

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

February 18, 2024

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 9: 8-17

Responsive Reading: Psalm 25: 1-10

Epistle Reading: 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3: 18-22

Gospel Reading: Mark 1: 9-15

Sermon: **Believe in the Gospel**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and the sum of its parts is HUGE!

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: “As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature...all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus, I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by

waters of the flood” ... And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I make between you and Me, and every living creature, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud: and I shall remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.”

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL.”

God made a covenant between Himself, and all flesh and Jesus said the time is fulfilled and we should believe in the gospel.

Believe in the gospel because it covers all the bases. Our Psalm reading for today gives us four prayers that are relevant for all generations. First, verses 1 through 3 are a prayer for protection. David’s enemies were never far away, and neither are ours. David knows that God is his protector. David knew that his enemies would not go away, and neither will ours. We need God to stand with us and protect us, and guess what; He will.

Secondly, if God is going to protect us, we need to be on the same page. Verses 4 and 5 pray, “Show me your ways, O Lord; Teach me your paths. Send me in Your truth and teach me, For

You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.” God will teach us, but we must ask and then we must listen.

Thirdly, verses 6 and 7, David admits that he is a sinner and acknowledges his flaws. We pray with David that God will be merciful and forget our youthful foolishness’.

Lastly, in verses 8 through 10, we and David need to go past prayer to contemplation. God is so forgiving and patient. God is good and upright, He teaches sinners, He guides the humble in ways of justice. Furthermore, all His paths are mercy and truth and He keeps His covenants. God sees His rainbow and remembers. When we see the rainbow, do we do the same?

God puts His rainbow in the cloud to be a sign to all of us and God also gives each one of us lesser signs that are personally tailored to our needs.

For me the most notable sign that I received was when Wanda was having a whole lot of trouble with her last hip replacement. That experience included 3 surgeries, one manipulation and 23 dislocations that required an ambulance trip to Buffalo General, some forty miles away. The last dislocation happened in the middle of the night when she got up to go to the bathroom. It was in April, and I was devastated. I had been praying so long and so hard, and the dislocations just kept coming. As I packed up some things for her and set off to follow the ambulance to Buffalo, I pleaded with God to give me some sign that He was

hearing my prayers and that He cared. I did not threaten to leave Him because like Peter I said, "Where else would I go?"

As I drove north on Rt 63 coming into Batavia I went under the railroad bridge, and when I came out, I saw the most beautiful lights in the hardwood trees along the road. I thanked God that someone had left Christmas lights on, for me, in April. That is when I realized that there were no lights on the trees. What I saw was a thin coat of ice on the branches and light I saw was because someone had left the spotlights on the Mausoleum and that was being reflected through God's icy light show just for me. That night God showed me His personal covenant that He was establishing just for me. God is waiting to show you the rainbow that He has for you.

It is so easy to look around us and see war, disease, violence, heartache, and other troubles too numerous to mention. We can't see the forest for the trees. Every forest has many sick and diseased trees but if you step back you will see that the forest is a thing of beauty.

The world says, "If you can keep a calm spirit amid all this chaos, you don't have a clear grasp of the situation." But Jesus says, "If you can't keep a calm spirit amid all this chaos, you don't have a clear grasp of Me!"

I often find songs that were written with a human love in mind that become so much more powerful when God becomes the

subject. One such song is Wave on Wave, sung by Pat Green. With slight modifications it goes like this.

Mile upon mile, got no direction. We're all playing the same game. We're all looking for redemption. Just to pray, to say the name.

So caught up now in pretendin' That what we are seeking is the truth.

I'm just looking for a happy ending. All I'm looking for is you.

You came upon me wave on wave. You're the reason I'm still here. Am I the one you were sent to save? You came upon me wave on wave.

I wandered out into the water. And I thought I might drown.

I don't know what I was after. Just know I was going down.

And that's when You found me. Not afraid anymore.

You said, "You know, I always had you, baby. Just waiting for you to find what you were looking for."

You came upon me wave on wave. You're the reason I'm still here, yeah. Am I the one you were sent to save? You came upon me wave on wave.

The clouds broke and the angels cried: "You ain't got to wipe the floor." That's why it put me in your hands. When it came

upon me wave on wave. You came upon me wave on wave.  
You're the reason I'm still here, yeah. Am I the one you were  
sent to save? It came upon me wave on wave.

God comes upon all of us wave on wave.

Look at the covenant. Look at the sunset. Look past the trees  
and see the forest. Look at a squirrel laughing at you. Look at a  
baby giggling. Look at a loved one as they look into your eyes.

These are just some of the parts. The whole is greater than the  
sum of the parts. God is greater than the sum of His parts and  
the sum of His parts is HUGE!

Drink it in and get drunk on God. Hallelujah and Amen!