

## “Chaos” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent Midweek 3 – March 8, 2023

- I. **Genesis chapters 7; 8; 9** – previously read
- II. **How many of you remember the tsunami of 1964?**
  - a. I'm not trying to give your age away, but some of you might remember the earthquake that hit on Good Friday in 1964, off the coast of Resurrection Bay in Alaska.
  - b. It was the largest earthquake to ever hit North America at 9.2 on the Richter Scale, and eyewitnesses in Seaside reported that the water along the coast was first sucked out to sea, exposing the bed of the Necanicum River that runs through town!
    - i. Soon, the water all came rushing back flooding and damaging the town, along with large amounts of debris.<sup>1</sup>
  - c. Oregonians know that water is one of the most destructive forces on earth.
  - d. From the very first pages of Genesis, God used His Word to battle water.
    - i. Nothing but water and chaos existed before God opened the door for life as He divided the waters above from the waters below – in order to make a space for life and dry land.
    - ii. With the boundaries He set, the water in the Garden of Eden was no longer destructive... was no longer a watery chaos.
  - e. However, after the fall, the waters will take a much different course.
    - i. When God saw the depravity of humanity growing and growing – He lifted the veil of His protection and boundaries of the waters.
    - ii. For forty days, the water came not only from above in a torrential downfall, but also from the water in the earth below.
    - iii. The separation that God made... the pocket for life... collapsed... and the waters came rushing back in to destroy life, except for Noah and his family and the animals on the ark.
    - iv. Water became an instrument of God's wrath and judgment against sin.
  - f. And yet in 1 Peter 3:20, Peter says that Noah was saved by the waters.
    - i. The instrument of God's judgment at the same time became the means of salvation for Noah, as he floated on top of the waters in the ark that God told him to build.
- III. **The next big water story was the Red Sea...**
  - a. Moses had led God's people out of Egypt, but Pharaoh was right behind them... and they came to a huge body of water.
  - b. They were trapped... They could not go backwards or they would die by the sword, and they couldn't go forward or they would drown.
    - i. But once again God separated the waters from the waters (Gen 1:6)
    - ii. The Israelites went through the middle of the sea on dry ground.

- iii. In the beginning, God had opened up a space where human life could flourish, and now he opens up a space where the Israelites could escape...
- c. The Egyptians, on the other hand, met a far different fate.
  - i. When they followed the Israelites into the sea, God took away the boundaries separating the waters from the waters.
  - ii. The sea rushed in and swept away their chariots and drowned them.
  - iii. Miriam sang this song: "I will sing unto the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and the rider He has thrown into the sea." (Exodus 15:1)
  - iv. So, for the Egyptians, the sea was their doom, but for the Israelites, it was God's salvation.
- d. Even Jesus struggled against the sea...
  - i. One day he was asleep in the back of a boat, and a storm arose on the sea and His disciples thought they were going to die for sure...
  - ii. But Jesus rebuked the sea and there was a great calm (Matthew 8:23-27)...
- e. And in Revelation, it says that God overcomes the sea.
  - i. Before His throne is a sea of glass.... No more chaos and death.... It is completely smooth.
  - ii. And it says in Revelation 21 that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and... the sea "is no more" (Rv 21:1).
  - iii. God wants us to know that He overcomes the chaos that the water and the sea bring to us...

IV. **Now you might think that a Christian is immune from this chaos...**

- a. Unfortunately, that is not true.
- b. Just stop for a moment and think about your baptism... the Small Catechism says that baptism is water combined with God's Word.
- c. In a sense, when you are baptized, God is allowing you to be in the struggle of brokenness, sin, and death versus forgiveness, life, and salvation.
- d. So, it's no surprise that the Christian life is a struggle!
  - i. Don't be deceived about the Christian life.
    - 1. It's not all about "nice."
    - 2. We may be tempted to look around and say, "Oh everyone around me has it all together, and I'm such a mess..."
      - a. But what do you think the church is?
        - i. You would be wrong to think of it as a place of perfection – or a place where everyone is nice... the pastor's words are nice, and life is nice.
        - ii. Nope – we are in a struggle.
- e. We are baptized...

- i. This means that we are in a fight... a spiritual and physical and emotional battle... so of course we are overwhelmed by the chaos and sins of life.
- ii. I'm not talking just about sins like getting angry with someone who says something wrong, or you driving on 182<sup>nd</sup> at 40 instead of 35 miles per hour.
- iii. No, I mean your life isn't turning out the way you want it to.
  - 1. Maybe you lost your parents when other people haven't.
  - 2. Or you're single and you don't see how you will ever be married.
  - 3. Or you don't think God could possibly love you.
  - 4. Or you have doubts because Christianity just seems implausible after all that you have been through.
  - 5. Or you're left out.
  - 6. Or maybe the Christian life is full nice people who have their lives put together, but you will never succeed.
- f. Don't fall for it.
  - i. These attacks and thoughts do not define you.
  - ii. What you are experiencing on a smaller level is what we read in Genesis... as that story is happening to all of us.
  - iii. The trials and tribulations come out of the very sin that was introduced so long ago by Adam and Eve.
  - iv. Yet the chaos doesn't win the day.
    - 1. The catechism tells us that baptism is not water alone, but it's also God's word.
    - 2. God's word separates the waters from the waters and opens up a space where life can thrive and succeed.
      - a. It divides the sea and lets the Israelites pass through on dry ground.
      - b. So you can fight this battle and win because you have the Word of God...
        - i. The Word that rebuked the stormy Sea of Galilee and opened the waters of the Red Sea and made the waters recede after the Great Flood.

V. **We are in a season of repentance.**

- a. During this time, it is important to acknowledge that we have felt overwhelmed by the forces of sin and evil in our lives.
- b. However, it is also important to acknowledge that we have God's Word.
  - i. God's Word cuts through the chaos.
  - ii. God's Word is powerful enough to overcome those forces.
  - iii. God's Word is powerful enough to deliver us through it all.

- c. As the Psalmist says, “The waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. We will not fear though the earth gives way, and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.” (Ps 46)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[https://nctr.pmel.noaa.gov/education/science/docs/tsun2975/tsun2975\\_appendixC.pdf](https://nctr.pmel.noaa.gov/education/science/docs/tsun2975/tsun2975_appendixC.pdf)

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