

The perfection was gone. Long gone. It had been ten generations since Adam and Eve lived in the perfect Garden of Eden home God created for them. That came after six days of God creating perfect things and declaring **“it was good”**. But all the good was gone. Adam and Eve threw it away by falling for Satan’s temptation. They pulled themselves and the entire world down into sin. Suddenly everything that had been good was not good. Every child of Adam and Eve was anything but good. They were wicked and seemed to be getting worse. Things could not continue down that path for long before being out of control.

Sound much like today to you? It has been many generations since Adam and Eve. The perfection is long gone. It doesn’t take much time at all before that’s easy to realize. Everything and everyone has their problems, their tendencies, but one thing holds true for every last person. Wicked and getting worse.

God took action when he saw things getting bad. He didn’t want to let it continue. If it had the promise he made to Adam and Eve about eventually setting things right again would be thrown away. God would never let that happen. Drastic measures needed to be taken. Judgment needed to be brought down on the sinful world. A judgment not unlike what we will face someday in the future. But this same judgment that destroys is also a judgment that saves. As we listen to the first lesson from Genesis we hear...

How to build your Advent Ark

The population at the time of Noah is a mystery. It was big, but how big isn’t known and it’s not really that important. What is important was the quality of the people. **“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.”** Talk about a clear statement. The Lord saw humanity as one giant cesspool. There was nothing about humanity worth anything. They were completely sinful. Every thought they had was sinful. Every action they took was another step further away from God. Unchecked they would train their children to not believe in God. Then the next generation would know nothing about God. How would God’s promise of the Savior be shared if no one knew the promise? The result would be a human race that wouldn’t know the promised Savior at all.

As God shares it, one man and his family didn’t go the way of the world. **“Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.”** There was something different about Noah, something that came from outside him. Noah had all the same wickedness in his heart that infected every other person. He was from the line of Adam and Eve. Noah hadn’t escaped sinfulness somehow. But what Noah had was something missing in many other people on the planet at the time. Favor in the eyes of the LORD speaks to an action the LORD took with Noah. The difference between all the wicked and Noah and his family was God’s favor, or maybe better, God’s grace.

The promise of God’s grace had been passed down through the generations from Adam and Eve who heard it directly from God. **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.”** Adam and Eve told their children of God’s promise to send a Savior. Those children told their children, and the promised Savior made its way through time. The promise of how God spared the lives of Adam and Eve and promised this new friendship between humans and Satan would not last. God himself would set it right again. In the promise describing how God would set things right again by crushing the head of Satan. A promise of love and of grace to come. That grace made all the difference in the life of Noah when he heard. Noah heard of God’s grace, a Savior who would forgive sin, and would rescue all people. Knowing that a Savior was coming made all the difference. **“Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.”** He wasn’t perfect. But he walked with God because God was with him. He was righteous because God declared him righteous based on the promise of a Savior. He was blameless in the eyes of God because of God’s grace.

Did it surprise you to hear the LORD’s conclusion? When he looked at the world of Noah’s time, **“The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, I will wipe mankind; whom I have created, from the face of the earth.”** He planned drastic steps. God planned to send a flood, a flood that would wipe out all humankind. It would be a cataclysmic event that the world had never seen before. Every wicked person would be eliminated. All humanity destroyed.

What would be God’s conclusion as he looks at the world today? Would it not be the same? Times are not good. Wickedness still exists. I say that not because of politics, terrorism, or economics. Times are not good because things haven’t changed since Noah’s time. Every thought of every human heart is still only sinful all the time. People are still all too comfortable sailing easily into sin with the rest of the world. It’s too easy to flow with the world that wants to make its own decisions and its own paths. We fall into wanting to live our own lives and let other people keep their noses out. We like to kick back and take it easy. Trying to be good when everyone else wants to be bad is too hard. It’s so much easier to be bad today and feel bad about it tomorrow. Give in to the sinful nature. Don’t fight it. Why fight it?

The Lord must still be grieved. We live with no risk of a worldwide flood. But we do live with the risk of God’s judgment. He finds ways to bring judgment into our time. He shows wickedness isn’t tolerated. Those who are involved in sin sometimes experience earthly consequences for those sins. Those who let sin take over their lives, give in to the sin, and die that way are lost forever. When someone rejects God’s mercy, God’s Savior, and ends up lost in hell it is forever. Yes, that’s the possibility. Any people outside of God’s mercy, anyone outside the ark, lost their lives but much worse than that their souls ended up in hell.

A few were saved. That's the glowing gospel point. Some were saved. **"I am going to put an end to all people...everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark."** When Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives stepped onto the ark and the rain started falling God's promise of a Savior lived on. The covenant God made with humanity, starting with Adam and Eve, and continuing to Noah and his family, was that he would preserve them to keep the promise of the Savior alive. This God did by the ark. And God made a covenant with Noah that would not be lost in the destruction of the wicked world. Noah and his family learned firsthand what it was to be connected to God and his grace. God's promised flood actually was their salvation. Riding in the ark on top of the water they were kept safe and brought through the flood. Then through Noah, God reestablished humanity and also kept the promise of the Savior going through history. Noah and his family had God's covenant of mercy.

The promise of a Savior has come to you. You will not be judged in a flood, but on the Last Day when Jesus returns. Thinking about your sins might cause you to fear that day. If you thought you had to stand before God and answer him alone it would be scary. Like a destructive flood coming. But the same judgment others fear because they rejected Christ, you will not fear. The covenant promise you have from God is one sided. Jesus will return on the Last Day. But the Last Day is when you'll see God's grace finish what he started. You'll ride high above the judgment taking place, completely safe in the ark provided by Christ. Carried right along past destruction and death into the joys of heaven. No bouncy ride, no danger, no evil to hold you back. The Last Day will be your day of rescue. You're inside the ark by God's grace.

The perfection lost by Adam and Eve will be back. We prepare for that day, the Last Day which will usher in perfection for you. The world around us seems lost in sin and they have a judgment day to fear. Not you. Not me. In Christ Jesus the Last Day is a day to look forward to. You've got your ark. You're safe in Christ. He enables you to float along safely above the wickedness of the world. In him you will arrive safely in heaven, in perfection that never ends. Today you find yourself in your Advent Ark by God's grace and promise to you.