

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome, Campers, to Camp Neighborhood!
- B. When I was a little boy, I grew up going to a Christian summer camp called Camp Awana. Fishing, swimming, games, cabins... it was a Chicago-boy's dream come true. Every night, all us kids climbed to the top of Campfire Hill. There was a kind of amphitheater on the top, built of giant railroad ties. And a roaring bonfire in the middle. We gathered there—eight and nine and ten years old—under a starry sky, trying to avoid the smoke. It seems no matter which side of the fire we sat on, the wind shifted to blow the smoke in our faces.
- C. Then we sang some camp songs, and then my favorite part began. A leader got up to tell a Bible story. David and Goliath. Samson and Delilah. Jonah and the Great Fish. Daniel in the Lion's den.
- D. I didn't realize it then, but my heart and mind was being filled with the grace and power of God through those stories.
- E. So many kids grew up hearing these stories. Whether at camp or Sunday School or Vacation Bible School or Awana clubs... It is an awesome treasure for sure.
- F. But we also know that many did not grow up with these stories. Church or Bible was not part of your life growing up. We can't assume that everybody is familiar with these stories.
- G. So let's tell those stories and see how God still speaks through his Word.
- H. Today, I'd like to tell the story of Noah's Ark and the Great Flood.
- I. I would like to go over the story first, and then ask "so what?" What can the impossibly ancient story of Noah and the Ark say to our lives today?

II. Noah's Ark and the Great Flood— The Story

- A. The story dates back to the misty dawn of human civilization. It goes so far back that we cannot put a date on it, and anyone who says they can is making stuff up.
- B. It happened several thousand years ago, a couple *thousands* of years before Christ, at least.
- C. The ancient civilizations had turned their backs on the true God.
 - 1. *Now the LORD observed the extent of the people's wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. (Genesis 6:5, NLT).*
- D. When a culture forgets God, this is what happens. Violence. Lawlessness. Abuse of power. Corruption. The breakdown of power. We are fallen members of a fallen race.
- E. I think anybody who is really honest knows that there's a dark and dangerous streak deep down inside our hearts. I have that and so do you. And without restraint, it's the Lord of the Flies.
- F. In Noah's day, the evil ran deep. It was demonic. Energized by the devil. An out and out attack against everything good and pure and true. An open defiance against God, and a rebellion against his reign.
 - 1. Yes, God is loving, with a holy love.
 - 2. And God is gracious, with a righteous grace.
 - 3. And God is good, with a goodness born of justice, and purity, and truth.
 - 4. And God is patient, but there comes a time when he knows that no amount of patience will produce a different outcome.
- G. And that is what happened in Noah's day. An evil so deep, so far ingrained, that the time of patience was over.
 - 1. *Now the LORD observed the extent of the people's wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them. It broke his heart. And the LORD said, "I will completely wipe out this human race that I have created. Yes, and I will destroy all the animals and birds, too. I am sorry I ever made them." (Genesis 6:5-7, NLT).*
- H. There is a big word in theology that applies to this verse. You might remember it from a while back.
 - 1. *Anthro-po-morph-ism: describing God in human terms so our puny brains can understand him.*
- I. God never makes mistake. He never changes his mind. But for us to understand him, sometimes the Bible has to dumb him down. It's called language of accommodation.
- J. What is NOT language of accommodation is judgement of God. The time has come, and his strictness and wrath, which he has been holding back, like a pent up dam, will be released.
 - 1. The first judgment of the whole human race happened in the Garden of Eden.
 - 2. The second judgment of the whole human race is about to happen here.
 - 3. And there is a third one yet to come.
- K. But into this horrible mess shines a ray of light.
 - 1. *But Noah found favor with the LORD. This is the history of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless man living on earth at the time. He consistently followed God's will and enjoyed a close relationship with him. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Genesis 6:8-10, NLT).*
- L. Noah was a shining difference from all the people around him. The Bible says three things here:
 - 1. He found *favor* with the Lord. That word means grace, and whatever is happening in his life, it is rooted and grounded in the grace of God finding him out.
 - 2. He was a *righteous* man. This is the first outcome of his grace. Noah learned the secret of how to be put right with God. And the secret was this: the way to be put right with God was by grace through faith in the sacrifice that would cleanse him from his sins.

