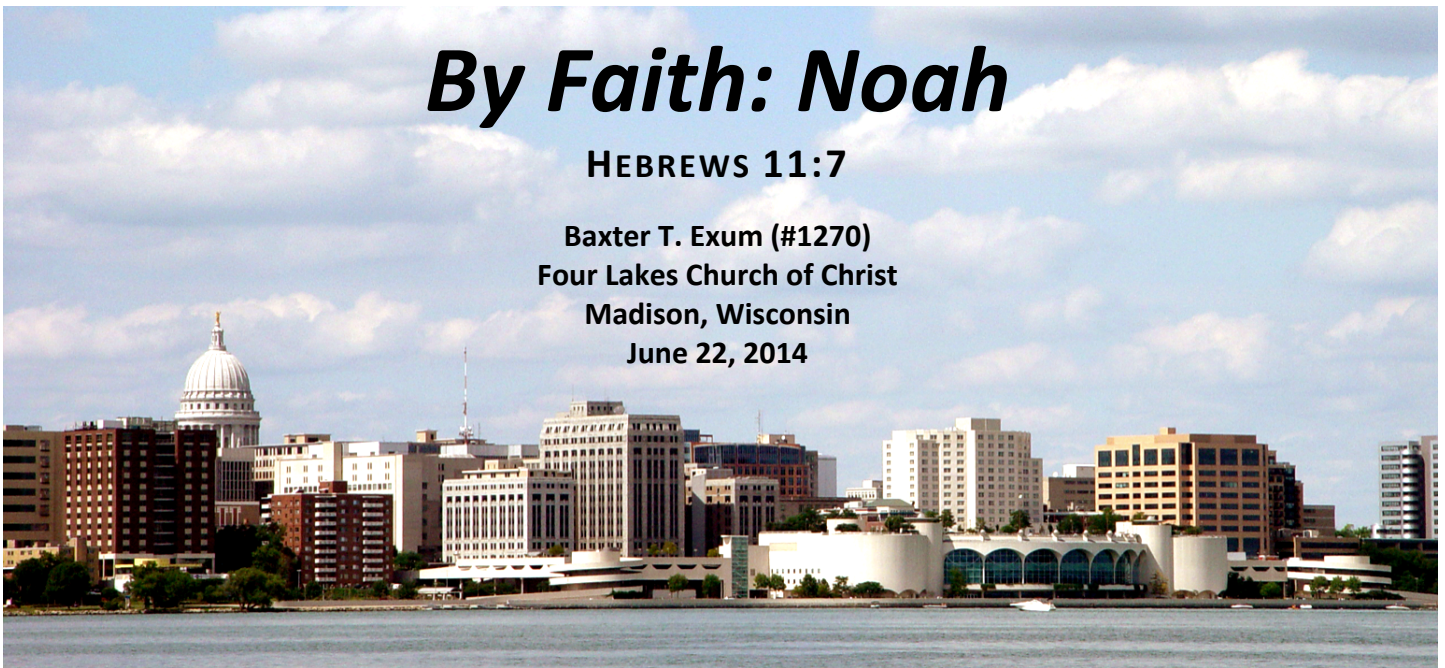


By Faith: Noah

HEBREWS 11:7

**Baxter T. Exum (#1270)
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If you were here with us yesterday, then you know that we spent some time looking some heroes from the Bible. We looked at the courage of David as a young man, we looked at the strength of Samson, and we also looked at the selflessness of Queen Esther. As you can see, there is one more hero up here, one man we haven't studied this weekend, and that man, of course, is Noah. As we begin, I would ask: What is the first word that comes to mind when we think about NOAH? What word do we most often associate with Noah? Most of us would probably answer with the word "ark." We might think of the great "flood." And certainly, yes, the ark and the flood were both huge parts of Noah's life. The ark itself was a massive project, unlike anything that had ever been done before. We know from Genesis that the ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet tall. It was built with three levels and was capable of holding at least two of every kind of land-dwelling animal on the earth. I don't know whether you can read the fine print on the picture here, but it was built to hold the equivalent of 500 rail cars and could hold more than 125,000 sheep-sized animals. So yes, the ark and the flood were both huge parts of Noah's life. This morning, though, I want us to study Noah from a slightly different point of view by looking together at a single verse in the New Testament book of Hebrews. And the reason is: If we could ask the author of Hebrews for a word that he might associate with Noah, the word would not be ark or flood, but the one word would be FAITH. To the author of the book of Hebrews, Noah was a hero of faith.

