

Pray

Wednesday evening... She might have had more success if she'd marched around the building 7 times blowing a trumpet.

Things to say to the person who has just broken into the church at 11pm through a window:

"Halleluiah! You've come to church. Most people use the door."

"Knock and the door shall be opened."

"Well, you didn't come through the roof, and I'm not Jesus, so you're out of luck."

I make light of this because it was strange and insignificant in contrast to the terrible events in Boston and Texas this week. And, we struggle again as a culture with the why. Why would people break windows or make bombs to blow up other people? *CNN online ran in response a cover editorial titled "Is Man Inherently Good or Evil?"*

Three dead bodies, 20 to 30 missing limbs, and more than 180 injured can force us to revisit that age-old question:

What is the state of man's nature? Is he inherently good or evil?

The Boston Marathon bombings have presented us with the dilemma of Locke versus Hobbes again.

But it is not just the dilemma of two philosophers... the dilemma goes back to the beginning. We find it in our text today.

A text that begins with a glowing picture of man's origin, and then moves toward the horrible statement of Gen. 6:5

"Every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually."

This is God's assessment of the nature of the human race... and who are we to disagree with Him.

We certainly cannot make our case based on our wonderful behavior.

So, the Bible tells us that we are inherently good... and because of the Adam's sin, and our own, inherently evil. Both.

Again we find the Bible's answer to the great questions of life have the clarity and complexity needed to make sense of it all.

We have seen already in Genesis how and why people who are created very good could become very bad.

Now, in Genesis 5-6 we are shown that this problem has infected the entire race. It is not just Adam and Eve's problem.

It is not simply a story of a dysfunctional family. It is characteristic of the entire human race.

This is a description of all of us... **"Every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually."**

Gen. 5 begins again at the beginning.

I. God created mankind in His likeness. 5:1-2

We begin a new section in the book of Genesis. The first phrase in vs. 1 alerts us to this fact.

Now we are going to read of the generations of Adam... the results of Adam... what came of Adam.

Mankind was created male and female in the likeness of God, blessed and named by God. (Gen. 1-2)

We know from those first two chapters of the Bible that the world that God put man in was very good.

But, the first people, Adam and Eve, did not want to live in God's world under God's direction.

They wanted to go their own way... to do what they wanted, not what God wanted. So they disobeyed God.

They knew good and evil like they had never know before. They lost paradise and their firstborn became a murderer...

II. Mankind's sin results in death. 5:3-32

In contrast to 5:1, Seth is not described as being in God's likeness, but in Adam's. Why?

It is because sin, Adam and Eve's sin, has marred God's likeness in Adam. So, Adam's children bear the corruption of sin as well. Indeed, we see that this is so as the chapter unfolds... and in the following chapter as well.

Notice as I read how each of the following generations, except two, follows an identical pattern. This is important. **Gen. 5:3-32**

The same epitaph is written over them all, "and he died... and he died" ... except two... Enoch and Noah. Why not them?

It is because Enoch and Noah both walked with God. (Enoch, vss. 22, 24) We will see this later with Noah.

Everyone else dies because sin has spread to all of men. This is the nature of sin, just as it spread to Cain, now it spreads to all.

The New Testament tells us that this is still the condition of mankind. **Rom. 3:23, 6:23**

III. Mankind's sin makes God sad. 6:1-7

This is one of the most debated and puzzling passages in the whole Bible. So, I'm going to solve it for you this morning... no.

There have in the history of the church been 4 major categories of interpretation.

The debate centers around the identity of "The sons of God(s)."

1. Demigods, as told of in mythological stories when gods have relations with humans...

But this relies too much on extra-biblical sources and assumes a worldview that is foreign to the Scriptures.

2. Angels, fallen angels coming down to earth and having relations with human women.

But this relies heavily on one passage in Job 1:6 and passages in Jude 6-7, 1 Peter 3:18-22, and 2 Peter 2:4-5...

that are notoriously difficult to interpret and may or may not connect angels to Genesis 6.

Moreover, Jesus tells us that angels do not marry.

And, it is difficult to imagine that Israel in Moses' day would have understood this text like this.

Thus far in Genesis, angels have not been introduced at all apart from the cherubim (Gen. 3:24)

3. Powerful human rulers. David was called God's son as were a few other rulers in the Bible.

This is the interpretation the Jewish Rabbinic tradition, and it is plausible. It helps explain God's judgment on men to follow.

But, it is an odd use of the phrase "Sons of God" and has no Biblical parallels.

4. The godly descendants of Seth in contrast to the godless descendants of Cain.

This fits interestingly with the preceding text but is difficult in relation to the judgment of God to follow.

I am going to suggest a very simple interpretation that is essentially a modification of the last two.

Imagine if you were hearing Moses read this for the first time to you in the wilderness of Sinai.

