



By Faith (Part 3) – Noah

Pastor Deone Drake – March 12, 2017

So Christa Yak just prayed, basically my message. I love it when that happens. Actually they just sang, the songs that we sang this morning, pretty much my message. I love it when that happens.

So, I want to take you back to June of 1984. I was in a Sunday School class back on 895 North Forest minding my own business. There were a lot of people in that class, but I just noticed one. And that was a young lady by the name of Patricia Rebadow. She was and is the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. I have absolutely no idea what was taught that day, because all I could think of was her. And I began to think about her a lot. In fact, I spent the next three months thinking about her. I figured after three months it was about time to move into action, so I asked her out. She said yes. And I began to pursue a relationship with her and quickly discovered in my own mind that it was, you know, I think I want her to be a part of my life. And after we dated a while, I began to think I think I want her to be a permanent part of my life. And so I, on Christmas day I asked her to marry me. And she said yes. And on April 12, 1985 she became a permanent part of my life.

And after 32 years now, she is no longer just a part of my life. She is my life. There is not a part of my life that she has not touched, influenced, transformed and made better. And that's expected. That's what happens when you fall in love. You meet the right person. You're married. And after 32 years they become your life.

Now I don't tell you that story so that in one month from today you'll send us an anniversary card. I tell you that story because I think in many ways it pictures the essence of faith. There was a time, in fact there may be a time right now when you are thinking thoughts about God. In fact, there is something that is drawing you to Him or there is something that drew you to Him. And so, you decided to pursue a relationship with God. And at some point in your life, by a prayer, by walking an aisle He became a part of your life. But after walking with Him for a month, a year, decades, a long time I hope you've come to the realization that He is not a part of your life but He really is your life. And you begin to recognize that this pursuit of God never ends, it never stops, it's a life-long pursuit.

And if you're on this end rather than on this end, I want to remind you that faith is not just thinking thoughts about God. James says it this way: "You believe there is one God." You have thoughts about God, good. "Even the demons have thoughts about God. They believe that and shudder." It's not just thinking thoughts about God, it's not just kicking the tire on this Jesus thing. You must move beyond that so that He becomes your life, so it becomes a life-long pursuit. In fact, faith is not making Christ a part of your life, a component of your life. Boy, in western civilization we are so good at

making things a part of our life. But He's not interested in that. He wants to be your life. He wants to be your pursuit.

Paul said it this way in Philippians 3:8. "What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ." The journey of faith is and must be a life-long pursuit. In fact, if you were to ask me, if you were to pull me aside and say "what do you think of when you think of the word faith"? This is what I'd like to tell you. Faith is pursuing all of God with all of me.

As I was describing my relationship with my wife, would you think anything that I said inappropriate for me to describe that relationship, even now as everything in me pursuing everything that she is. In fact, wouldn't you think it strange if I said to you on April 12, 1985 I was married, and yet for the last 32 years I don't even know where she is. We never talk, we never do anything. That's strange. And for me to come to the point where I make Christ a part of my life but I don't talk with Him, I don't pursue Him. How inappropriate that would be. Faith is pursuing all of God with all of me.

In fact, do we not see this very same thing in the writings of Hebrews 11 where we've been, in fact the verse where Pastor Jerry ended last week. Hebrews 11:6. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." That earnestly "seek him" part fits the profile that I have given that faith is pursuing all that God is with all of me.

And such a sentence is most appropriate as we turn our attention to the very next person who enters into the mind of the author of Hebrews. When he thinks about this kind of faith, because the very next verses, the very next three words after he says "earnestly seek Him" are these: "By faith, Noah". I want the Spirit of God to really impress on your heart the understanding of faith that I've just given you, pursuing all of God with all of me. Not just part of me, but all of me. It's what I prayed for this week.

And I want you to see it as we look at really two passages that I want to put back to back. One in Hebrews and one in Genesis that talk about Noah. First of all, Hebrews 11 says this about Noah: "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 and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith." Genesis 6 tells us this about Noah: "This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God." This is verse 9.

So as we look at Noah through the lens of the definition that I just gave you, what markers do we see? That he had the faith that I'm talking about. Because I believe they will be the same markers that we'll see in you and you'll see in me. In fact, I want to look at it this way. When I pursue all of God with all of me, I see five markers. Here's the first: When I pursue all of God with all of me, I will... walk by faith, which sometimes means walking alone. I will walk by faith which sometimes means walking alone.

