

<b>Series:</b> Barrier Breaking Faith	<b>Reference:</b> Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:13-22	<b>Title:</b> Vehicles of Deliverance	<b>Date:</b> 05.19.2019
<b>Website Writeup:</b> <i>This week we learn lessons of barrier breaking faith from Noah.</i>			

### Color changes in text indicate slide changes

Last week we began this series looking at Hebrews 11:1-3, *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for & assurance about what we do not see.* We said that we come to faith in Christ & don't just live on the defensive, but are called to go on the offensive for the Kingdom of God (Mt 28:18-20). Living in imaginative faithful prayer about what God can do. Allowing the Holy Spirit to use our imaginations about what He can do in & through us & praying that into being. How He can create something out of nothing. Deepening our spiritual formation, overflowing in sharing Jesus with others. Spiritual formation leading to evangelization. Like a tree growing down, up & out becoming stronger & providing the fruit of Jesus to our community & the world.

As we grow in these things, we experience (1) a renewed belief in Jesus & His mission for us, (2) a renewed attitude of servanthood with our time, talent & treasure, and (3) a more strategic outward-facing prayer effort. Knowing our faith is the means by which God works in the world, we actively believe the promises of God to see something come from nothing. We ended last Sunday with an open imaginative prayer time seeking what the Holy Spirit would bring about in which a few of you shared.

We heard about Rachel's vision of God beckoning us further in faith trusting him even though we walk blind at times. We heard Elysia's vision for the church to uphold our cross-cultural missions effort, which birthed a group this week to meet every 1st & 3rd Sundays at 8:30a to do so! We heard Kathleen's vision of pursuing forgiveness, not allowing bitterness to take root, quoting Mt 6:12 (forgiveness) & Isaiah 66:13 (as a mother comforts her child, God will comfort you) We also heard of Dicks gratitude for what God's doing through this church. And Todd & Kristin Hall & the healing prayer they experienced.

Rob Shaeffer shared via email with me... *"Sunday toward the end of the service my mind was moved toward the unqualified & how God is calling the unqualified among us. I think He's asking us to step out, to take risk for Him in relationship, in prayer, in listening & in speaking & just in showing up & letting Him work through us. He wants us to partner in bringing His Kingdom to earth - even in what we may overlook & pass off as small ways. We are not too young, too old, too quiet, too weird, too whatever to engage in what He has for us. We were created by Him to do great things for Him & He wants to remind us of that. We don't have to know everything or achieve a special level of spirituality to get started. He wants us to seek His heart & His word & know Him better in the process, but He also wants us doing stuff & trusting Him as we go."*

I imagine this space redesigned, us owning this building, it being actively utilized in daily ministry, more people being reached with the Gospel, a full robust staff, growing to multiple services due to the amount of people we have coming to know Jesus!

*Today we continue this discussion by looking at Noah in Hebrews 11:7...By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world & became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.*

Noah was one of the many listed in Hebrews 11 who acted in faith. Like Abraham, he had little to go on. He couldn't see the future & lived by promise, not explanation.

Part of his story is found in Genesis 6:13-22...*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 & the earth. <sup>14</sup> So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it & coat it with pitch inside & out. <sup>15</sup> This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide & thirty cubits high. <sup>16</sup> Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark & make lower, middle & upper decks.*

*<sup>17</sup> I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. <sup>18</sup> But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark - you & your sons & your wife & your sons' wives with you. <sup>19</sup> You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male & female, to keep them alive with you. <sup>20</sup> Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal & of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. <sup>21</sup> You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten & store it away as food for you & for them." <sup>22</sup> Noah did everything just as God commanded him.*

How often do we focus on our own churches, ministries, or needs in such a way that excludes others who need Christ's saving message? Are we distracted from living life as missionaries in our homes, at our jobs, and within our communities? When we look at the story of Noah, we see his barrier breaking faith results in his entire family being saved. What would it look like if our church got to the next level through focusing on helping others 'jump in the ark' with us? Viewing Six:Eight as the Ark in this community inviting people in to experience the peace, joy & hope of Jesus?

**Barrier Breaking Faith believes what hasn't happened yet & acts accordingly.** God instructed Noah to build an ark for an impending flood, despite some scholars believing rain might not have even fallen on the earth prior to Noah, and most certainly there had never been a flood.

Noah lived in a godless immoral time. God describes it in Genesis 6:5 *<sup>5</sup> 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.*

We think we live in a godless time - Noah's was worse, <sup>8</sup> *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.* This was an amazing man of faith. Living in a time when every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart were only evil all the time, Noah's was inclined toward God. He had very little to look around at & say, "That gives me hope!" Like Abraham, who against all hope, in hope believed (Rm 4:18), Noah did the same. These are faith models, people who didn't look around at their situations, but looked up to God's promises & acted accordingly. They believe in something before they could see it. Isn't that the creative nature of God? Isn't that how anything worthy gets created?

