

Through The Storm Part 4

A Sign Of Hope

Genesis 9

Memory Verses: Psalm 42:11

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? Could our storm actually be a blessing in disguise?

Over the past three weeks we've tried to answer some of these very difficult questions... and what we've seen is this; through the storms of life, in the most difficult of situations... when nothing seems to make sense, and we don't understand why God is doing what he's doing... He is still faithful! He is.

How can we say that? Because we've seen that there are answers for the why? Why did God allow this storm to come into your life? Perhaps it was so that you would respond with faith and obedience and that response would draw the lost and hurting to God. Sometime the why is as simple as how we respond. Why did God cause this tragedy to wreck your life? Perhaps it was because you were putting your trust in this life rather than the salvation of his son Jesus Christ. When it all boils down... that is all that matters. All that matters is... are you protected by the Ark of Jesus Christ. This life may have its floods, but the only thing that will get you through it to the other side is salvation in Jesus. Why did God send this trial your way? Perhaps it was to show you how he works all things for your good and his glory. He makes beauty from ashes, he brings light to the darkness. **Romans 8:28**. Perhaps it was to show you the blessings that can only come from the storm. Some blessings can only be given to us wrapped in sorrow and pain. Our pain can bring us closer to our families, closer to our church, and closer to Jesus. And in the end we will see that all of our sufferings have been worth it. **Romans 8:18**.

So instead of dreading the storms of life... the Bible, time after time, encourages us to rejoice in our sufferings. **Romans 5:3-4** tells us to rejoice in our sufferings because eventually our suffering will produce perseverance, character... and lastly hope.

And here is our final struggle with the storm... here is our final question; "how in the world can the tragedies of my life eventually

produce hope?" How do I walk out of the storm, not simply alive, but filled with hope? Seems like a contradiction doesn't it? Storms, tragedies, trials, all should produce sorrow... and they do... but not hope and joy, right?

In the midst of the storm, or as the storm ends, God always provides us with signs of hope. For instance – this is a sign of hope (**American Flag**.) Today is memorial day, of course, and as most of you are aware, I intentionally try not to make a big deal about politics or patriotism in our services, but today it goes so good with the sermon I couldn't avoid it. When you see this flag, I don't know about you, but I gives me hope. I can't fully explain why, but if I had to I would say it's because I truly feel blessed to live in this country. I know that many men and women had to suffer and die to give us the freedoms and the quality of life we experience here. I know that when I see this flag... that it is a sign to the whole world of hope for a better life. I know that men and women all of the world can look at that flag and say, If I could just get to America, I can have a better life. Or, when I see that flag flying in my country I know that my country will be a better for it. So, if you know someone who has given their life in the service of this great country be thankful for their service, and be thankful for the hope they have given to the rest of us.

This morning I want to talk about signs of hope... like this flag. I want us to finish the story of Noah and I want us to see the sign of hope that God gave to him... and is giving to us. This morning I want you to recognize that after the clouds clear and the storm waters recede... there is an everlasting hope in our God. This morning I want you to see that... **God Has Never Allowed A Storm Without A Sign Of Hope**.

Go ahead and turn with me to **Genesis 9:1-19**, and let's look at the sign of Hope that God gave Noah and the signs of hope that God wants to give you today.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first sign we see here is the sign of children... **God Gives Us Children As A Sign Of A Better Society**. Look with me again at **Genesis 9:1-7**. Just as in Genesis chapter 2 when God told this to Adam and Eve, he tells Noah and his family to be fruitful and multiply. For those who are unfamiliar with this phrase.... that means get married, have lots of sex and lots of children. Or as a the meme says, "Sex – do it for the kids."

But seriously, children are one of God's biggest signs of hope to us. We hear all the time that "our kids are our future," or "everything I do is so my kids can have a better life than I did." For a lot of us our greatest hope is in a better future for our children. Just think of holding a brand new baby. You look into their beautiful face and you see so much hope. Who will they become? What will they do? Will they create life saving medicine or perhaps become a world leader?

When Noah looked at his children and grandchildren what did he

see? He saw hope that they would have a more prosperous life than he ever could have had. In this passage God give Noah and his family permission to eat meat. Before this, meat was off the menu, but now God allows everyone to eat any of the meat that they can get. Now, you may ask, how does this make Noah's kids more prosperous than he was? Are you kidding? Have you ever had a steak? Have you ever had KFC? Have you ever had bacon? You can be the poorest person in the world and eat a piece of perfectly cooked crispy bacon and feel like a king. In all seriousness... meat in any society is a sign of prosperity. Even in America... the rich eat Steak and Lobster. The fact that God put meat on the menu was a sign that he was allowing Noah's children more prosperity in this world. They would never starve.

But Noah wasn't just hopeful that his children would be more prosperous, but that they would also be more protected. This passage institutes the eating of meat, and it also institutes capital punishment. Before the flood mankind was allowed to kill without much repercussion. When Cain killed Able God said no one would harm him, and that pretty much became the law of the land. Perhaps that is why Noah's world had gotten so evil, there was no law. But now God says, a life will be taken in exchange for a life. When Noah heard this I can just imagine his heart being overwhelmed with hope, for he knew that his children and grandchildren would grow up in a much safer society.