Noah walked with God, listen, in a world where no one else did. We'll see that in just a minute, where no one else did. That automatically means that sometimes walking in faith means that we will walk alone. Why is that? Here's one reason. Because we walk by faith, not by sight. We walk by faith, not sight. By faith Noah was warned of things not yet seen. Well, what does that mean? He's told to build an ark and the thing not yet seen was a rain that would cause a deluge and wipe everything out. That never happened before and by God's promise it will never happen again. But the warning moved him to action even though he had nothing to set God's Word next to and say "this is what it's going to look like".

And that's the way of faith for all of us. And that's why people who have no faith don't see the things that we see. Because we walk by faith, not sight. Because oftentimes, God will speak into our lives and say "this is the way I've called you", and there's nothing to set God's Word next to that says this is what it will look like. It demands that we walk by faith and not sight. This is exactly what it was like for Noah.

But the writer of Hebrews has already set this up in the very first verse of this chapter when he says "faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." Well, it's the exact same thing that the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:7. "We live", some translations say "we walk by faith, not by sight." We just sang that a moment ago. But what I really need you to see is that this is not the end goal, this is not the target that someday you and I will get to the point where we walk by faith and not sight. This is the starting point. This is the life to which He has called you and me, that we walk by faith not by sight.

You want an example? The disciples. Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee and He sees some fishermen and He says, "follow me". What does that look like? What will that look like? Do you think they had any idea what the next three and a half years looked like, let alone the rest of their lives if they would simply follow Him and leave their nets. There's no way they knew, but they walked by faith not by sight. And God wants to remind you that the starting point of your journey with Him is that you begin to see with different eyes. You begin to see through the eyes of faith. And that means that you'll see things that other people don't see.

Let me give you a couple of examples. How about the political circus that we've just exited called our Presidential election? And you see people on both sides promising that the sky is going to fall if the other person wins. And you and I may have seen that, some of you may have been caught up with that. But people of faith see with different eyes and as Christa has already prayed we understand through the eyes of faith that none of this has moved God one inch off His throne. And it won't.

Another example, some of you may be experiencing right now or have the very same things that people of no faith experience because we live in a broken world. A bad doctor's report. The loss of a job. A jolt in your marriage. A wayward child. And you see that and you experience that because we live in this broken world. But people of faith see with different eyes. And it causes them to realize that they have a God who has promised never to leave you nor forsake you. You see, one of the reasons why we walk alone is because we walk by faith and not by sight.

But there's another reason. We walk against the current. We walk against the current, we always will.

Hear the words of Moses when he talks about Noah in Genesis 6:9 again. "This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous and blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God." Two adjectives to describe Noah, righteous and blameless. One of those adjectives, righteous is found throughout the Old Testament describing some of the men and women in the Old Testament. But those two adjectives are never used of anyone else but Noah. Righteous and blameless. When? In the generation that he lived. And what kind of generation was that? Genesis 6:5 says "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". That's the generation, that's the culture, that's the environment in which Noah was righteous and blameless caused him to walk alone. Caused him to walk against the current.

Maybe this analogy will help. When we were younger, we had a circular pool in our backyard. And when we got really bored, us guys would walk around, of course, inside the perimeter of the pool to create a current. And then we would try, sometimes we would be bulging out the sides of the pool, and then we would try to walk against it, and it was almost nigh unto impossible.

Do you ever feel that way? At work, I'm the only believer in my job. And sometimes I feel like I'm walking against the current. Or the things that

they talk about, the culture, the decisions that they make. And I feel like I'm the only one who feels the way I do, thinks the way I do, and I'm walking against the current. I'm the only one in my family, the only one in my family that believes. And sometimes at Thanksgiving and at Christmas, I feel like I'm walking against the current. And I feel like I'm all alone. No you're not. You just need to see with different eyes. While it may seem like you're surrounded by people of no faith, it's not all that is surrounding you.

The writer of Hebrews in the very first verse in the next chapter says this, Hebrews 12:1. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." You're not alone. You are surrounded by witnesses who say "if you will continue to walk this faith, this journey of faith you will finish the race well".

