

Coram Deo
Soli Deo Gloria, Soli Deo Gracia, Soli Scriptura
Agnus Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi
Deo Volente

Sermon Preach at Stouffville United Church

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“Noah knew We were All in the Same Boat”

Series 4

Genesis 7:1-9

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A man’s car was stuck behind another car that had broken down in front of him. The longer he sat there the more frustrated he become. He began to yell, and honk his cars horn, while the woman driver in front of him frantically tried to start her car. Finally, the elderly lady came over to the man in the car and said, “Sweetie, you must be tired. Let me help you. Let me hold the horn, while you start the car.”

It really is easy to grumble – however, finding a solution is always more difficult. After all, we need to remember that we are all in the same boat.

A little six-year-old girl was playing with her infant brother after returning from Sunday School. She asked her mama, “When will he start talking?” Her mother replied, “Well, babies don’t start talking until they’re two or three years old.” The little girl said, “Oh, they start talking before that. They did in the Bible.” Her mother asked, “Who did?” She said, “Well, Job for one. The teacher said this morning that Job cursed the day he was born.”

Life is just like that isn’t it? Confusing - and when the storms come and the floods threaten to over take us we wonder what happened and what am I going to do now?

Noah understood while others didn’t that storms always come. We can choose to deny it, reject it, or refuse to accept it but they come whether we like it or not. Jesus said, “In this life you will have tribulations” – not you may have, or might have, but rather “you will have tribulations.”

We’ve learned over the last few weeks some of the lessons that Noah has taught us through his life about how to survive the storms and succeed in life. The first lesson was to “Plan ahead – we never know when the storm will come”. The second was “The Woodpeckers inside may be a greater threat then the storm outside.” Next we learned, “Be Ready – Noah was 600 when asked to do something really big”. It’s not easy to keep a promise – so build on higher ground”.

And today we will take a look at the fifth lesson and that is that Noah understood that we are all in the same boat. And because of this he understood that someone had to do something about what was going on around him. The problem however, is that it is

easier to complain than to make a commitment. It is easier to complain about the way it is, compared to the way it was, or it is easier to complain about the ideas offered than to make a commitment to do something.

I. Blaming or Accepting

Noah firstly, moved from blaming others to accepting responsibility. Noah didn't play the blame and shame game. He didn't say, "It is not my fault that things are the way they are." He didn't say, "Why should I bother doing anything? I didn't make things the way they are. It's not my fault; it's someone else's fault." He took responsibility. He wanted to do something. He wanted to make a difference. He took responsibility when building the ark but also in his own life. He was a "righteous man". Another way of saying this is that he was a responsible man. He took responsibility for his action and for his relationships. He understood that one person can make a difference

One of the main reasons many people never succeed in life is they play the blame game. It's a game of controlling and condemning. It is a game that no one wins. Failure to accept responsibility is truly the only failure.

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus who was known for his brilliant and provocative sayings 2,500 years ago said, "Your character is your destiny."

Everything that is happening is happening because of who you are. You are where you are because of who you are. Our destinies are determined through the various decisions we make on a daily basis. It is no one else's fault for where we are, but our own. We make, or choose to avoid making, certain decisions. We pay attention to one thing and ignore another. We decide what time to go to bed and how late we will sleep in. We decide how hard we will work or how much leisure time we will take. No one forces you to watch 5 hours of television at night; while someone else works hard on a new business deal. Your character does determine your destiny. Your destiny and destination is determined by your decisions.

Did you know that 98% of the time, when a plane is in the air, it is off course? It is true. A plane leaves the runway with a destination in mind, but due to weather conditions, navigational considerations, there are continual course corrections. However, the destination is never in doubt. The decisions that are made due events in the air may cause the plane to arrive early or late, but it still arrives at its destination.

However, in life, we may have a destination we wish to reach; but rather than keeping the end in mind – that destination – when we make our decisions and course corrections in our lives - due to various storm and struggles that come along; rather than keeping that destination in mind we go off course and end up where we never intended to be. And then we start blaming everything and everyone rather than accepting responsibility and changing course.

We may not have chosen all the storms and floods that sweep through our lives; that knock us to our knees, and wash what seems to be everything good away; but we have chosen how to respond to them.

Our decisions and course corrections, determine our direction, and our direction our destination and destiny.

Professional golfer Paul Azinger was diagnosed with cancer at age 33. He had just won a PGA championship and had ten tournament victories to his credit. He wrote, "A

genuine feeling of fear came over me. I could die from cancer. Then another reality hit me even harder. I'm going to die eventually anyway, whether from cancer or something else. It's just a question of when. Everything I had accomplished in golf became meaningless to me. All I wanted to do was live."

