen... I know that may seem like a long shot. I know that may seem like a cliché. That may seem like a copout.

Trust me I get it. But stay with me here. If we can learn to respond to the tragedies of life with a strong faith in God and trust that he is always good... the world will take notice. You want to know why God may be bringing this storm in your life? It may be for this very reason... to use your response to draw people to salvation. That's a huge why? How many of us would say, "yes Lord, use me however you want... yes Lord, I would lay my life down for you?" Right? So if you can say that... then why is it so hard to believe that God may be using you in the midst of these trials to show the world that he is a rock and stronghold that they too can run to in the midst of the storm?

And what did we see last week? That no matter what comes against us in this life... No matter how crazy the trials or the tragedies, nothing can really phase us if we are sheltered in the Ark of Jesus Christ.

It's all about perspective. What is the worst thing that could happen to you? Death? Close. But, even more so than physical death is eternal spiritual death. A death that the Bible describes as torment and separation from God for eternity. The Bible tells us that many enter into this spiritual death called Hell, but only a few find eternal life. So if the greatest enemy is Hell, and the majority of the world is falling into it's grasp forever... should we really fear sickness, financial calamity, social collapse, and even physical death? Let me ask it another way. If we could be saved from Hell, wouldn't any other trial or storm seem like a minor inconvenience by comparison. Let me remind you of what we read last week in **Romans 8:18** – Nothing compares to the glory that will be revealed in us. Nothing! Why? Cause in the Ark... in the shelter of

Jesus Christ we have been set free from our sin. We've been set free from Hell.

And... We've been granted eternal life and glory forever and ever in a place of everlasting bliss, joy, peace, and goodness. There, there will never be another tear, another sickness, another heart attack, another round of chemo, another bankruptcy, another divorce, another broken promise, or another bout of depression. In Heaven, we will be glorified beyond what we can even imagine. And one day we will look back at all of the struggles of this very short life and say, "Thank you Jesus... it wasn't really that bad."

Let's go back to the story of Noah. Noah's been presented with the prospect of a coming storm. A literal storm that will wipe out the entire world... except Noah and his family, but only if they are obedient to do what God calls them to do. He's told to build a boat the size of a city and to bring upon that boat representatives of every creature on the Earth. Never mind that it's never rained before. Never mind that it will take 120 years to complete the boat and get all the animals on board. Never mind the fact that during those 120 years you will be mocked and jeered by the entire world for building a giant boat cause a voice from the sky told you to. And... Never mind that everything you've ever loved or known outside of your family will be obliterated and you will have to start over at ground zero.

So what does Noah do? He builds. He prepares. He is obedient. He responds with a faith that shows the world exactly where he allegiance lies. And he is saved. When the storms of life come upon us... let us be like Noah.

But that brings us to another aspect of our current situation. Yes, Covid-19 is a storm, and yes it has brought many trials with it, but perhaps it has also brought blessing. Could the things that happen to us, that we despise, actually be gifts greater than we know? So here's the question of the week; "could your storm actually be a blessing in disguise?" This morning I want to talk about the blessing in the quarantine. How our collective quarantine is a blessing and how your personal trials can be a blessing as well. And here's what we will see... **God Doesn't Waste Storms And Neither Should You.**

Turn with me to **Genesis 8:1-22** and let's continue the story of Noah and see exactly how this storm was a blessing in disguise.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing I think we are seeing here is that... **Our Storms Bless Us With New Environments**. Like in the Wizard of Oz, Dorothy's storm landed her in a new land filled with color and magic, Noah's storm took him to radically different environments. Our storms will do the same thing. I don't think we are in Kansas anymore. What were Noah's new environments? Well, a giant floating zoo was one. He went from open spaces and clean air to tight quarters and, well, you can guess what the air

smelled like. After the flood he experienced another new environment. His family settled on Mt. Ararat, perhaps the cleanest air ever, perhaps the most beautiful scenery ever, and all the open space anyone could ever want. I'm sure each of these new environments brought their own struggles but also their own blessings.

