

The Ark

[DROUGHT] You probably know that without water you've got problems.

[FLOOD] And at the other end of the extreme you've still got problems.

[BODY] Sixty-percent of the average adult human is composed of water. In infants it is 77%. We can live for weeks without food, but only a few days without water.

Our scriptures are filled with references about water because nomadic and agrarian civilizations know how important it is. God refers to Himself as living water in Jeremiah 2:13.

[MIGHTY WATERS] But in today's reading, water takes on a more ominous reference - it becomes many waters or much water. In Psalm 69:1 it says the waters have come up to my neck and I sink in deep mire. Psalm 46 has waters that roar and foam. Folks much water is bad news! In situations like this we need an ark - maybe not one as big as Noah's, but an ark that can save us, protect us. Sometimes life overwhelms us, with personal and professional problems that feel like a flood of mighty waters. We feel overpowered by difficulties rushing toward us, whether they be emotional, financial, relational or vocational. We find ourselves gasping for breath, with the waters coming up to our necks and our feet in deep mire.

[ARK] Flailing around in the flood, we desperately need an ark - a vessel to carry us across the waves to a place of safety and salvation. An Ark for our Spirits.

[PRAYER] The construction of such an ark begins with a prayer to the God who has power over the flood. "The voice of the Lord is over the waters," says Psalm 29; "the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters. ... The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!" (vv. 3, 10-11). This passage is telling us that the voice of God is more powerful than the waters. He's more powerful than a seemingly bad situation in our lives. You've heard me say before that throughout our scriptures God says to us, "Don't be afraid, for I am with you." We often lose sight that God was with us, is with us, and will be with us now and forever. (*Doesn't that deserve an AMEN?*)

So, pray to God who has control over the spiritual floods of our lives. I'd like you to close your eyes and take a moment to meditate on the words of Psalm 46:10, which enable us to connect with the Lord who sits enthroned over the flood.

Be still, and know that I am God.

Be still, and know that I am.

Be still, and know.

Be still.

Be....

When we rest in the power of Almighty God, we are given the strength and the peace we need to face the flood.

[CHURCH COMMUNITY] Another aspect of building a spiritual ark requires us to build a community of support and accountability. That support begins with our families and then it ripples outward to the church. Throughout its history, the church has been a kind of an ark. Gothic churches have a section called "the nave" which is where the members sit. Nave comes from the Latin *navis*, meaning ship.

Presbyterian minister Frederick Buechner suggests that the Christian church is Noah's ark, a vessel filled with all kinds of creatures, "the predators and the prey, the wild and the tame, the sleek and beautiful ones and the ones that are ugly as sin.

"He admits that it's not always enjoyable on the ark. "There's backbiting just like everywhere else. There's a pecking order. ... It's a regular menagerie in there, and sometimes it smells to high heaven."

But even at its worst, there's at least one thing that makes it bearable inside -- the fact that there is a storm outside, with "wild winds and terrible waves." At its best, concludes Buechner, the church provides "shelter from the blast, a sense of somehow heading in the right direction in spite of everything, a ship to keep afloat, and, like a beacon in the dark, the hope of finding safe harbor at last."

[SATURN] As I was reflecting on what I wanted to say for this message, I saw an interview with a scientist on NASA TV. She is a part of the Cassini project which is an international satellite project that's been collecting data and photos of Saturn and its moons. I don't know why, but this image reminds me of someone praying. The halo are the rings of Saturn and the blue ring is sunlight shining from behind the planet.

The scientist knew that they would have an opportunity to take some photos of the Earth and thought it would be something special if they let people know on what date and time this would happen so that they could stop and look up and smile for the picture.

[SATURN & EARTH] This is the photo of our home from 1-billion miles away. Do you see it? Let me point it out.

[ARROW] You may be wondering why I'm showing this.... Because this is our Ark in the vast ocean of the Universe. This is our refuge in space. Statistically there are many planets like ours in the universe - but as far as we know for sure - this is the only planet with life as we know it. So, it would behoove us to take good care of it.

Unfortunately, we are not! [China air pollution] As a species, we pollute the air that we breath... [Grand River, Michigan] and the water that we drink.... [Dominican Rep Beach] We dump our waste in the oceans, some of which washes up on our shores,... [Entangled whale and sea turtle] but not all of it.

[Deforestation in Indonesia] We are destroying our rain forests which help to cleanse our air from the fossil fuels that we have put into it, ... [Orangutan vs bulldozer] which is causing the extinction of species and the way of life for indigenous people throughout the world.

[Melting glacier] Our reliance on outdated fuel sources, like oil and coal, is causing the collapse of glacier ice caps in the Artic Circle. [Polar Bear on melting ice] A recent news article [April, 2019] reported temperatures in the Artic averaging in the 80s, when it normally should be in the 50s this time of year.

[**Whale jumping out of ocean with rainbow**] A recent editorial in the Christian Century magazine tells about a whale that recently washed ashore in the Philippines had 88 pounds of plastic in its stomach. It said, “That event encapsulates a planetary crisis: the earth’s magnificent creatures – including the very Leviathan that God enjoys watching “play” in the sea – are being destroyed by human recklessness.” Last month experts from around the globe reported that up to 1 million species are in danger of extinction. That’s one in every eight animal and plant species on the earth. Although species extinction happens naturally, experts now say the rate of extinction is tens to hundreds of times faster than normal. While climate change increases, biodiversity decreases, making it harder for plants and animals to adapt.

I want to take a moment to read you the conclusion of that editorial:

[**Graphic**] The divine response to the unfolding of species, as recorded in Genesis 1, is affirmation: “And God saw that it was good.” According to the psalm writers, the proper response to the diversity of creation is praise: “O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all” (Ps. 104:24). Psalm 148 imagines the creatures themselves praising God, each in their own way, through their mode of existence: “Sea monsters . . . wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds! . . . Let them praise the Lord.”

[**Graphic**] Humanity’s assault on the diversity of species is more than self-destructive. It is a denial of creation’s intrinsic worth and of humanity’s fundamental vocation of wonder and praise.

As people of faith, we are called in our scriptures to be stewards of the earth; caretakers of God's creation. For the last 20-years, climatologists throughout the world have been warning us about this apocalypse while our governments, and, sadly, many of our religious leaders, have ignored them. But we must act now! Individually and globally, while there is still hope for our children and future generations of all species.

[JESUS IS OUR ARK] When life threatens to drown us, we each need an ark -- - an ark which comes from connecting with God through prayer, and receiving his strength and peace;- an ark which always includes the church – the Body of Christ, a community of support *and accountability* to God *and* our neighbors;- an ark which has Jesus at the helm, sailing above the waters and steering us in the right direction.

As we face the challenges of life, we can be helped by keeping our eyes on Jesus, - the living water - the one with whom God is well pleased. The one who said, "I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Amen.

Benediction

Go forth in power, full of the Spirit of God. Let love be genuine, hold fast to what is good, rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering and persevere in prayer. And may God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.