IS GOD MEAN?
Genesis 7:1-24

Let's pray – Father God, you have given us a written record of your word in the Bible, so that we might know you better and surrender our hearts to you and find joy in your presence. Please open the eyes of our hearts so that we might see and understand better who you are today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

INTRODUCTION – Is God Mean?

Over the years I have heard some people talk about the difficulty they have reconciling the God of the Old Testament with Jesus in the New Testament. They struggle because they think the Old Testament portrays a God who seems angry, and harsh, maybe even vindictive or mean. Whereas in the New Testament, Jesus seems so patient and loving and compassionate. How can these be one and the same God we are talking about?

We've come to a place in our discussion of Genesis together that will raise questions like these. Today we are going to read about the flood God sent to destroy everything on earth except for Noah and his family and 2 of every animal. **Do stories like this prove that God is harsh and mean, or do they invite us to look deeper and so discover important truths about God and ourselves?**

Let's read the story and then we'll explore these questions.

Genesis 7:1-24.

7 The Lord then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I
have found you righteous in this generation. [2] Take with you seven pairs of every kind of
clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male
and its mate, [3] and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their
various kinds alive throughout the earth. [4] Seven days from now I will send rain on the
earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living
creature I have made."

5 And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.

6 Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. **7** And Noah
and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of
the flood. **8** Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move
along the ground, **9** male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had
commanded Noah. **10** And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second
month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of
the heavens were opened. 12 And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

13 On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife
and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. 14 They had with them every wild
animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that
moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its
kind, everything with wings. 15 Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them
came to Noah and entered the ark. 16 The animals going in were male and female of
every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord shut him in.

17 For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they
lifted the ark high above the earth. 18 The waters rose and increased greatly on the
earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. 19 They rose greatly on the earth,
and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. 20 The waters rose
and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits.[a][b]

21 Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the
creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. 22 Everything on dry land that had
the breath of life in its nostrils died. 23 Every living thing on the face of the earth was
wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the
birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.
24 The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

As we read the story, did you think God was being mean or harsh? Certainly, things like verse 4 might lead someone to feel that way. There God said:

4 Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I
will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made."

If that is all we know of the story, we might believe that God is being harsh or mean. Otherwise, why would he choose to destroy every living thing on the face of the earth?

However, when we understand the context that led God to that decision, the story of the flood does not reveal a temperamental or vindictive God. Rather, the context reveals a God who is grieved over the way his creation has used their freedom of choice to hurt each other and ruin the beautiful world he made.

A few weeks ago, we read these words in Gen 6:5-6 -

5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the
earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the

time. 6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

In a message titled, “Grieving the heart of God,” we discussed how this word “regret” doesn’t mean God made a tactical error in creating humans. Rather, it is meant to convey the sense of deep sorrow and grief God felt as he witnessed human sin.

We discover from the context of the story that God allowed himself to feel pain in his heart, and to grieve, over the evil that he saw.

In Genesis 6:11 tells us

Genesis 6:11 – 14

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. 12 God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. 13 So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. 14 So make yourself an ark of cypress[c] wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.

As we seek to answer the question, “Is God mean?” the context of the story of the flood reveals otherwise. It is not anger that drives God’s plan, but grief.

I want to share with you a very sad and tragic real-life story that brings deep grief to my heart.

Ah-Wah’s Story –

Many years ago, while I was studying in college, I received news that a friend of our family was murdered in mainland China.

Her name was A-Wa, and she was the wife of the first person my mom led to the Lord there. Her husband’s name was A-Keung. The couple had taken over a struggling restaurant and had worked long hours to turn it around in the hopes that they could sell it and spend less time at work and more time with their 4 year old daughter Emily.

They had taken on a 19 year old worker who had come in from the countryside and was in need of a job. A-Wa had taken him under her wing pampering him, taking him to his doctor visit, brewing the prescribed Chinese medicine for him. She didn’t do that for any of the other employees, but he was just 19 years old. Sometimes she would let him take cold drinks or ice-cream from the fridge without paying.

When they hired him, he agreed to a one year contract that provided for his room and board. His first 2 weeks wages would be held as a deposit to secure the contract. If he quit without notice before the end of the first year, he would forfeit the deposit. If they

fired him, the full 2 weeks deposit would be refunded to him. He accepted the terms and quickly started work.

After he received his first month's pay, the lad asked for a day off to go visit his brother in a neighboring town. They told him they were short staffed that day and asked if he could wait a day or two so they could find a substitute for him. He quit on the spot and left without returning the key to his room or paying back the money he borrowed against his deposit.

