**Part A.** Have an introduction about when things get so bad you have to start over.

**Genesis 6:9-22**

**This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.**

This passage gives us a glimpse of what God sees when he looks down on our world. Here he sees his beautiful creation, and in his mind he knows how great it was meant to be. And then he sees the corrupt mess that we have made of things. Some people might hear this story and think, wow, God is impulsive. But if you have been here the last few weeks, you understand that is not the case at all. God has been very patient. But he has also honored humanity’s choices. God was patient with Cain, allowing him time to repent. He was patient with generation after generation, and they mistook his patience for apathy. So the people got more and more corrupt. Murder went from something occasional to something frequent. Even people raised in God-fearing homes got caught up in it. We saw last week that the children of believers, whose parents had set them up to have a close relationship with God, instead chose to marry unbelievers and join in the unbelieving way of life. The wicked people in society wore down the good people and eventually either killed them, we must assume, or convinced them to join them.

God looked down, and should have seen all mankind serving and helping one another for the glory of God and the good of the world, but instead he saw them hating and killing each other, fighting for their own glory, and defiling the face of the earth. Fewer and fewer righteous people were left. It was only getting worse and there was no turning things around without outside intervention. God’s decision was essentially made for him. As the earth grew corrupt, it brought on its own destruction.

Yet God saw that Noah was righteous. That does not mean that he was perfect, but that he was righteous because of his faith in God. He walked with God. Last week we looked at five different questions you can ask yourself to evaluate your walk with God, and I encourage you to consider those passages. This phrase means that wherever he went, whatever he did, he did it with God. He relied on God, he lived in accordance with God’s will, he prayed frequently about everything. And finally, Noah was blameless. This is the word that means when other people looked at him, they really couldn’t point to anything he had done wrong. The world was filled with murder, but Noah did not murder. It was filled with hatred, but Noah didn’t hate.

So God chose to save the world through Noah and his family. Make no mistake, from our perspective, it might look like God was destroying the world, but the world had just about destroyed itself. Almost no one walked with God anymore. But true life is only found in walking with God. And so God was taking the last traces of true life and preserving it, saving it, so that the world would not become totally corrupt.

Imagine a beautiful, famous painting infested with a terrible, corrosive mold. It was left in some rich guy’s storage unit and no one noticed the corruption until only a small part of the painting was left uncorrupted. So finally, someone finds the painting, and cuts off the good part. He is not destroying the painting, It’s already destroyed. He’s merely saving what is left. That is what God did in the flood. He salvaged what was left before there was nothing left at all.

**So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks.** Now if you want to know about the details of the ark, there is a museum in Kentucky you can visit with a life-size replica of the ark. Here are a few images from there.

**I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.”**

Try to imagine what it must have been like to be Noah and to hear this. Noah and the great flood is one of the most popular stories to include in children’s Bible story books, yet this is really horrifying to think about. Imagine looking around you and thinking to yourself, “This is all going to be destroyed in the flood.” And yet it would have been hard to believe. There had never been a great flood before.

Yet God made a covenant with Noah. A covenant is simply an agreement. There are many different covenants in the Bible. For example, next week we will see God make a covenant with Abraham. At the last supper, Jesus told his disciples, this is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. God’s covenant is essentially a promise that we receive by faith. He promised Noah that he would keep him alive despite all the destruction around him.

Imagine the faith it took to create the ark. Imagine how much time and money it would take. Imagine how other people must have treated Noah, and what they said about him in that wicked ancient world. There had never been a flood before. Noah must have felt some temptation to bury his head in the sand and just pretend it all wasn’t happening. But instead we read: **Noah did everything just as God commanded him.**

God does not lie. If he says destruction is coming, it is. If he calls us to trust him and promises a covenant, we do well to listen and heed that covenant. God has a similar message for us today. He promises to come back and judge the world. He promises to save the world by purging it through fire. Like Noah, we might find it hard to believe and even harder to accept. We have never seen anything like that. The world around us thinks we are strange at best and evil, judgmental people at worst for believing such things. Yet God has promised to save us through the destruction and bring us to a perfect world on the other side. God has told us how to live accordingly. Like Noah, let us believe God and live accordingly. We now turn to our Psalm.

**Part B Genesis 7: 1-9, 22-24**

**The Lord then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”**

And so the time had finally come. With only seven days to go, Noah once again did not hesitate, but we hear again: **And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.**

Imagine if he had not. Of course we are not in a place to speculate about such things, but we can all be thankful that he did. And I hope that there will be believers generations from now who look back and feel thankful that we kept the faith alive in our dark times. But seven days later, it began:

**Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah.**

We are skipping the part where the waters get higher and higher. In fact, it was not only rain, but water from the great deep that flooded the earth. It seems that there was more subterranean water at that time, and that somehow it was released. It seems likely that the old world still had the continents together, and that at the flood, and then the drainage of the flood, God moved them around and drastically changed the surface layers of the planet. But we’ll never know the details, and so I think we are safe in skipping to the end.

**Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.**

If Noah or his family had doubts, they were over now. God’s Word came true, as it always does and always will. Just like God promised Noah that eventually his patience would end and a flood would come, so he promises us today that another end is coming. This time, and end by fire, with a great resurrection, a day or judgement, a new heavens and a new earth. Do we really believe that God’s judgment is real? Do we live like God’s judgement is real? Let that sink in as we sing our next hymn.

