

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Remembering Noah

*The waters flooded the earth for a hundred fifty days.
But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that
were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters
receded.* —Genesis 7:24-8:1

*Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.
Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways;
according to your love, remember me, for you are good, O Lord.*

—Psalm 25:6-7

For generations readers have been jarred by the account of Noah and the opening words of chapter eight in Genesis. After a lengthy explanation of the rising of the waters and the destruction of the earth, a new chapter begins with the shocking and memorable words: *But God remembered Noah*. The obvious and unsettling implication of this statement of remembering Noah is that it implies that God had forgotten him! Had God forgotten Noah? On a closer reading it becomes clear that we are not being told that God woke from a slumber of forgetfulness, but that God was ever aware of this humble servant. Some will point out that ancient writers spoke of God in more human terms than we would today, and this observation is often made with a bit of condescension. In scholarly circles we may speak of an anthropomorphism. As we understand it, God never forgets and so it seems foolish and unnecessary to speak of God remembering.

We must be careful, however, how we deal with the ways of ancient writers, for there may be a deeper point in these verses. For many verses the destruction of the old world and progress of the flood is explained, but then there comes a shift. In chapter eight we learn of the flood receding and the promise of life returning. Some scholars have even spoken of a parallel between chapter eight and the creation story of the first chapter of Genesis. In between the two movements of this great flood, in the great shift from destruction to restoration, is the statement, *But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark*. Lest we forget, Genesis reminds us that God was remembering Noah in all of this and was working toward restoration. These are comforting words to all of us as we endure rough patches in the shifting seasons of life.

What I find especially sweet about God remembering Noah, and the false implication that God might have forgotten for a moment, is that Noah probably *felt forgotten* as

the days dragged on. Certainly, this is a sentiment which we can all comprehend and appreciate. Life presents us with numerous occasions when we are likely to start feeling forgotten, and endless voyages in arks and pandemic shutdowns are two such occasions. We may be slow to confess to feeling so forsaken as such a lament may seem lacking in faith, or sounding childish, but the psalmist was not so hesitant. I have long adored the twenty-fifth psalm's plea for God's remembrance. In the sixth and seventh verse the word remember is used three times. First the singer asks God to remember that He is merciful and loving, then the appeal is made that God *remember not* the sins of his youth and his other troublesome ways. Then comes the final, and I believe the most heartfelt request, and that is that God simply remember him. It appears that he and Noah had a mutual understanding!

Like Noah, we have all been through a lot in life, and like Noah we have all doubted. As this pandemic drags on and this winter seems to know no end, many are depressed. This is a serious affliction and demands attention. Let all know that despite how we may be feeling, God has not forgotten us. Let us all be sure to seek the support we may need to deal with such sadness. And let us all take heart. God did not forget Noah, nor the psalmist, and God shall not forget us.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

Almighty God, who in thy wisdom hast so ordered our earthly life that we must walk by faith and not by sight; grant us such faith in thee that, amidst all things that pass our understanding, we may believe in thy fatherly care and ever be strengthened by the assurance that underneath are the everlasting arms; through Jesus Christ our Lord. —Source Unknown