- a) For Noah, it was faith in a sacrifice who would come thousands of years after.
- b) For us, it is faith in a sacrifice who came thousands of years ago.
 - (1) The plan of salvation has always been the same.
 - (2) Noah understood this, so...
3. Noah walked with God. God saved him, God blessed him, God grew him, and now, in an epic sort of way, God is going to use him.
 - a) So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Yes, I will wipe them all from the face of the earth!"
 - b) "Make a boat from resinous wood and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. Make it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Construct an opening all the way around the boat, 18 inches below the roof.
 - c) Then put three decks inside the boat--bottom, middle, and upper--and put a door in the side. "Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing. Everything on earth will die! But I solemnly swear to keep you safe in the boat, with your wife and your sons and their wives.
 - d) Bring a pair of every kind of animal--a male and a female--into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. Pairs of each kind of bird and each kind of animal, large and small alike, will come to you to be kept alive. And remember, take enough food for your family and for all the animals." (Genesis 6:13-21, NLT).
- M. An ark is a box. So God said, "Noah, build me a giant floating box." Because I am going to give the world the judgment it has asked for, and asked for, and asked for. The very judgment that I have held back for so many centuries.
- N. So Noah goes to work. With his three sons, he buys the lumber. He draws out the plans. He hires the workman. It's the biggest thing on the horizon for miles and miles around.
- O. It became a giant attraction.
 1. "Hey Noah, what are you building?"
 2. "An ark!"
 3. "What's an ark?"
 4. "It's a giant float box."
 5. "What? Here? Why here? There's no water around here?"
 6. "Because God is going to judge the world."
 7. "You really believe that nonsense?"
 8. "Yes I do."
 9. "Well how is he going to judge the world?"
 10. "Through a great flood. But I'm here here to tell you. God's justice will come, yes. But mercy precedes justice, and there is mercy with God. When the time comes, come on board the ark."
 11. "Sure, Noah. You're just a foolish old man."
- P. For a hundred and twenty years, Noah built the ark, and preached the good news, inviting everyone to flee for refuge to the ark before it was too late.
- Q. For 120 years, Noah was what the Bible calls a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). It was a hundred and twenty year countdown.
- R. God is patient, but in the end, his justice will be shown.
- S. And the only people who believed his gospel were the members of Noah's own family.
- T. So finally the day came.
 1. Finally, the day came when the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I consider you alone to be righteous. (Genesis 7:1, NLT).
- U. Noah boarded the ark. Don't picture Noah running around trying to catch all the animals. God sent animals to him, thousands and thousands inside the giant ark.
- V. And when they were all in...
 1. Two by two they came into the boat, male and female, just as God had commanded. Then the LORD shut them in. (Genesis 7:15, 16, NLT).
- W. The Lord shut the door.
- X. The countdown was finished. Time is up.
 1. For forty days the floods prevailed, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, standing more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks.
 2. All the living things on earth died--birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all kinds of small animals, and all the people. Everything died that breathed and lived on dry land. Every living thing on the earth was wiped out--people, animals both large and small, and birds.
 3. They were all destroyed, and only Noah was left alive, along with those who were with him in the boat. And the water covered the earth for 150 days. (Genesis 7:17-24, NLT).

- Y. The Bible goes on to describe how long they were on the ark, and how the waters receded and after long last, they came off the ark and started a new civilization. The story ends with this promise from God.
 - 1. *When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds, and I will remember my covenant with you and with everything that lives. Never again will there be a flood that will destroy all life. (Genesis 9:14, 15, NLT).*
- Z. This is the story of Noah's Ark and the Great Flood. I believe it is history, not myth. I believe it is scientifically consistent. What you believe is up to you.
 - 1. Now, what can such an ancient story possibly say to us today?
 - 2. Please think with me about the Top Ten Parallels between our lives and the story of Noah's ark.

III. Top Ten Parallels

- A. 1. *The Number: there was only one way of salvation.*
 - 1. There was only one ark. And there is only one way to God today. Jesus is the way, and no one comes to God except by him. People say that all roads lead to God, but that really doesn't make sense, because all roads are actually heading in different directions.
 - 2. There is...
 - a) Only one Savior who came down from heaven.
 - b) Only one Savior who died for our sins.
 - c) Only one Savior who rose from the dead.
 - d) Only one Savior who defeated death, conquered the grave, crushed the devil, and battered the gates of hell.
 - e) Only one Savior who sits at the right hand of glory.
 - f) Only one Savior who can forgive your sins.
 - g) Only one Savior who can give you eternal life and make you God's forever.
 - 3. There was no other way to be saved in Noah's day but the ark, and there is no other way to be saved in our day but the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. 2. *The Size: it was big enough for all.*
 - 1. What a gigantic ark! "The ark was a great ark, which held all kinds of creatures; and our Christ is a great Refuge, who saves all kinds of sinners" (Charles Spurgeon).
 - 2. The power of the Cross of Christ will never be exhausted. Till Christ returns, there is room for more. Another seat at the eternal feast, and another after that.
 - 3. Though millions have come, there's still room for one. There is room at the Cross for you.
- C. 3. *The Reliability: it was a certain and sure refuge.*
 - 1. Some people accept Jesus Christ, and then worry if they're really saved. They tell themselves they have to work and think they have to add. They worry it wasn't enough.
 - 2. If Noah could build an ark that could withstand a flood of waters, Jesus could build a salvation that can ride triumphantly above the wrath of God.
 - 3. His cross is a complete forgiveness and his salvation is a complete salvation.
 - 4. The devil can't wound it. You can't damage it. Time won't age it.
 - 5. You do not have to fear. Your salvation is as strong today as it was the first day. When our sun has burned out its energy, and this whole cosmos is rolled up like a scroll, the ark of salvation you ride upon will show not a single sign of wear, and will be as perfect and strong and stable and sure for all the ages of eternity.
- D. 4. *The Window: only one, and it looked up.*
 - 1. There was only one window in the ark, and it looked up.
 - 2. When tough times come, where do you look? Wherever else you look, look to Jesus. Look to God.
 - a) *I will lift up my eyes to the hills-- From whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore. (Psalms 121:1-8, NKJV).*
- E. 5. *The Door: there was only one door.*
 - 1. The ark represents the grace of salvation.
 - 2. The door represents the faith through which you climb on board.
 - 3. The message that we preach is not to do this thing, or that thing, or the next thing.
 - 4. It is one thing: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. This is the one door. The only door.
 - a) It is not give something to God. It is only believe.
 - b) It is not commit anything to God. It is only believe.
 - c) It is not do anything for God. It is only believe.
 - 5. The Bible says whoever believes in Christ will not be put to shame (Romans 10:11). We all enter by the same door, the humble door of faith alone in Christ alone.
- F. 6. *The Passengers: clean and unclean are all brought on board.*
 - 1. When God sent animals on the ark, he sent both clean and unclean.