Antoni Gaudi, in his imagination, birthed the Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família in Barcelona, Spain. An incredible feat of architectural prowess which he'd not even see come to fruition. He died a 1/4 way into the project & it's still being constructed to this day! It's had roadblocks & setbacks from theft to fire & basic community turmoil surrounding it, but in the end it will stand as a great testimony to the imaginative spirit of humankind reflecting the creative character of God. God calls us to imagine what the church can do in the life of our local community & the world - to imagine something not yet there, but could be!

I can't say the Bible is clear on how many years it took Noah to build that Ark, some say 120, some around 75, but it doesn't really matter how long. What matters is, this man built an Ark in the middle of an arid climate for decades under constant ridicule. If Noah didn't struggle deeply with doubt during that time, and often, he'd be a better man than me! I could hear him in bed with his wife at night, "Tell me again why I'm doing this? This is crazy! Maybe they're all right! Did God really say to do this?"

Have you ever believed God for something, but it took years to come about? Maybe you've prayed for someone for years before they had their 'aha' moment with God. Maybe you worked for years to see your calling come to fruition with many setbacks. God says to his church go, make disciples of all nations, and we pray, take risk & share Jesus, and it seems to not make much difference. We sit by watching loved ones & friends make horrific life choices which bring them more bondage & we get discouraged. We see people refusing to get on the boat, that's hard. But some do. Whose faith was stronger, Noah, who'd heard to voice of God, or his relatives following him into the boat? I'm not sure...

The power to believe what hasn't happened yet, responding in both trust & obedience for decades, is what God used to save mankind. God wants us to have the same visionary faith to hope & obey even when we don't immediately see His work. God called Noah to swing a hammer & invite others in & God would bring the animals & rain.

In the 1960's, Indonesia had a huge people movement to Christ among the Javanese, a Muslim people group of 48 Million. The result of all the foundational work other Christians & missionaries had been doing for decades. Christians had been swinging the hammer, inviting people into the boat for decades, and the political & social climate became such that millions of Javanese overnight became Christians - the Ark of Church

filled up. Those people, and their descendants are still there, doing kingdom work, and are now seeing more people than ever come to faith once again among Muslims in the largest Muslim country in the world.

We work in the hope of Christ which never dies. Winston Churchill was buried in St Paul's Cathedral. When it was done, a bugler went up into the dome at the back of the church & played *Taps*. The tune which signifies the day is done, darkness had fallen.

But then, when he'd finished, another played *Reveille* from the front of the church. The tune which signifies it's time to get up! (John Ortberg: *Soul Keeping*, p114) Even in death we're not defeated. God's in the business of raising the dead. We remember Churchills speech which began, "Never, never, never give in!" Keep going! God's call to the church. No matter what happens, what the climate looks like, go & make disciples of all nations & I'm with you to the end (Mt 28:18-20).

**Barrier Breaking Faith shows others how to be delivered.** Noah's testimony over the decades of building the Ark demonstrated faithful obedience to God's commands. As the Ark was completed, the vehicle of deliverance showed Noah's family who the true God was. His faith & obedience achieved the mechanism of his salvation, as our faith & obedience will result in others around us seeing the true rescue of Christ's work on the cross, for our sins, and in our place.

The Lampungese, a Muslim people group in south Sumatra, Indonesia, whom Kim & I worked among for 9 years, had a belief that a great ship would come back & take them all to heaven. It's depicted in the Kain Kapal, the Ship Cloths of Lampung. In the story of Noah, we see the redemption of Jesus, he's the ship which comes to carry us across the flood waters to life anew. When we climb aboard the Body of Christ, He's our safe passage through waters of suffering & death. I shared that with my Lampungese friends, and believe the words weren't uttered in vain.

But remember, the Gospel isn't just about crossing from death to life in the sense of our mortality. It's also about kingdom life now (Rob's imaginative vision). Following God in His promises even when we don't see why - without explanation. If we want abundant life now, we choose the path of Jesus, nothing else. I've asked so many people in my ministry, where do you want to be in ten years? The answer's always...to be happy, peaceful, content, to have a family, etc. They're never...I'd like to be divorced, saddled with debt, lonely & depressed, since our souls long for God & healthy connection with others. So, I gently ask, are the choices you're making now leading towards these life-giving things? Sadly, most admit they're not.