Unable to secure another job after leaving the restaurant, the lad returned home to his village for 3 months. With little else to do, he thought about the deposit of his first 2 weeks wages and decided that the boss should have given it back to him. So, he returned for it.

He let himself in with the old keys he had failed to return and hid under the bed that night, planning to take back the money he thought he was owed.

As it turned out, A-Wa was now a couple months pregnant with their second child. She was exhausted and not feeling well in the morning, so instead of getting up and going to work with A-Keung, she slept in. A-Keung got Emily ready for day care and left for work. When noon came and A-Wa had still not arrived at the restaurant, A-Keung went home to check on her.

I can only imagine the horror and the grief he felt when he discovered her lying on the floor of their home, stabbed to death, for the sake of a few dollars.

The pain and the grief was immense. He not only lost his wife, but also his second child as well. Even though you never met A-Wa and you didn't know her personally as a friend or family member, I imagine your heart must also grieve as you hear this story. Am I right?

Grief is the driving force we see in heart of God when he shared with Noah his plan to destroy the world with the flood. God grieved and felt deep pain over the violence and evil He was witnessing. He designed creation for good, not for this kind of evil. We could hardly call Him a loving or good God if he sat idly by doing nothing in response. When God sent the flood to destroy the world it wasn't because he was mean, it was because he taking action to put an end to the evil and violence and corruption that had overtaken the world.

Would you think it mean put an end to the evil that led to my friend A-Wa's murder?

The Chinese government didn't think so. In due time they executed her murderer. A bullet to the back of the lad's head. It was a much quicker, less painful and less gruesome death than what he had caused. But it brought about his death nonetheless.

Even very secular human governments understand that evil cannot be left unchecked.

Nor can God ignore violence, corruption and systemic injustices. And we wouldn't want him to. Anyone who has ever said, "That's not fair!" about a situation has on some level, cried out for justice to be delivered or enforced.

When we have been wronged, don't we all long for justice to be done to set things right, whether on a big or small scale?

The flood and other stories we read in the Bible that might make us wonder if God is being mean, are really stories about God providing justice on a very grand scale.

In his love for us, God is holy and just. He won't tolerate evil or sin indefinitely.

He must act to address the evil he sees and certainly we can be grateful for that.

And when he acts against evil, God's judgements are deliberate and measured. They are tempered with mercy, and he always provides a way of escape for anyone who is willing to accept it. [Show picture of Noah's Ark]

Noah's ark was a tangible and real provision of God's mercy and grace. God provided Noah with the exact blueprints he would need to build a wooden boat that would house him, his family and 2 of each animal that walked the face of the earth or flew in the sky.

Built into the side of the boat was one door (Gen6:16). It would have had to be a ginormous door as it needed to fit a pair of elephants through it. If a pair of elephants could fit through the opening, so too could many, many people if they chose too.

I imagine the people around Noah would have been very curious about what he was building. They must have asked questions, maybe some even helped him carry wood, or hammer a nail or two. But maybe not. Maybe they all just thought he was a cook because he said God had spoken to him and was going to send a flood to destroy the world. Maybe they all laughed at him or made fun of him because of his beliefs and his righteous life.

Certainly, he didn't keep quiet about what was coming. He spoke about, no doubt trying to warn people of God's coming judgement on them.

2 Peter 2:5 tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. And there was plenty of time for them to listen and turn away from what they were doing and follow God if they wanted. Estimates are that it took at least 50 to 75 years to build the ark.

Yet, when the ark was finished and the Lord commanded Noah and his family and all the animals to go into the ark, only 8 humans entered and found safety in obedience to God's commands. Noah, his wife, his 3 sons and their 3 wives.

The door was open to all and big enough to house any who wanted to come in. But only 8 choose to respond and enter the sanctuary of relationship with God.

And we read in Gen 7:16 that when the animals and Noah's family were all in the ark, then the Lord shut Noah in.

Wait, who closed the door of the ark? The Lord.

The giant door that was massive enough to allow a pair of elephants through it, this massive door that was big enough to allow any would wanted to walk in, this giant door that would no doubt have been to heavy for Noah and his sons to close themselves from inside the ark, the Lord closed the door himself.

The Lord himself, closing the door of the ark, provided a seal of protection for those who chose to walk in His ways. God himself ensured the safety of those in right relationship with him. Sadly for those who had chosen to remain on the outside of the ark until the first drops of the rain began to fall, the same sealed door that kept the righteous safe inside, also acted as a barrier to keep the ungodly out.