The passage is found in Hebrews 11 (p. 1882) – Hebrews 11:7. In Hebrews 11:1, the author starts out by saying, ***“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval.”*** He then starts listing several examples, men like Abel and Enoch. In verse 6, the author wants to make sure we really know how important faith really is. He says, ***“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”*** And that is where we pick up with our text for this morning – Hebrews 11:7. We might think of this as the Reader's Digest version of Noah's life – here is a man who lived for 950 years, and his entire life is summarized in a single verse. Notice, please, Hebrews 11:7, ***“By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”***

For the rest of our time together this morning, I want us to look very carefully at this one verse, and I want us to figure out why this verse is in the Bible. And to do this, I want us to look at what Noah had and compare it to what we have today. What do we have in common with this hero of faith from the Old Testament.

I. **As we look at this one verse, I want us to notice, first of all, that Noah was WARNED BY GOD.**

Of all people, those of us here in the Madison area know something about the dangers of weather. Just this past week, we have seen entire homes blown away in just a matter of seconds. We also know the value of a warning. We know the value of having a weather radio that will wake us up in the middle of the night. We know the value of having a cell phone that will tell us when something terrible is about to happen. We know this, because we have been through it just a few days ago. We know the value of a warning.

In a similar way, when we go back and look at what happened in Genesis 6, we find that God also sent a very clear warning to Noah, many years in advance. Back in Genesis 6, we find that ***“...the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.”*** Because of that corruption, God said to Noah (in Genesis 6:13-14), ***“The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.”*** And then God goes on to give more details concerning exactly what Noah needed to do.

Of course, as with any warning, we have a choice concerning whether we will accept it. Will we listen to the warning, or will we ignore it? Will we run to the basement in the middle of the night, or will we silence that alarm? In a similar way, God warned Noah, and Noah also had a choice. Thankfully, Noah decided to listen to the warning. Thankfully, Noah believed those words that he heard. So we apply this to our situation today – not with weather, but with God’s judgment. Today also, God has warned us, just as he warned Noah. Noah was given 120 years. We have not been given a time. We have, though, been warned by God. We think of what Peter said in 2 Peter 3:3-7, ***“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”*** Did you notice that? Just as Noah was warned about the flood, so also we are warned about the Day of Judgment. The question is: Will we listen to the warning? Noah is a hero of faith, because he listened to the warning.

II. **There is something else Noah did that we can also do, and that is: Noah responded to this warning with the utmost RESPECT AND REVERENCE FOR GOD. Some translations even refer to “FEAR.”**

Noah feared God. Noah was a God-fearing man. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Noah received God’s warning ***“in reverence.”*** We have the idea of standing in awe of God. God is God and we are not. We have the idea of respect. God speaks and we listen. We know, though, that the people of Noah’s time did NOT respect God. They did not fear God. Instead, Noah was the only one – the only man on the face of the earth at that time who had any real concern for what God had to say. Out of perhaps millions of people, Noah was the only righteous man on the face of the earth. Can we even imagine what that might be like? Imagine being the only person to worship God this morning – not just here in this building, but anywhere on the face of the earth!

Imagine being the only righteous person anywhere! It took *“reverence,”* it took *“fear,”* for Noah to maintain that kind of faith.

Someone might say, “Oh, but we really don’t need to FEAR God. That is such an outdated concept.” Or maybe somebody says, “We might fear God at first, but we grow to love God over time.” And in a sense that is true, but let us not forget, though, what the Bible actually says, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”* (Proverbs 1:7). By faith, Noah responded to God *“in reverence,” “in fear.”* I would point out that Noah got busy building an ark, not because he was afraid of drowning, but because he was afraid of God. Let us also fear God. In a world that had no respect for God, Noah was different. As William Penn once said, “Right is right, even if everyone is against it; and wrong is wrong even if everyone is for it.” Oh, how our society needs this reminder. Right and wrong are not determined by judges or kings or even by a vote of the people. Noah was different because he feared God. Let us also be different!

III. Not only did Noah have a warning, and not only did Noah fear God, but there is something else Noah had that we can also have, and that is: Noah reacted to God’s warning with OBEDIENT FAITH.

He believed the warning, and that belief caused him to do something about it. It has been said that one of the greatest acts of faith in the history of the world was Noah chopping down that very first tree. And from that point on, Noah spent 120 years obeying one command. God said, “Build an ark,” and with every swing of the axe, Noah was proving his faith. With every stroke of every saw, Noah was telling his family, “I believe in God.” With every swing of each hammer, Noah was telling the world, “This is my faith.” We think of what James said ****PPT**** in James 2:17, *“Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”*

When we believe in something, it changes our behavior. When we believe in somebody, it changes how we live. If I could illustrate this in a very practical way: If I have faith in the weather forecast for the day, our faith in that forecast has a way of changing our behavior. If Gary Cannalte says that a tornado is bearing down on my house in the next 15 minutes, my faith in Mr. Cannalte will cause me to do something! In a similar way, our faith in God’s word causes us to change the way we live. Faith is a lot more than just believing something is true. Real faith leads us to do something about it. By faith, Noah rearranged his life so that he could do what God was calling him to do. In the same way, the word of God also changes the way we live. It changes what we do each weekend. It changes what we do with our friends. It changes how we think. Our faith changes everything. Noah had obedient faith. We can have obedient faith as well.