God's ceremonial & civil laws have been fulfilled in Christ - His moral law still stands. Faith is a walk of purity & pursuit of holiness. We're made new in Christ, but we aren't perfect, we're being spiritually formed into Christ-likeness with every little choice we make & thought we entertain. Everyone's being formed either towards, or away from Jesus. It's about choices & obedience. The people surrounding Noah had trained their

will, minds/emotions, bodies to follow the desires of self. As a result the world was full of violence, sin & wickedness. Their souls were dead.

Jesus has given us all we need to walk in victory over our feelings, desires & crooked wills. Even to train our bodies to desire things good for us. Our soul, which ties our bodies, will, minds, feelings & desires together, longs for God (Ps 42:1 - *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God*). We wound it with every unholy choice we make.

Actions have consequences, a simple axiom of life; but although good choices are often simple, they're not always easy to make as Paul described in Romans 7, "*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.*" (v15). Spiritual decay or entropy is a result of disobedience, not ever in one really large choice. Spiritually healthy people don't just go out & cheat on their spouse. These decisions are a result of a myriad of smaller decisions & attitudes which build up on each other like ounces on a waistline. Eventually ounces make pounds producing joint pain & diabetes of the soul. Spiritual unhealthiness overflows, just as Spiritual health does, but in sinful ways.

It's usually due to a lack of hope - we've forfeited the hope we have in Christ & chosen disobedience rather than life-giving obedience. God's moral law isn't a stick to be hit with, it's a nourishing meal to be consumed bringing health to our souls.

Paul says before this in Ro 6:11–14, <sup>11</sup> *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.* <sup>12</sup> *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.* <sup>13</sup> *Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.* <sup>14</sup> *For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

Grace is our blessing. We're the living testimony of Christ. If we vacillate in faith, are emotionally fragile, or easily given to temptation, since we've not nurtured our spiritual lives, our witness is hindered. Have we done the work of submitting ourselves to Jesus? Like growing trees adding to our depth, height & girth over time - allowing Him to root us by the river in order that it doesn't matter what the outside climate is, we stand firm & well fed. The world needs its faith models.

**Barrier Breaking Faith exposes the world & receives righteousness.** Noah's faithful obedience condemned the sin-wrecked world around him, showing rebellion against God results in destruction, but obedience to God results in salvation. 2 Peter 2:5 speaks again of Noah's salvation in comparison to those who'd given themselves totally to desire. 2 Peter 2:9 says, *the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials & to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.* Responding to God in faith leads to wholeness & salvation. Denial of God leads to destruction, simple axioms.

Our faith becomes the signpost the Holy Spirit uses to convict the world concerning sin, righteousness & judgment. The Spirit of God calls us to persist in doing good, in our pursuit of holiness & purity, proving ourselves worthy of the calling we've received (Eph 4:1). We're like John the Baptist in the desert proclaiming, "Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" A worthy task.

And, we've been given all we need to do so, the Word of God, Jesus powerful work on the cross & resurrection from the dead & His own Holy Spirit within us. John 16:7-11 says... *7 But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin & righteousness & judgment: 9 about sin, because people do not believe in me; 10 about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

They say the average American has more stress now than a 1950's psych ward patient - everyone's anxious, over medicated, filling their soul with all the wrong things. It takes those who've found the answer in Christ to proclaim to them both in word & deed, the only way of salvation & full life now, is to climb onto the Ark of Christ.

The work is done for us, now we must live out the life of Christ before others. And no matter what they say, we're a conviction to them. Hopefully that leads to salvation & freedom for them, but it may not - people will often still choose not to get on the ship.

**Application:** Barrier Breaking Faith can result in the salvation of others when we, (1) faithfully trust God can accomplish the impossible. (2) Faithfully obey the commandments of Jesus to model to others who the true source of salvation is. (3) Faithfully model & proclaim the Good News of Jesus, sharing our lives & our Savior with others around us who are destined for destruction apart from Jesus.

Dallas Willard said, "*Hurry is the great enemy spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life*" (Soul Keeping, John Ortberg, p20). I agree. The question is, will we put down all the hurry, trinkets, toys & distractions which keep us from being so spiritually formed in Jesus that we become naturally supernatural, that we just overflow hope in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rm 15:13)? Will we, in view of God's mercy, offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God as true & proper worship. Not conforming to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Becoming able to test & approve what God's good, pleasing & perfect will is? (Rm 12:1-2)

We have a unique opportunity before us in the 40 Days of Prayer & Fasting to pursue Jesus at a greater level. Stick around after church & let Rachel walk you through how that can look - let's lean into creative, imaginative, trusting faith. Going on the offensive for Jesus, not just reacting to life as it comes. Let's ruthlessly eliminate the hurry, modeling faith to each other, our kids & community in order that more people will jump on the Ark of Salvation & find life abundant along with us!