

...as follows in Jesus' name:

Then God said to Noah, "Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh--birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth--that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark. Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

People loved by God,

370 days or so earlier, God had commanded Noah to enter the ark with his family and all the animals.

For a little over a year, they had all remained safe within that box,

while the rain came down and the foundations of the deep burst forth for 40 days and 40 nights.

Then they waited while the waters prevailed on the earth for 150 days (5 months).

And waited some more while the waters abated (or dried up) for another 150 days.

Then Noah sent out the raven and the dove to learn something of how the earth was drying out,

until the dove returned with an olive branch, which since then has been a symbol of comfort and peace.

And finally, God commanded Noah and his family with all the animals **to go out from the ark.**

This last week many of our communities endured less than a week of flooding,

but it was catastrophic for them — there were even videos of houses floating down the river.

But for Noah and his family, there was absolutely nothing left of the previous civilization.

No neighbors to help them rebuild. No Home Depot to buy supplies from. —

The old world had passed away. Behold, a new had come.

But note the Lord's love and concern for Noah, his family, the creatures, and His creation.

It wasn't until all was safe that He finally told them to go out of the ark and,

commanding this, He immediately blessed them saying that they would **be fruitful and multiply.**

He had preserved them through the flood in a most miraculous way,

through the gift of Noah's engineering mind and his skillful hands (& that of his sons and their wives).

& by His grace, the ark did not leak, nor did its beams break under the torrential pressures of the flood.

The Lord had kept them safe, even as He devoted everything else to destruction.

It must have been bitter sweet — thinking of what had been and what was now.

All those people (perhaps millions upon millions), completely wiped out — and judged,

condemned for their wickedness. Those Noah had preached to, but they would not listen.

At the same time, what a relief! Consider all that they had had to live through for those 120 years:

the violence and wickedness...the impurity and obscene things that defiled their consciences.

But do you ever wonder if they suffered with survivor's guilt?

Perhaps it was a "good riddance" sort of feeling, all those years of people mocking them as they built the massive ark for a future flood of catastrophic world destruction.

And yet, it wasn't as if Noah and his family were perfectly righteous either.

Even after the flood, **the Lord said in His heart... the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.**

So why were Noah and his family singled out and chosen to survive the flood?

It was by God's grace!... As the author to the Hebrews notes in Chapter 11: it was purely by grace that **By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.** Hebrews 11:7

And so with reverent fear, Noah and his family and all the animals on the ark took their first steps off of it.

And what is the first thing reported that Noah did? What was Noah's priority?

He took some of those surviving animals, from the clean animals (of which he had saved 7 pairs), and devoted them to the Lord... he sacrificed them to the Lord.

To the outsider, what a waste! What a mismanagement of his few remaining resources.

Such precious few animals... and you willing kill them and devote them to complete destruction?!?

And for why? ... To thank God for saving you... and them?!?

But to the Lord, that offering was a pleasing aroma.

Like Abel's sacrifice before it, it was given in faith:

Trusting the Lord's promise that He **would never strike down every living creature as He had done, and never curse the ground because of man;**

Trusting the pledge that **While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease;**

Trusting the Lord's blessings, that the animals would **be fruitful and multiply** on the earth as they had once before;

Trusting the Lord's provisions — even without those animals — just as He had provided these.

But what is more: Like Abel's sacrifice before it, Noah's offering was given in faith,

Trusting the Lord's promise that a Savior was yet coming into this sin-corrupted world.

Trusting that this Savior would devote Himself completely to God's judgment/condemnation.

Trusting that this Savior would suffer the torments of hell, not for His own sins, but for Noah's and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him... and for all their ancestors'... and for all their descendants' still to come.

This sacrifice of your ancient father, Noah, is a witness, a testimony, to you,

and a proclamation of the same faith that you yourself confess in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here, Noah shows Himself to be a forerunner of Christ,

and, through his whole burnt offering, points to the sacrifice of Jesus for the world's sins...for your sins **for the intention of your heart that is evil from your youth.**

So in offering those clean animals, Noah did not mismanage the few resources the Lord had given him.

He showed himself to be a faithful steward of God's blessings, using them as God desires:

1. For His glory and 2. For the welfare of Noah and his family.

For what greater purpose could Noah have used those animals than as a preaching of Christ's atonement?

For what greater purpose could he have spent his God-given resources, few though they seemed, than as a thank offering for God's grace?

People loved by God, The same is no less true for you.

Like Noah, the Lord has chosen you to believe, so that it could be said of you,

By faith Luke and Lucy Lutheran, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear built up the Church for the saving of their household, and their neighbors'.

His calling you in to His Church was not on account of your goodness or your choice, but completely by His free grace and mercy.

As recipients of God's grace and forgiveness through Jesus' perfect sacrificial life and death, your life is a thank offering, a pleasing aroma as you use His gifts

(1.) for His glory and (2.) the welfare of yourself and your neighbor.

The Lord still provides for and preserves His creation, showing great care for you & your neighbors.

Though there be local floods and other catastrophes throughout the world, His pledge remains true:

while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

And still the Lord calls you, as He did Noah, to be a faithful steward (manager) of His good gifts.

And not only of the earthly resources, but also of your gifts and abilities, as St. Peter admonishes,

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace... in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. ^{1 Peter 4:10-11}

And so we see that the Lord graciously continues to care for His creation through you.

Through your service to your neighbor, He blesses them.

Through your vocation as a father, mother, brother, sister, child, aunt, uncle, cousin...

as a customer, retailer, a manufacturer... as an employee, manager, or employer...

as a friend, an acquaintance, a neighbor... as a citizen or government official, as a civilian or soldier, and yes, also as a member of Christ's Church.

Through you and through the blessings and gifts that the Lord has given to you as your stewardship, the Father continues to care for you and for your neighbor, to His glory.

Where the Church gathers, He gives **servants of Christ**, to continue Jesus' work in this sin-corrupted world:

to preach the good news to the poor,

to open the eyes of the spiritually blind to the light of the Gospel,

to loose those lamed by their sin and guilt,

to cause those who have been deaf to the Gospel, to hear the Lord's forgiveness and believe.

By your support of His Church, here in this place, He blesses you and your family, and your neighbor with an ark [the Church] to keep you safe from the coming judgement and destruction of this world.

To the outsider (to the world), your prioritization and devotion to the Lord...

your time spent receiving God's Word and Sacrament...

your offerings and the use of your gifts and resources in the work of the Church...

in short, your offering your life to the Lord as a living sacrifice of thanks, is a waste, a mismanagement... a misuse of your resources.

But to the Lord, it is a pleasing aroma, an acknowledgement and appreciation of your Savior's sacrifice for you and the entire human race.

Thanks be to God!

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria