

✠ *In the Name of Jesus* ✠

<sup>3</sup>*First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.*

<sup>4</sup>*They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ [God] promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”* <sup>5</sup>*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. <sup>6</sup>By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. <sup>7</sup>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.* These words are from Peter’s second letter. The “last days” Peter predicted are upon us. It’s amazing how many people reject the facts revealed by the Bible, not just about the Creation account, but also the Great Flood, the universal deluge which wiped all the land-based creatures from the face of the earth, except those which God preserved in the ark. And isn’t it amazing that almost the same number of people reject the promised universal judgment on the Last Day? So on this first Sunday in Advent, when it is our custom to think about Jesus’ final Advent, his final coming, we consider some of the **LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM THE GREAT FLOOD.**

Think back to the story of Cain and Abel. After Cain murdered Abel, the race of humans was divided between those who

wanted to be obedient to God and those who didn’t. Although the godly group tried to remain separate, the two camps lived near each other. There was interaction. And those who followed God began to drift off course. Their loyalty to God slowly weakened. Our text tells us: <sup>6:1</sup>*When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup>the sons of God (the believers) saw that the daughters of men (the unbelievers) were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.* Here’s our first lesson. Marriage is the most foundational of human relationships. Whenever believers push their faith and their godly heritage to the side, trouble is sure to follow. When it came time for the godly men to choose a wife, they stopped asking, “Will this woman help me to make our home a place where our children can grow up to be believers?” They cared less about morals and more about looks. After a few generations of this, there weren’t very many believers left. We can see this sort of thing happening again and again throughout history. The church makes a comeback in the strength of the Lord, only to have those gains wiped out by a generation or two of descendants who let the good things of this world push the Lord to second or third or last place in their lives. It’s difficult enough to raise children to be believers when there are two believing parents. So, young people, it’s very important that you marry only a believer in the true God. Otherwise it is likely

that your descendants will turn away from the Lord. And God puts up with rebellion for only so long.

In Noah's day, <sup>3</sup>*the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years."* Isn't that amazing? Although the Lord could see that things were going from bad to worse, he granted the humans another 120 years to repent. Talk about patient love! For another six score years the Holy Spirit would contend with the wicked, try to reach the hearts of people through his Word, try to reverse the drift away from good toward evil, try to keep these souls out of the judgment they were lunging toward. There are two lessons here. First, God will punish those who are not sorry for their sins. So when we do wrong, let's return to the Lord quickly and confess our sins to him. We know from the New Testament that God has already forgiven us for Jesus' sake. So let's return to God quickly whenever we sin. Second lesson: God shows tremendous patience in dealing with those who rebel. What a comfort for all of us who have relatives who are in rebellion against God! We still have a little time to pray for them, love them in our hearts, and encourage them to turn to the Lord. But let's not waste time thinking they will be okay as they are. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone whom Scripture alone reveals. This is the only way for them to be saved too.

Our text says, <sup>4</sup>*The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.* The word Nephilim appears to come from the Hebrew word for 'attack' or 'fall on.' And since the context is wickedness, most Bible students agree that the Nephilim were violent men, men who didn't care about human rights, especially if it got in the way of them taking what they wanted. But instead of getting sick and tired of the violence, the people decided to make these violent, self-centered men their heroes. They looked up to them as role models, someone they wanted to be like, someone to cheer on. What a topsy-turvy world when violence is rewarded! But when love for God goes missing from people's hearts, it isn't long before love for their neighbor goes missing too. Kindness slips right out the window. See how important it is to keep our relationship with the Lord strong through Word and Sacrament?

Things were so bad, something had to change. God doesn't change, but the way he deals with a situation can. <sup>5</sup>*The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.* Every inclination, only evil, all the time. God's not just talking about the wicked

ones before the Flood. We know, because he repeats this thought after the Flood when he promises not to destroy the whole world again until the very end (Gen 8:21). What a helpful truth! Since we humans are born totally depraved, we can't do even a little to save ourselves from punishment in hell. This Bible teaching sets us up to hear the good news about Jesus. He did everything necessary to rescue us from hell. Everyone who trusts in him will go to heaven. Otherwise not (John 3:16-18). There is no Plan B.