So, it may seem like we walk alone, but there's a second thing that I see. When I pursue all of God with all of me I will walk in reverent fear, which means obedience. I will walk in reverent, or holy fear, which means obedience.

God communicates to Noah an incredible message. "I'm going to purge the whole world with a flood." Do you remember the first Sunday I preached and I pulled out an Etch-a-Sketch? The flood is God's giant Etch-a-Sketch and "I'm going to shake this thing and I'm going to start all over." What an incredible message.

And if you're counting, only ten generations from Adam to Noah. And if you're counting, Moses takes 112 verses, that's it to go from "and God saw everything that He made and it was good" to "I'm sorry that I made man" in only 112 verses. And He comes with this incredible message and the way that He's going to save Noah is even more outrageous. Build an ark. My goodness, Moses must have loved to tell the story about building the ark. Because the Hebrew word for ark is used only one other time in the Old Testament. In Exodus chapter 2 when the parents of Moses built a little basket to put Moses on the Nile. Same word.

As Noah built an ark to save his family, so the parents of Moses built an ark to save him. And this is the message "I'm going to destroy the world and you need to build an ark so that you are safe. And what was his response? We just read it. By faith in holy fear he built the ark. This is the response of faith to the word of God. Holy fear, respect and awe. How different is this than when Lot came to his sons-in-law and told them that God was going to in a very similar kind of judgment destroy the city that they lived in, the city of Sodom. Here is their response, in Genesis 19:14. "So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, 'Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!' But his sons-in-law thought he was joking."

There it is. There are the two extreme responses to the Word of God. Do you respond when you hear the Word of God in great reverence or in our vernacular do you blow it off? God has clear words, my friends about purity. Do you treat those words with respect? Or do you blow them off? God has clear words about how to treat your husband or wife. How to treat

your children. Do you treat them with great respect and awe or do you blow them off? God has clear words about how to treat an enemy, how to respond when you've been treated unfairly. How to speak the truth in love, how to handle conflict. Very clear words. Do you treat them with great reverence and respect and awe or do you blow them off? How would you know? You respond in obedience.

How do you know Noah treated it with respect? Because he obeyed. Genesis 6:22 says "Noah did everything just as God commanded him. So how do you and I know that our faith is one of a holy response to God's Word. Very simple. We obey Him. We respond in obedience. Have I just described you? Is there an area of life where I've not? Where the Word of God has not described you? Because to this point, God has been trying to get your attention. God has been communicating a message to you. But to this point, because you know better, because I know better, we've been treating it lightly. Listen to the words of Noah.

There's a third thing that I want us to see. When I pursue all of God with all of me, I will walk in light, which means confronting darkness. I will walk in light, which means confronting darkness. The writer of Hebrews tell us that Noah by faith condemned the world. It sounds to me, it might sound like to you, that Noah is preaching.

In fact, Peter seems to indicate the same thing, when he says in 2 Peter 2:5, that if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others.

So, you might get the idea, you might have in your mind, that basically what's going on is that Noah is on his scaffold and building the ark, and he begins to preach to the people who are ridiculing him below. Maybe. But I have a different idea. And this might help those of you who find it very, very difficult to speak words. I think the way Noah preached righteousness was with every strike of his hammer. And this way, he condemned the world by obeying God, by being light in a very dark place. I think in many ways, that's exactly what's going on here.

You see, when we are obedient, when we walk faithfully, we immediately confront darkness with the light, even before we say anything, and even if we don't say anything. Now, there is going to come a time when we need to say words. And the Holy Spirit has promised to help us. But even before we say anything, just be light.

Want an example? A real simple one I think. I like to wear a white t-shirt underneath whatever shirt I'm wearing. But I also am known for wearing clothes until they are ready to be buried. Can I hear an amen from the men? Right? Alright. Absolutely.

Well, after a while, my wife thinks the white t-shirt I've put on is quite disgusting. And she wants to replace them. And I say, I'm just getting grooved in here. I like this. And she realizes that it's a battle that she's not going to win. And so she doesn't say anything. She just goes to the store, buys a brand new package of white t-shirts, and sets them next to the disgusting things that I've been wearing. And she doesn't need to say a word. I know.

