

In the past three years, Houston has experienced three 500-year flood events. And since catastrophic floods seem to be occurring a bit more frequently these days, people are getting ready for the next one. Homes that have been flooded are either being razed with a “z” or raised with an “s” to prevent a repeat. City officials are asking for billions of dollars in federal aid to make major improvements in Houston’s flood control system. FEMA is pointing people to their website, www.ready.gov, which gives people resources to be “disaster-ready” in case another strikes.

The apostle Peter tells us about a man who was disaster-ready. The flood coming Noah’s way was far more historic than the ones we’ve seen here in Houston recently – a once in this world’s history kind of flood that destroyed everything on earth. But God got him ready for that day, and saved him and his family on that day.

And there’s a reason Peter shares the story. It’s because he wants to show how God makes us disaster-ready. No, not for another world-wide flood – God’s promised that won’t happen again. But Jesus likened what happened in that flood to what will happen when he comes again. Like the flood, he will come suddenly. Like in the flood, he’ll come with destruction for the unbelieving world – only of the eternal kind.

And like in the flood, he’ll save his own. Peter wants to remind us where that safety is found, so that we’re all disaster-ready for that day. 1) *It will certainly come*, 2) *God will certainly save*.

¹⁸ For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

II. It will certainly come

People in Noah’s day should have been ready for the flood. God had put the world on notice, after all. 120 years before it happened, he told Noah that because of the growth of unbelief and sin, he was gonna wipe everything from the face of the earth. And Noah must have been warning others – that’s not the kind of news you keep to yourself! In fact, the ark that he was building was itself one giant sermon no one could ignore: God would come to destroy, and to deliver.

And God desperately wanted to deliver! For 120 years, Peter says he **waited patiently** for people to repent and believe and be ready. But by the end, only Noah and his family were. Maybe the rest laughed at the thought of water covering the earth. Maybe they were just too busy with life in this world to bother with it. Whatever the case, the flood certainly came, and when it did, the rush of water caught them outside of the boat.

The same God has put this world on notice. The world's wickedness hasn't changed; the flood wiped sinners from the earth, but it could never wipe sin from human hearts. Only Jesus can. Right now, God is **patiently waiting** for people to repent and believe and be ready, but he won't wait forever. God's promised that Jesus will return, and when he does, the flood of God's wrath that will sweep unbelievers into hell will make Noah's flood seem like nothing in comparison.

Still today, there are scoffers who won't be disaster-ready. Peter said there would be in his second letter; people who say, "Where is this coming he's promised? No, this world will keep on spinning, just like it always has."

But maybe we should focus on the scoffer in us. I know, you believe what God says about Jesus' return, but there's an unbeliever inside of us who doesn't take it seriously. And since it'll be unlike anything we've experienced, it might not seem all that real in our minds. Since it's been so long, it can seem so distant in our minds. We'd never say, "Where is this coming he's promised?" but the danger for us to start to live that way. If we knew a hurricane were going to dump another four feet of water on us tomorrow, wouldn't that change our priorities today? Our number one priority would be making sure we're ready. And yet spiritual preparation for Jesus' return rarely is our top priority. It slips down the list as we get caught up with the hustle and bustle of the here and now. Ultimately, that's a life that can lead to not being disaster-ready when the day arrives.

So we need the reminder: It will most certainly come. God promised he'd come in judgment in the flood, and he did what he said. Jesus promised he'll return in judgment on the Last Day, and he'll do what he said. God always keeps his word. So there's nothing more important than being disaster-ready for that day.

II. God will most certainly save

And here's the good news Peter shares with you this morning: God himself makes you ready for that day. So that it won't be a disaster for you; it'll mean your deliverance. After all, that's what God promised Noah: deliverance. And God kept that promise, too. He designed a wooden box for Noah to build, one that would keep him and his family safe from the judgment. Before the flood, God shut them inside and sealed the door. And when the flood came, the same waters that destroyed the world kept that ark safely floating on the surface, above all the destruction.

Peter says God has given you an ark, too. Someone who will keep you safe from the judgment: Jesus. Because of our sins, we deserve to be swept into hell in the flood of God's judgment just like the rest of mankind. But Peter says **Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous**. Yes, Jesus the righteous one took the place of the unrighteous ones – our place. On the cross, God charged our sins to his account. God poured out on him the flood of judgment we deserved, swept him away instead of us. And it happened **once for all**. One sacrifice that suffered all we deserved. One sacrifice that paid for the all your sins and all the world's sins. His "It is finished!" from the cross is him telling the world he's the ark who saves us from the judgment to come.

As proof that he's watertight, Peter mentions something we don't talk about much: Jesus' descent into hell. We say it in the creed, but still I think a lot of Christians are confused about why. He didn't descend to suffer – that he did on the cross, **once for all**, like Peter said.

And even though Peter says he went to **preach to the spirits in prison**, it wasn't an evangelism trip – the bible tells us there's no second-chances for those in hell. No, he did it to proclaim his victory over all the forces of hell. After coming to life on Easter Sunday, he descended to do a victory march down hell's main street – to assure us that he won. To assure us that, clinging to him, hell can't touch us; we're completely safe in him.

Peter also mentions when God brought most of us into this ark: when we were baptized. Just like the water saved Noah and his family by keeping that box floating safely on the surface, Peter says **your baptism saves you**. It saves you because it brought you into Jesus. It wasn't just a washing that cleans your body from dirt – it's a washing that has cleansed your soul from sin. It's God's pledge to give you a clean conscience before him by daily removing your guilt for Jesus' sake.

God promised Noah deliverance, and he provided it. God promised the world deliverance, and he's provided it in Jesus. God has made you disaster-ready through faith in him. When the judgment comes, God will most certainly save all who are in Christ!

Yet still God **patiently waits** for more to become disaster-ready. And so we are waiting, too. And as we do, there's nothing more important for us than to stay on the boat. To make sure our loved ones are there, too. Just think of how foolish it would have been for Noah to leave the ark right before the flood hits because he forgot to lock his door, or left some valuables in his house. How foolish it would be for us to let a pursuit of the best this world offers distract us from spiritual preparedness.

No, God keeps us on the boat the same we he brought us on: The gospel in word and sacrament. So make use of the Advent and Christmas opportunities to hear about Jesus here at CTL. Consider doing some advent devotions at home – MLC has free devotions for each day of December online (<https://mlc-wels.edu/publications/seasonal-devotions>). Remember your baptism when you take your shower every morning – how just like the water cleans the dirt from your body, Jesus cleanses you from sin and makes you disaster-ready for his return.

What a day it will be! Noah stepped off the ark into an empty world, but the same old sin-fallen world. When Jesus comes back, he'll give us a new world – an eternal home where righteousness dwells. God keep us ready for his return. Amen.