2. And so it is with salvation. The most moral person, the most immoral person. Good and bad. Lawful and lawless. The most moral person you know will stand no better when he comes before God than you will.
 3. Their salvation is the same as yours because their Savior is the self-same Jesus.
 4. You may look down on yourself. You may think you're the worst person in the world. It doesn't matter. We are all the same on the ark of our salvation. All the same at the foot of the cross.
- G. 7. *The Call: by a mysterious inner working.*
1. When it was time to board the ark, God sent the animals to Noah. No one knows that invisible inner working that sent them to the ark.
 2. And no one knows the invisible inner working that brought you to Christ. You heard a preacher. Or you read a book. Or you listened to your mom or dad. It might have been the Bible itself. Or a deep conviction or fear or need.
 3. When God starts tugging at your heart, all that's left is to say yes. You can say yes today, and tell God that you are believing in Jesus, and receiving him today.
- H. 8. *The Patience: God is patient, but the clock is still ticking.*
1. The patience of God only runs out when the knowledge of God sees nothing will change your mind.
 2. No one will stand before Jesus Christ at final judgment who didn't have a chance to first seek him, and then hear of him, and then believe.
 - a) *Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance [coming to Christ in faith]? (Romans 2:4, NKJV).*
- I. 9. *The Finality: God shut the door.*
1. God shut the door on the ark.
 2. And there is a door that shuts on every life. There comes a time in every life when it's too late. The heart is too hard. The will is too stubborn. The mind is too convinced of its lies. The Bible says "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27, NKJV).
 3. You don't know about your tomorrow. Nobody does. And so, today is the day of salvation.
 4. And therefore, there's one more parallel, and that is the one most on my heart for today.
- J. 10. *The Mission: We're all God's Noah's, and the world still needs an ark.*
1. God told Noah to do this crazy thing and build an ark. People thought he was crazy, but what he did saved the world.
 2. What is the church? What is Neighborhood?
 3. We are a bunch of Noah's sent into every subdivision, and business, and agency, and school in this region to tell people a storm is coming, and to say get on board the ark.
 4. The Ark is Jesus Christ, crucified and risen again.
 5. We're not calling you to a set of behaviors. Or a religion. Or a philosophy of life. We're not calling people to just be nice and loving and kind. That's not the ark, and that won't save.
 6. It's Jesus. And the world thinks we're nuts. We're crazy and wasting our time, they say.
 7. Leave us alone. And they laugh as we build the ark. They say we do it for money, or for control, or to shove it down their throats.
 8. They think we're weird. They don't understand.
 9. God has spoken in his Word.
 10. A storm is brewing. It's the pent up justice of God. There is a salvation, and a Savior. And an ark of love and joy and peace and heaven and forgiveness and the life you were meant to lead. Come on board.
 11. Christians will always get together. We enjoy each other's company. Mostly.
 12. They will gather in houses to study the Bible. We will pray. We will sing. We will worship. We will help each other.
 13. Those things come so naturally sometimes.
 14. But the first thing in a church that dies is a mission to save the lost. Evangelism. Outreach. Preaching the gospel, and inviting people to believe in Jesus. It's so rare, and I don't know why.
 15. Have we forgotten the price that was paid?
 16. Have we forgotten the destiny of a lost soul?
 17. Have we watered down God into a senile grandfather whose only desire is a good time he had by all?
 18. Have we transmogrified the message of a Redeemer who shed his blood to set us free into the impossibly dull message to share and be nice and love? No!
 19. Some people are saved. Some people are lost.
 20. Saved people spend an eternity with God. Lost people spend an eternity under the wrath of God.
 21. And we are here to call the world to get on board the ark. They may mock us, but we can handle it.
 - a) "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for." (Spurgeon)
 22. Church, let's live and die to build the ark and call the world on board.