Rejecting God leads only to sadness, and not just for people. Our text says: <sup>6</sup>*The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.* Compare this with the joy God likely felt when everything he created was still “very good” (Gen 1:31). As I said, God can change course on how he deals with evil. <sup>7</sup>*So the LORD said, “I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them.”*

Look who announces the judgment! “The LORD.” It's very helpful when reading Genesis to realize how careful the Holy Spirit was when he told Moses what to write down. When Genesis uses the name “God,” the emphasis is on his power. So it's God who created

the world in Genesis 1. When Genesis uses the name “LORD,” the emphasis is on his desire to rescue sinners and give them eternal life. So it's the LORD who calls on Cain to repent for murdering Abel. It's the LORD who establishes a covenant with Abraham to send the Messiah. And it's the LORD who announces, “*I will wipe mankind from the face of the earth.*” This tells us to look beyond the power-judgment aspect of the Flood and look for God's saving purpose to be revealed in the Flood. Don't accuse God of being vindictive and heartless, as many do when they read the account of the Flood. The lesson here is to see the LORD taking this drastic action because he didn't want his plan of rescuing people from hell to be swallowed up by evil before it was time to send the Messiah.

In the midst of all that pre-flood depravity and violence, we hear: <sup>8</sup>*But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.* <sup>9</sup>*Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.* To say that Noah was righteous is the same as saying that God decided to count Noah as not-guilty. No wonder he found favor in God's eyes. God was dealing with Noah according to grace, the free gift of love. No wonder Noah was blameless and walked with God. He wasn't sinless, but he worked hard not to do things that God says are evil. There's a good lesson. Let's live like

Noah since the Lord has counted us not-guilty for Jesus' sake. You are righteous in God's sight because of Jesus. You know good from evil. Stop letting yourself dabble in evil. Walk with God every day.

To introduce the Flood, the Bible says, <sup>9</sup>*This is the account of Noah.* It doesn't say, "This is the account of the Flood catastrophe." The flood is Noah's story. When the waters burst forth, we aren't pointed to the billions of people who died. Instead we hear how God saved Noah and the animals on a huge floating barge. So God left us a record of what happened in Noah's day because he loves us. He actually wants us to study his judgments so we can learn important lessons for our spiritual growth. By God's judgments he demonstrates his righteous wrath on those whose hearts have become hardened by not being sorry for their sins and not believing that the Messiah rescued them from sin. But just as importantly, by God's judgments he always makes known his saving love. He always delivers his own from his judgments, as he will do when Jesus returns for the final judgment. In fact, God's grace always tempers the way he carries out his judgments so that they result in some benefit for his believers. Sometimes he even holds off his judgments where his saving gospel is being proclaimed so that a few more people can be brought to faith first.

Could this be why "the big one," the big earthquake has not come to the west coast yet? At other times God decides to move up the time table on his judgments so that some of his believers are not swept away in unbelief as a result of being exposed to evil for too long. This is what he did in the Flood. Evil had to be stopped before it swallowed up all the believers. If all the believers became wicked, who would the Messiah be raised by?

Speaking of raising children, think how hard it must have been for Noah and his wife to raise their three sons to be godly men and to find three godly women to be wives for their sons. But they persevered. If you have children in your life, keep spending time every day to instill in them the truths revealed by the Lord in the Bible.

Soon enough Jesus will come back for the final judgment. But by studying his judgment in the Flood, we can see that God always sends his judgments at just the right time. He made sure that many of his judgments were recorded in the Bible as a way of taking us into his confidence, helping us to understand his ways. If studying his judgments helps us keep our sinful flesh from gross outbreaks of sin, what a blessing! If studying his judgments helps us see God's mercy, what comfort for our souls!