There was a way of escape until the day of judgement came. But once judgement began, the door could not be opened.

One of the hardest things to do as a pastor is to preach about the coming judgement of God upon the world. Yet the apostle Peter warns us this way in 2 Peter 3:

3 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as
reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. **2** I want you to recall the words
spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior
through your apostles.

3 Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and
following their own evil desires. **4** They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he
promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the
beginning of creation." **5** But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the
heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. **6** By
these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. **7** By the same word
the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of
judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand
years, and a thousand years are like a day. **9** The Lord is not slow in keeping his
promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting
anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a
roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will
be laid bare.[a]

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives **12** as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.[b] That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. **13** But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

According to this letter from Jesus' close friend Peter, we are living in another period where we must make a choice. Will we listen to God's voice and obey his commands, and so come into the safety of relationship with Him who wishes to take us to his eternal home where righteousness dwells. Or will we stand outside of God's mercy and grace, outside of relationship with him in this life and the next. The choice is ours.

Revelation 3:7-8 tells us that a door stands open before us:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. 8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

The apostle John is writing this. He said -

4 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

The door to heaven still stands open before us. As in the day of Noah, all who will may come. But one day it will be shut. Not by us, or any other person. It will be shut by the Lord himself. And when that day comes, those on the inside will live with God in the new heaven and the new earth, kept safe from any evil that would seek to destroy. They will be in a place where there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away (Rev. 21:4). But sadly, those who have chosen to stay on the outside will be shut out for ever. [Show picture of Ark in the storm.]

God does not delight in destroying anything he has made. He provides a way out of judgement, a way to safety in his presence and in his home. But we must make the choice to go through that door.

In Noah's day, a wooden box was the vehicle of salvation from the destruction of the world. Today the ark is Jesus Christ. In Jesus, God's mercy and the demands of justice met. The punishment that was ours for the wrongs that we have ever done was laid upon Jesus on the cross. The evil and violence that the world delivers was hammered into Jesus body. And being nailed to the cross, his plea was, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

When we come into faith in Jesus Christ, we find that the one who is supposed to judge us, becomes our advocate and our savior, as he in fact, takes our place.

Jesus said, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

He also said, “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me.” (Rev 3:20)

The door of salvation is open wide for you today. Have you stepped through the door into relationship with Jesus Christ? Will you choose to step inside today before that door closes for good?

Matthew 25

25 “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and
went out to meet the bridegroom. **2** Five of them were foolish and five were wise. **3** The
foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. **4** The wise ones,
however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. **5** The bridegroom was a long time in
coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

6 “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

7 “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. **8** The foolish ones said to the
wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

9 “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those
who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

10 “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins
who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

11 “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

12 “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

13 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

CONCLUSION -

Stories like the flood narrative raise questions as to the character of God. They leave some people asking, “Is God mean?”

I hope you'll see as we've gone through this message today that God's fierce love for his creation means he must act against injustice. Part of bringing about justice means taking difficult actions to bring an end to violence and evil.

But God is holy and he tempers justice with mercy. Even as he refuses to tolerate evil he also provides a means of rescue and salvation for all who will enter. If you have never put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, will you make that choice today? Don't put it off another day. We don't know the day or the time that the Lord will return. Will you step through the door that is open to you today, before it is too late?

The same storm that led to the destruction of the world in Noah's day, led the salvation of Noah's family and a remnant of each animal too, as they were preserved safely in the ark and carried through the storm.

One day the Lord will come back and he will judge all that has happened in the world since then. He is creating a new heaven and earth where there will be no evil allowed to enter.

All of us do wrong things. How can any of us enter? It is only through confessing our sins, and allowing the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross for us, to forgive us and wash us clean so that we can stand in right relationship with God.

That is our only hope. Will you come through the open door today?

Let's Pray: Lord Jesus, our hearts break when we experience the evil and the violence in the world today. And it is pretty rampant, when we listen to the news. When we hear reports about what is going on in our own nation and around the world. Death. Destruction. Violence. War. People pursuing selfish gain. It's all the same as Noah's day. And someday we know that in your love you will bring an end to that. So that for eternity we can find peace and rest in your presence without that kind of pain. We look forward to that day. In the meantime, Lord, would you comfort us in the places where we grieve, when we have suffered from the effects of evil. Lord, for those who are here who have never put their faith in you and don't have a personal relationship with you, would you allow them to hear you knocking at the door of their heart. Would you give them courage to open the door and let you in. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BENEDICTION:

Numbers 6

24 "'The Lord bless you and keep you;
25 the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;
26 the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.'