IV. There is something else Noah had that we also have today, and that is: Noah had a PLACE OF SAFETY.

The ark was not designed for pleasure. This was not Noah’s yacht. This was not some kind of ship built for exploring the world. Instead, it was more like a lifeboat. It was more like a safe room. It was a place of protection from what was about to happen. The purpose of the ark was to save the human race. The ark was built for survival, and once the rain started, the only place of safety was inside the ark. We learn from the Scriptures, in fact, that God closed the door. In other words, it was not even up to Noah to decide who got in. Instead, God made that decision.

I hope we see some of the parallels between the ark and the Lord’s church. The Lord’s church is also a place of safety. On the day the church was established in Acts 2, Peter told the huge crowd of people that they had murdered God’s Son, and the people responded by saying, *“Brethren, what shall we do?”* Peter answered by

saying, ***“Change your hearts, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins might be forgiven...”*** (verse 38). We find that 3,000 people responded to the good news, and at the end of that chapter, the Bible says that, ***“The Lord was adding together daily the ones who were being saved”*** (Acts 2:47). Do we see the parallel there? Just as God closed the door to the ark, God also adds people to the church. The Lord God commands obedience, and those who obey are saved. In Acts 2, people were being baptized, and God was adding them to the church. God was putting them in the place of safety. Years later, Peter even makes a direct connection between the flood and baptism in 1 Peter 3:20-21, where he refers to, ***“...the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*** Just as Noah and his family had a place of safety in the ark, so also we today have a place of safety in the church, if we will submit to God in the act of baptism and if we will remain faithful through the end.

By the way, I would point out here that Noah’s family were saved with him on the ark – his wife, their three sons, along with their wives – for a grand total of eight souls. Some people say that Noah was a failure, that he preached for 120 years and only converted his own family. I would disagree. As fathers, if we can save our own families, that is a huge success as far as I’m concerned! Last week, I asked what we would think of a father who saw a tornado coming, ran for the basement, and left his family out there in the yard. Not good! In the same way, as fathers, our main job is to bring our families into that place of safety, the church. Only God can add somebody to the church, but fathers have influence. Like Noah, then, we have a place of safety, and we want our families in that place of safety with us.

V. There is something else Noah had in verse 7 that we also have today, and that is: Noah had a MISSION TO PREACH.

In Hebrews 11:7, the Bible says that in building the ark, Noah ***“...condemned the world.”*** Noah, then, did not keep God’s warning to himself, but he passed it on. In fact, we find in 2 Peter 2:5 that God, ***“...did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.”*** Noah, therefore, was a ***“preacher of righteousness.”*** Noah condemned the world. Even the building of the ark was a sermon: Judgment is coming! Can you imagine living somewhere nearby? I mean, here is a huge boat – more than 1-1/2 football fields long, four stories tall, nearly 100,000 square feet of cargo space, covered with tar – it would have been a very strange thing to see. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. His words and his life told people that God was to be feared and that judgment was coming.

With this in mind, let us not forget that Noah’s mission is our mission. In Colossians 1:28 the Bible says (concerning Jesus), ***“We proclaim Him, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone complete in Christ.”*** Like Noah, we need to think of our friends and loved ones. Do we know people who are not safe in Christ? Do we know those who have not been immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins? If so, then the example of Noah tells us that we, also, are to be preachers of righteousness.

Conclusion:

So, in our studies yesterday and today, we have looked at some heroes – heroes in courage, and strength, and selflessness – and this morning we have looked at a great hero of faith. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1), and without faith, it is impossible to please God

(Hebrews 11:6). Noah had faith. Even though he had never seen it rain, Noah heard God's warning, he feared God, he obeyed, he built the place of safety just as God had instructed, and as he worked on that project, he became a preacher of righteousness. What an amazing example!

Here at the end, we get back to the basics of the Christian faith. We are saved at the point of baptism. We hear the word of God, we turn away from sin, we confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and based on that confession, we are then buried with Christ in baptism for the forgiveness of our sins. If you have any questions, we would invite you to investigate. We would invite you to ask. Maybe you are already a Christian but have slipped and fallen into sin. Perhaps you need the prayers of this congregation. We would invite you to write those concerns down and bring those to the front. We would be honored to go to God on your behalf. On the other hand, maybe you already know what you need to do. If you are ready to be baptized right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com