With greater prosperity and protection, Noah's children really were the hope of the world, and the hope of a brighter future. Are children are a sign of hope to all of us. They show us that things can be different, that things could be better. But that hope only comes after pain right. You can't have children without childbirth, and as many of our mothers will attest, childbirth is one of the most painful experiences in this world. And what does that show us? It shows us that sometimes we have to go through the storm to see the hope. **Even though childbirth is a very painful ordeal, the sign of hope a child brings overwhelms the suffering . God Has Never Allowed A Storm Without A Sign Of Hope.**

The second sign of hope we are given here is the rainbow. **God Gives Us The Rainbow As A Sign Of His Loving Mercy.** Look again with me at **Genesis 9:8-17**. Here God makes a covenant promise to Noah and all flesh. We need to understand God's covenant promises. This is in itself one of our greatest hopes... God never breaks his promises. If he says it will or won't happen... you can take that to the bank. So if you are experiencing tragedy or trial in your life... claim his promises. **When the storms of life come, cling to the promises of God .**

What was this promise? To never kill off all flesh again with a flood. God is saying... this was a one time thing in order to course correct

the worship and morality of mankind. I won't do it again. I won't destroy you. Get this... we all deserve to die just like everyone who was killed in the flood. But, you can be assured that though we all deserve to be destroyed, God is merciful to stay his wrath. God caused the flood and took a lot of lives... but he had that right and had a plan. God isn't evil when he takes life, rather he is merciful when he preserves any life. So, instead of questioning his goodness you should thank God that in his mercy he has preserved your life.

He promised to preserve Noah, his family, and humanity.. and the promise was sealed with a sign; a rainbow. Why the sign? He could have just made the promise and that should have been enough right? But he went the extra mile to give us hope. **Noah and his family needed reassurance. They were no doubt wounded in their souls from the tragedy of a global holocaust. So God had to show them time and time again that he would never again destroy the world with a flood. "I am never again going to destroy the world by flood. You have seen the ugliness of sin and its effects, the horror of my judgment and wrath. I want to reassure you that you will not see it this way again... and to assure you of that I'm giving you this rainbow."**

I don't know where you fall in this picture today. I don't know what scars you carry, what storms you've endured... but I want to reassure you of the promise of the rainbow. In the words of the great theologian James Boice, "to you I say, God is the God of beauty. God makes signs of beauty to say, I know that life is filled with tragedy. Sin is ugly, but I am the God of beauty. I am the God who is able to overcome these things, and I call you away from them to myself."

So when it rains or storms we can see a sign that God has once again spared us his wrath. The rainbow has been a consistent reminder over 5,000 years that our God has promised to preserve us from his wrath. **When you see a rainbow, you should feel hope... it means the storm is over and you're okay. God Has Never Allowed A Storm Without A Sign Of Hope.**

The last sign I want us to see today is the cross. **God Gives Us The Cross As A Sign Of Everlasting Freedom.** The rainbow is one of God's greatest signs for the salvation of mankind... but it's only a precursor for the greatest sign – the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross of Jesus stands, world wide, as the greatest sign of hope the world has ever seen. Whoever sees the cross knows, even if they don't know the whole story or even believe in God, they know it stands for the hope of freedom.

And, how did we get this sign? Jesus had to suffer. Jesus had to suffer the greatest pain to provide us the greatest sign of hope. Like the soldiers who fought and died for the flag, like the pains of childbirth for a child to be born, like the flood before the rainbow, the sign of hope comes

after the storm!

What does the cross mean? The cross means I am free from sin, death, and hell. Because of the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross, I no longer am a slave to the flesh and the sinful thoughts that seek to capture me. It means I am saved from the wrath of God. The death of Jesus has paid my debt. It is the greatest sign not just of freedom, but of love, mercy, grace, redemption, atonement, forgiveness, justification, and salvation... and so much more.

Just as you look at that rainbow and recognize that Noah was freed from the flood, and just as you look at the flag as a sign of freedom from tyranny... look to the cross as a sign of freedom in Christ. **Though the cross represents the greatest suffering the world has ever known, it also represents the hope of the world – salvation through Jesus Christ.** No matter what storm you go through... the cross will always stand as the greatest sign of hope. So, place your trust in the sacrifice of Christ and be freed from all of your storms. **God Has Never Allowed A Storm Without A Sign Of Hope.**

Application

This world will have storms and tragedies... we can't avoid them. But for every storm there will be a sign of hope... you just have to look and see them. Through the storm of cancer you can see the sign of a greater dedication to living a life of meaning. Through the storm of being fired you can see the sign of a new opportunity. Through the storm of divorce you can see the sign of a loving small group. Through the loss of a loved one you can see the sign of heaven and eternity with them. There are signs of hope all around us. Through every storm, God is supplying hope to those who know him. For every storm there is a sign of hope. Look at what the Bible says in **Psalm 42:11**. When we are downcast, when our souls are hurting and there is turmoil within us... Hope in God... look to his signs of hope and praise him. **God Has Never Allowed A Storm Without A Sign Of Hope**

Conclusion

8 months ago our community was rocked by news of the slaying of the Bivens family in Keeling. On August 27th 2019 Blake Bivens found out that his wife Emily, his baby boy Cullen, and his mother-in-law Joan had all been murdered by his brother-in-law. Could there be a more tragic story? Could there be a bigger storm. Bivens described feeling like "his heart had been turned to ash" after he found out. His whole world was destroyed in just one afternoon.

Just two weeks ago, Blake gave an interview testimony of how he is doing now. Let's take a look **Video Testimony of Blake Bevins**. It's obvious that he is still hurting... he will hurt the rest of his life. But he

points to a couple signs of hope too doesn't he. There is hope in the storm this morning. Hope for Blake, hope for the world, and hope for you this morning. Look to God's signs of hope, namely is the cross and his son Jesus and we will get through the storm... I promise.