

“Life-Giving Flood”

The Genesis flood covered the earth – wiping out every living thing. It was a flood sent by God – but was brought about by the wickedness of mankind. As we hear in Genesis before the flood – “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (6:5)

That is a clear picture of our sinful nature – how the sin of Adam has corrupted all of God’s “very good” creation – how sin has become our default position – only evil, all the time.

That’s why we confess that we justly deserve God’s temporal (in time) and eternal punishment. We confess that we deserve to be wiped from the face of the earth by the flood of God’s wrath – receiving what our sin deserves – separated from God for all eternity.

And yet, we can be absolutely certain that God will not wipe us from the face of the earth with another flood – because He has given His promise. He made a covenant with Noah, and all his offspring, and every living creature for all generations – and that includes YOU!

The Lord promises that He will never destroy all flesh with a flood – and as He often does – He gives a sign to go along with His promise.

The Lord sets a rainbow in the clouds as a reminder of His promise. How ironic that replicas of rainbows have flourished in our day and age – and yet – when you see one, you are not reminded of God’s promise – but a bold and proud flaunting of man’s wickedness.

A rainbow set in the sky is a different matter – because it catches your eye. Whether you are 5 or 50 years old – you not only take note of rainbows in the sky – but point them out to others. “Look, there’s a rainbow!”

They truly are an amazing sight – the colors, the shape, the beauty. Some may be fascinated by the physics of light and refraction – why they appear at certain times, and not others. But as beautiful and fascinating as they may be – it is not simply the forces of nature that bring about a rainbow.

A rainbow is the result of God's Word, His promise. It stands there in the sky by His divine pleasure. We have rainbows because of the will and promise of God.

When you see a rainbow – do you even think of God? And if you do – does it remind you of God's wrath at sin – or of His grace? Do you think of all those who died in the Flood – or do you think of Noah and His family who were saved through the water in the ark ----- or both?

We don't have to look very far to see signs of death all around us – reminding us of our own mortality. What we need in this fearful and mortal life is a sign of LIFE to comfort us – and the rainbow is just that – a sign of God's grace, His promise, His desire that we would not die but live.

Luther says that the rainbow should remind us to give thanks to God. "For as often as the rainbow appears," he writes, "it preaches to the entire world with a loud voice about the wrath which once moved God to destroy the whole world. It also gives comfort, that we may have the conviction that God is kindly inclined toward us again and will never again make use of so horrible a punishment. Thus it teaches the fear of God and faith at the same time, the greatest virtues." (LW 2:148)

Twelve descendants of Adam and Noah find themselves in a boat – surrounded by water – and "the wind was against them." For these Twelve disciples, there is no sign of God's grace – no rainbow to comfort them – only darkness, and the fear of death.

To these followers of Jesus – the Lord Himself comes. The very same Lord who saved Noah and his family – comes walking on the water – showing His dominion over creation. The Lord comes in human flesh and blood – and once again a Word of God is spoken – "Do not be afraid."

And as soon as Jesus steps into their little ark – the wind ceased.

This is why the Lord of all creation has taken on human flesh and blood – so that He might bring peace to His creation wracked by sin. God in the flesh Jesus takes to Himself all that ravages God’s “very good” creation – the turmoil of the wind and the water – the illnesses of all who were brought to Him – all sin which brings suffering and death.

In His flesh, nailed to the cross – the flood of God’s wrath at sin is poured out on Jesus – who gives His life into death.

Dear baptized children of God – “do not be afraid” of this flood being poured out on you – for Jesus has consumed all of God’s wrath. All you baptized – “take heart” – for the saving flood of Holy Baptism is a lavish washing away of all your sin.

What benefits do you receive in this Baptism? It is for you a constant working of the forgiveness of sins, rescue from death and the devil, and it gives eternal salvation to all who believe the words and promises of God. And what does He promise? “Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

And with His promise, a sign – the sign of the cross – to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. Redeemed are your lies, your lusts, your pride and your prejudice. All your sin washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ – who creates in you a clean heart, makes you to be a new creation, and gives His everlasting life to you.

“Do not be afraid” – for in the Ark of Holy Baptism you reside with Jesus your Savior – safe and sound – until the day He delivers you to the shores of your heavenly home. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.