Covid-19 has carried us to a new environment, a quarantined, enclosed, and tight quartered environment no less. Our quarantine is not all that dissimilar from Noah's minus the animals, and the cruise, and... well maybe it's not very similar at all. But, being in a confined space... well, most of us would not have chosen this environment if we had a choice right? Perhaps, the only way God could get us here was to bring this storm. Perhaps, the only way God could bless us was to put us in the storm?

So what are these blessings? As you roll your eyes, right? Well, I think we can find some here. For example, what about the blessing of a closer personal walk with God. The statistics are showing us that more people are using Bible Apps, Prayer Apps, and Verse memorization Apps than ever before. It seems that the more we are separated from the luxuries the world has to offer, like eating out, and watching sports, the more we desire personal time with Christ. In the quarantine, people are looking for more spiritual content. The Chosen, is the first multi-season television show about Jesus ever created, and it can only be watched on its own app and youtube. Since the quarantine began it's been viewed almost 20 million times. If you haven't seen it, I highly recommend it. The point is this, this quarantine has provided us with the opportunity to turn our attention to our own personal walk with Christ. No longer do we have the excuse of being too busy for Jesus, and a lot of people are taking advantage of that. Are you? Have you been blessed with a closer walk with Christ during the quarantine? **God Doesn't Waste Storms And Neither Should You.**

Another example of quarantine blessing is the blessing of a closer relationship with family. We've all gotten to spend more quality time with our families. Here's some comments I've heard since the quarantine began. "The other day my family ate around the dinner table for the first time in years." "For the first time in forever, my family played a board game." "Our family did their first ever house project together." "Last night, we had family devotions together for the first time." The point is clear... the quarantine has brought a lot of families closer together. We didn't choose this storm, but without this storm, would we have made time for each other the way we have now? And this is good. This is perhaps the longest period of family bonding and unity in the past 50 years. And I think we need to start planning to keep some of this as best as we can when the quarantine is over. A pastor friend of mine mentioned to me the other day that his marriage may have been saved by this quarantine...

and he and his wife are already making plans for him to be home more when the quarantine is over. So, how have you bonded more with your family since the quarantine started? How are you guys taking advantage of the time together. Are you doing family devotions? Are you trying to have real conversations around the table? Don't miss this blessed opportunity to be family again. **God Doesn't Waste Storms And Neither Should You.**

Another example of quarantine blessing is the blessing of a closer relationship with the church. Who would have figured that moving church on-line would have made us long for each other and pray for each other and relate with each other more? But it has. It has created a renewed recognition that the church is not built solely around a weekend gathering, but on the people. Praise God for the blessing of technology to connect us in prayer and worship not just on Sunday, but all of the time. Spend some time texting your prayers for one another, facetime together, doing a zoom small group gathering... and make church more about relationship than about a program. **God Doesn't Waste Storms And Neither Should You.**

Man, we have been blessed haven't we? We've been blessed by Covid-19. Yes, it's awful, and yes it's inconvenient, but in the midst of the storm there is blessing. So we look at all of these blessings and we must ask.... **If God has used Covid-19 and this quarantine to draw us closer to the most important things in this world, how can we not consider this storm a blessing?**

We also need to recognize that just as with Noah, Covid-19 will carry us to a new world. Our Mt. Ararat. When the quarantine is over we will live in a new world with new rules, and in a way we will be starting over just like Noah did. So... we can either fear a new world or we can embrace a new world. We can resist change or we can embrace change. We can either trust God or we can doubt him. Our new world will have struggles, but it will also have blessings. **God Doesn't Waste Storms And Neither Should You.**

The next thing we need to recognize is that... **Our Storms Bless Us With New Schedules.** Many of us are asking... how long? How long will you keep us in quarantine? How long until we find a vaccine? No doubt, we are becoming impatient. But let's put it into perspective. Noah spent around 120-130 years building the Ark and filling the Ark. Just this part of his storm lasted a very long time before the main storm even started. In fact, I'm sure Noah was excited to finally get to the storm. And then the flood hit and for 40 days and 40 nights they were in the ship during the storm. During this time they were most likely scared, bored, and perhaps a little depressed. Wouldn't you be? But that wasn't the end of their quarantine. They, then spent another 150 days on the Ark until the waters subsided. I'm sure at this point they were saying things like... "how much longer, are we there yet." At this point bored, no doubt, moved to uncomfortable and frustrated. But,

again, this was not the end of their quarantine. They then had to spend another 170 days on the Ark until the land dried out and they could leave. Think about it... we've hit land, I can see trees, I need to get off this boat. At this point uncomfortable and frustrated moves to desperation. I wonder, did Noah's kids ever try to sneak off the boat? I think I would have. By the time it was all over with, they had spent 1 entire year on the Ark. You think your quarantine has been too long, can you think of spending an entire year in quarantine?

Now think about this... before the quarantine we were the busiest people in the history of the world. Our days were packed from sun up to sun down with activities; sports, hobbies, jobs, school, etc. Had it not been for the quarantine we would have never slowed down, right?

And yet, the bible talks a lot about the value of rest and having an open schedule rather than a packed schedule. Look at **Psalm 127:2** which says "in vain you keep going hard toiling for things that really just make you anxious." And **Mark 6:31** where we see Jesus tell his disciples to go and rest for they had been too busy. In fact, a major law of the Old Testament is to keep the Sabbath. Sabbath means a day of rest, a day to do absolutely nothing but worship God. Now, I know Jesus and the New Testament have modified the original institution of Sabbath, but Jesus and Paul still tell us that it is important to have a day of rest, and a time off. And, let's be honest, we often neglect to take a day off or time to take a break. If you look at **Jeremiah & 2 Chronicles**, a major reason that the Israelites were sent into exile in Babylon was because they had neglected the Sabbaths and while in exile the land of Israel would experience 70 years of rest. God brought the sabbath because the people had neglected it **Perhaps in our busy lives and in our neglect of taking a break – God sent Covid-19 to give us Sabbath!**

My prayer is that we would take advantage of the rest. Let your bodies rest, let your minds rest, give yourself some down time and some time to spend with God in sabbath. My prayer is also that when we are allowed to get back to a normal schedule... that we wouldn't. Perhaps we can learn to not pack our days full of anxious toiling – but rather allow for some rest and some worship. **God Doesn't Waste Storms And Neither Should You.**

Lastly, **Our Storms Bless Us With New Perseverance**. Perhaps our greatest blessing is how God wants to transform us through our storms. **Romans 5:3-4** says "our sufferings produce perseverance, endurance, character, and hope." Listen, God used this storm to not only change Noah and transform him into a leader, a pioneer, a builder, etc... God used this storm to save him and his family. This was not a wasted storm by all accounts – God used it for good. And, God has no doubt used Covid-19 to change you and transform you for good. So, how have

you seen your perseverance, character, and hope increase through this quarantine and pandemic? Have you even allowed this storm to be used to transform you and draw you closer to the Lord? Don't waste it. Just like in all storms... **you can be traumatized by the storm or you can be transformed by the storm. God Doesn't Waste Storms And Neither Should You**

Application

Every trial and every storm that God brings into your life is a blessing in disguise. God wants to bless you with a new environment, a new schedule, and new perseverance. Can you see God's blessings in the midst of your storms? Can you allow God to use these storms to make us better worshippers, leaders, parents, etc...? **God Doesn't Waste Storms And Neither Should You.** It's hard to see the storm as a tragedy when we see the blessings that it brings.

Conclusion

Look again at **vs20** again. Here, Noah worships God with sacrifices. Don't miss this... Not only does Noah say, "thank you Lord for the Storm and for the blessings you've given to us through the storm." but Noah also says, "Lord, everything you didn't take away in the storm is yours too." Look, all we have left are these animals and supplies and yet, they are yours too.

Look... It's one thing to try to see some of the blessings in the storm, its another thing to try an actually worship God for the storm. It's hard to rejoice in our sufferings... but let's try it this morning. Let's try to worship and praise God for the storm we are in and the storms that we've come through and the for the storms that are going to come. So first, would you just quite your mind and heart and pray... Lord, help me to praise you for the storms in my life. Help me to see the blessings in the storms. And then let us worship him. **God Doesn't Waste Storms And Neither Should You**