Who would you think the "Sons of God" are?

I think the natural reading of this is that the Sons of God are those men we have just heard about in chapter 5 and maybe 4.

Gen. 5:1-2 Adam is certainly presented as a son of God, and those in the rest of the chapter are his sons.

Gen. 6:1 "men"... In a sense, we are all sons of God. We are talking about people... the people of Gen. 5, except Enoch & Noah.

In this particular way of speaking about people, we are prepared for the greatness of God's disappointment and grief.

We are supposed to live like sons of God, indwelt by the breath of life from God. This is God's design.

But, what is happening? what are these people doing?

They "saw" that the daughters of men were "good" and they "took" for themselves.

This mirrors the sin of Eve in **Gen. 3:6...** and **James 1:14-15**

These men, powerful or otherwise, are not thinking about what God wants. They are not considering God's design in marriage.

They are simply taking what they want because it looks good and they want it... one wife, two wives, other men's wives

This is the nature of human sin... we see it, we like it, we want it, we take it... and never a thought about God.

And, so, God further limits mankind and his power, "My spirit (breath, Gen. 2:7) shall not dwell in man forever."

The verb here has to do with staying... and so, God limits the days that people will live to 120 years.

These men who we read of in vs. 4... giants, great men, mighty men, men of renown.

Only God is great and He decides to make men less great, shorter lived... now people rarely live even that long, though they try.

God is in charge, no matter how great people think they are.

And, so it is to this day... the greatest of the great are defeated, fail, get old, get sick, die. No one is really great on their own.

So, in vss. 5-7 we are invited into God's perspective on how the human race that He created is doing.

This is the perspective of a loving Father as He views His own sons' waywardness... and He is sad.

These great men... their "wickedness... was great" vs. 5, "every thought only evil all the time." = total depravity

This is the opposite of God's declaration in Gen. 1:31. Is not this the way of the world even today?

Lord Acton, "Power tends to corrupt. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men."

Roman Emperors who declared themselves gods

Napoleon Bonaparte who was the result of the French revolution and used up a generation of young men to conquer Europe.

Adolf Hitler who thought of himself as the agent of a new perfect empire and slaughtered millions

Joseph Stalin, Mao... the list goes on and on...

People who do what they want and are accountable to no one turn into monsters...

in politics, in medicine, in science, in sports, in business, at the workplace...

and people who have no power, in their small way hurt others in order to get just a little more...

We are a horrible race, and God's description in vs. 5 fits us still today. We have gotten no better.

Thus God is "grieved in His heart." He is "sorry that He has made man" (vs. 6, end of 7)

So we find that our human emotions of grief and sorrow find their origin in the God who made us. In this sense we are like Him.

We experience emotional pain when things go in a way that does not please us. God does as well.

His own children are doing things that make Him sad, filled with grief... angry.

And, for this reason He is going to judge them. "I will destroy." He is going to wipe them out.

God has a right to judge them, a responsibility to judge them. They, like us, are ultimately answerable to God.

Whether we like it or not, we human beings are all accountable to the God who made us, as great as we may be.

Heb 9:27, "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment."

Universal sin and corruption demands universal judgment. 6,000 years ago as well as today. God has not changed.

But, God is not finished with human beings. He has a plan to save people... this is grace...

IV. Noah finds grace in the eyes of the Lord. 6:8

The word uses in vs. 8 for "favor" is also and often translated "grace." It means both... or both mean the same thing.

God looks on Noah with favor, with grace... and his life is going to be altogether different from everyone else.

He will walk with God. He will be called righteous... rescued from the judgment. He will be saved.

Why? We don't know. God does not tell us. But this one word, "grace," is packed with meaning. Underserved mercy.

When Lot was rescued from Sodom he "found grace in the sight of God." Gen. 19:19

When Boaz took Ruth and made her his wife, she had "found grace in his sight." Ruth 2:10

When you realize that Jesus has died on the cross to pay the death penalty of your sin... you "find grace in the eyes of the Lord."

In each case our attention is focused on the unworthiness of the person on the receiving end and the mercy of the giver.

Alec Motyer, the great British preacher, says that the only way to rightly understand this verse is to read it backwards...

"Grace found Noah"

We will discover next week what is the result of the grace from the Lord that found Noah. But, we will never know the reason for it.

Well, we will eventually... it is because of His love... God's unconditional love.

Understand this: As bad as people may be, God has a gracious plan to save those who are His people, those who will trust in Him.

God has a plan to save you from your sin. But, you must be found by the grace of God.

You cannot save yourself because your own sin will corrupt your every effort and you will find yourself before a holy God.

To say then, "I did it my way. I lived for what I wanted." That just will not do.

No, you need to be found by the grace of God. Has His grace found you? Maybe this morning... are you willing?

Pray