**Part C 2 Peter 3:3-13**

Next week we will get to the conclusion of the flood story, but this morning I would like to look at a lesson the apostle Peter draws from the flood:

**First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.**

Brothers, today are there scoffers who follow their own evil desires? I think that is pretty easy to see. This is how wicked people treat God’s word. They think it’s a joke. They laugh. They mock. And they have evidence. It has been thousands and thousands of years since the flood. It’s true, most ancient societies had some sort of flood story, but modern people forget that. And Peter tells us, they deliberately forget. They do not want to remember. But brothers and sisters, it really happened. And something similar will happen again.

**But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

We might grow weary sometimes living as Christians in a world that does not accept the claims of the Bible. What’s taking God so long anyway? If God had come back two years ago, how many people would have been sent to hell who are now Christians? Probably thousands upon thousands. God is not slow because he has forgotten, or he is weak. He could snap his fingers right now and bring this world to judgement. But instead, he is patient, because he wants everyone to come to repentance. God does not want anyone to perish.

That is important. We hear unbelievers mock God, and sometimes their mischaracterizations stick with us. Unbelievers familiar with the Bible treat God like he’s some sort of evil, over-sensitive tyrant. As though he sends destruction on a whim, or because of petty jealousy. That’s not who our God is. Our God is filled with goodness. He desires to see all men repent. He gives chance after chance after chance. Maybe some of you have not repented. Maybe you have family or friends who have not. Here’s so great news. Our God wants nothing more than to see them saved. He does not want to see them perish. He wants to see them repent. So guess what, keep praying for them. Keep sharing with them. Keep inviting them. God’s on your side. But at the same time, don’t delay. You cannot get into heaven unless you are washed clean in the blood of the lamb. And eventually God is going to stop the clock:

**But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.**

This earth, this corrupted earth, will finally be destroyed and purified. In forest management you need to have controlled fires sometimes. These burn out the undergrowth and the dead wood so that they young seeds are not choked out. The forest recovers and blooms like never before. That is what God will do at the last day. The earth will be burned, but only so that it can finally be restored to its original, uncorrupted state.

When you think about judgement day, there are many different things you might think about. You might think about loved ones. You might think about being with the Lord. Here’s a thought that should help you really look forward to that day: What will life on this earth look like when the corruption has been removed. Think of the greatest joy, love, or peace you have known in this life so far. Even that was corrupted by sin. I’m so excited to see what life will be like without that.

But until then, God gives us some implications of these truths for how we are to live. He encourages us to live holy and godly lives as we look forward to that day. Think about Noah. He believed God’s promise and acted accordingly by doing everything asked of him. He walked with God everywhere he went, everything he did. God declared him a righteous man because he lived by faith, not sight. He lived in an incredibly corrupt world, but he refrained from participating and remained blameless.

So how about for us? How can we live holy and godly lives as we await Jesus’ return and the new heavens and new earth? One way is walking with God. Last week I talked about walking with God, but this week I want to look at it a slightly different way. Consider walking with God to be getting in sync with God. Are you on the same page? Are your thoughts in line with his thoughts? Is your behavior in line with his law? Is your hope in line with his will? One way to do this is to pray the Lord’s prayer every day. I have advocated this before, but I’ll keep advocating it. When we pray the Lord’s prayer, God is teaching us to want what he wants and to seek the things he would have us seek.

Another way is to live a holy life. God has made you holy by setting you apart as his own people, but he calls us to live lives that reflect that. There is a bunch of garbage out there. Stay away from it. Stay away from the violence. Stay away from the hatred and the anger. This is what corrupts us. Stay away from the perversion. Stay away from over-indulgence. Instead devote yourself to what is good and true and right. To family. To service. Especially stay away from mockers and scoffers. You see them often on late night TV. You hear them at work. Mocking everything that is good. Scoffing at morality, scoffing at religion, scoffing at anyone who tried to be a holy, godly person. Recognize that their judgement is coming. You can share the gospel with them, but be careful the influence does not go the other direction.

And finally, be godly, that is, pious, devout. These words are getting to rare, maybe you’re not even sure what they mean. Our society is really a secular society. I think even in the church we might get uncomfortable if someone prays too much, or talks about Jesus too much. But brothers and sisters, this is what our father encourages us to do. To be godly means to live in such a way that we accord God the respect he deserves. Take daily prayer and daily Bible reading seriously, because this is how we show respect to God. Come to church frequently. Imagine you met a Muslim. You asked the Muslim, “are you a pretty devout Muslim?” And he answered, “Oh yeah, I’m very devout.” You asked him, “How so? Do you study the Koran a lot?” “Oh no, not really ever.” “Oh, do you pray a lot?” “Oh no, not really.” Do you often go to Mosque? Well, you know, sometimes. I know I would start thinking, “alright, this guy is barely attached to his religion at all, I’m going to try to get him to come to our church.” And it might work. Because he might want to believe he’s devout, but any objective observer can see the truth about him.

Being devout is not a popular thing these days. It takes dedication. It takes time. It takes giving up other things. Building the ark took devotion. Day after day of hard toil. But do you think Noah regretted it when the rain started pouring? And when you can look back on a lifetime of walking with the Lord, and see the mark your piety and devotion makes on others, perhaps your children, perhaps your family members, are you going to regret it? No way. Reading the Bible and praying and coming to church are the kinds of things we often don’t want to do, but when we finally get around to it, we’re so glad we did, because actually God gave us those things for OUR good, not his, and they are a blessing, not a burden. So let’s commit to developing some godly habits, so that these things become second nature and not something we have to work ourselves us to, or find time to squeeze it in. If you want some pointers on that, talk to me later.

The more we are occupied with holiness and godliness, the more we will see this present world for it is, and the more we will long for that future home where righteousness dwells. Let us set our faith on that final home, and remain unmoved as the world scoffs on. Amen.