Then he remembered something that Larry Moody, who teaches a Bible study on the tour, had said to him. "Zinger, we're not in the land of the living going to the land of the dying. We're in the land of the dying trying to get to the land of the living."

Golfer Paul Azinger recovered from chemotherapy and returned to the PGA tour. He's done pretty well. But that bout with cancer deepened his perspective. He wrote, "I've made a lot of money since I've been on the tour, and I've won a lot of tournaments, but that happiness is always temporary. The only way you will ever have true contentment is in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I'm not saying that nothing ever bothers me and I don't have problems, but I feel like I've found the answer to the six-foot hole."

II. Sinking or Swimming

Noah understood that we must move from blaming others to accepting responsibility. Secondly we must stop sinking, and start swimming, sailing or at least floating. Or stop sitting and start building. We must move from reasons to results.

A university student was seen with a large "K" printed on his T-shirt. When someone asked him what the "K" stood for, he said, "Confused." "But," the questioner replied, "you don't spell "confused" with a "K." The student answered, "You don't know how confused I am."

President Harry Truman enjoyed telling the story about the man who was hit on the head at work. The blow was so severe he was knocked unconscious for an extended period of time. His family, convinced he was dead, called the funeral home and asked the local undertaker to pick him up, which he did. Early the next morning the man suddenly woke up and sat straight up in the casket. Confused, he blinked several times and looked around, trying to put the whole thing together. He thought, "If I'm alive, what in the world am I doing in this casket? And if I'm dead, why do I have to go to the bathroom?"

Sometimes our lives are somewhat like these two stories. Life is sometimes so confusing that we don't know where we are or what we are doing or how we got here. We wonder: Is this for real? Am I for real? Is my life for real? Why is my life just falling apart around me?

We all have a choice in life. We can blame and shame others for our life situation and make up reasons why things are not going well. Or you can accept responsibility stop sinking start swimming or sailing and get results. Do you want reasons or results?

If all we want is a reason for why our life is the way it is – why the flood of problems that threaten to over take us is happening in our lives – as a reason to continue to complain and so that we can stay the way we are. That is easy. People will always find reasons to stay the way they are. Companies will always find a reason not to adapt and innovate; churches will always find a reason not to be open, welcoming, and accepting of people and the changes necessary to grow and make a difference.

If, however, you want results, then each one of us must start to look at our life and begin to accept responsibility for the decisions we have made and start swimming – start doing something, as Noah did, to make a difference for we are all in the same boat

Noah did that. As a result, he began to take steps to bring about change. No one can do it for us. For you are where you are because of who you are.

Robert Reed said, “I have everything I need for joy!” His hands are twisted and his feet are useless. He can’t bathe himself. He can’t feed himself. He can’t brush his teeth, comb his hair, or put on his underwear. His shirts are held together by strips of Velcro. His speech drags like a worn-out audiocassette. Robert has cerebral palsy.

The disease keeps him from driving a car, riding a bike, and going for a walk. But it didn’t keep him from graduating from high school or attending Abilene Christian University, from which he graduated with a degree in Latin. Having cerebral palsy didn’t keep him from teaching at a St. Louis junior college or from venturing overseas on five missions trips. And Robert’s disease didn’t keep him from becoming a missionary to Portugal. He moved to Lisbon, alone, in 1972. There he rented a hotel room and began studying Portuguese. He found a restaurant owner who would feed him after the rush hour and a tutor who would instruct him in the language. Then he stationed himself daily in a park, where he distributed brochures about Christ. Within six years he led seventy people to the Lord, one of whom became his wife, Rosa.

Robert could have asked for sympathy or pity, but he did just the opposite. He held his bent hand up in the air and boasted, “I have everything I need for joy.” His shirts are held together by Velcro, but his life is held together by joy.

One of the most devastating lies we tell ourselves is the lie, “I’m a victim.” “I can’t do anything” “It’s never going to change”. When we choose to accept no responsibility for our destiny we fail to see reality. We can be victimized, but that doesn’t make us a victim. The first, states that something was *done* to a person, the other *defines* the person. Once we define ourselves as victims we lose all ability to choose our destiny. We give the power to victimizers, criminals, society, and outside structures. We give them the power to define us as victims. And thereby control us

It may be true that what was done to us is not our fault. However, what we choose to do with what was done to us is.

Robert Reed said, “I have everything I need for joy!” Do you? You think about that. Amen