That's what it's like. Just be light. Do you understand from that analogy how necessary it is for us to be pure? Because when we dirty up our lives, like those grungy t-shirts, we no longer stand out. Maybe we don't want to, because we don't want to walk alone. But God is being gracious to the world around us who desperately needs Him by using us as light. Before they stand before the One who is light at judgment and it's too late.

God, use me like you used Noah. Even though it may seem like it's futile. After all, no one came into the ark but his family. But use me as light in a dark world, and help me to live a pure life, so that I really do show my faith.

There's a fourth thing that I see in here. When I pursue all of God with all of me, I will walk toward my inheritance, which means a legacy of faithfulness. I will walk toward my inheritance, which means a legacy of faithfulness.

Again, Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah became the heir of righteousness because of his faith. What is that? That's legacy. And Noah received that honor. How do I know? Because this story in Hebrews that we're talking about, and this event in Genesis happened minimally 5500 years ago, and we are still talking about Noah. Why? Because Genesis says he walked faithfully with God.

Do you know that Genesis only says that about one other person? We already talked about him last week. Great grandpa Enoch. Genesis 5:22 tells us that. After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked

faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. That's the legacy of being faithful.

Several weeks ago, some of us on staff were talking about our founding pastor James Andrews. And when he was in Akron, Ohio, after he graduated from Wheaton College in 1956, he was in Akron, Ohio, serving as an associate at The Chapel on Fur Hill, from which of course we got our name. And we worked for a gentlemen, a pastor by the name of Carl Burnham, Sr. And Carl Burnham had a son Junior, Carl Burnham, Jr. And Pastor Andrews worked alongside of him.

And one day, Carl Burnham, Jr. came to The Chapel and spoke. And he told this story, long after his father had gone on to be with the Lord. Carl Jr said he had gone to a hospital to visit an elderly man who had served in his father's church for many years. He was dying. And this elderly man said, you know, Carl, I'm about to go home to be with Jesus. And one of the things I want to do is, is I want to meet your dad. Is there anything that you want me to tell him? And Carl said yes. Tell him I've been faithful. Tell him I've been faithful.

My dear friends, you want that. I want that. Someday, someone's going to stand at a stage, or perhaps at a funeral home, and speak words about you. Someday my son is going to stand on a stage like this, or a funeral home, and say words about me. And I want those words to be, that he walked faithfully. I don't want him to say that he almost walked faithfully. Or he sometimes walked faithfully. Or he walked faithfully, until... I want him to say that he walked faithfully.

And I believe, in the clearest of our thinking, we want that. And you might say in this room, or watching now, that it's not been my legacy. Here is the beauty of God's grace. You can start right now. And from this point in, to the end of your life, you can walk faithfully. And that can be your legacy.

There's one more thing that I want you to see. When I pursue all of God with all of me, I will run, not walk, to the anchor of my soul, which means Christ alone. I will run, not walk, to the anchor of my soul.

So, build an ark. If scholars are right, Noah lives in between the Tigris and Euphrates River in the middle of Iraq. There's no water nearby. What an absolutely outrageous thing. And if Noah had deemed it outrageous, and dismissed it, we would never hear from him, and God would have a completely different story. Things would look far different today, if there was even a today.

But the ark became the very thing that Noah ran to and found salvation. But I need to pause, and say the ark wasn't his salvation. The one who told him to build it was. The ark represented the means by which God would save him. And so Noah ran to God. And God became the anchor of his soul.

This is how Hebrews writes it in chapter 6. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the refuge set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain. If I understand what it means to pursue all of God with all of me, then I will run to the anchor of my soul who is Christ.

Last night, my son texted me. He was reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, called *The Ethics*. Too late for me to adjust for me to put it on the slides. But this fits in so perfectly with what I'm talking about right now. He says, faith means the finding and holding fast the foundation. It means casting anchor upon it, and being held fast by it. Faith means founding my life upon a foundation, which is outside of myself. Upon an eternal and holy foundation, upon Christ, faith means being held captive in the sight of Jesus Christ, no longer seeing anything but Him.

Have I just described you? Is your attention, as you are pursuing all of God with all of you, is your soul attention on Christ? Because here's another outrageous statement for you. Two thousand years ago, a man hung on a cross. And if you will place the full weight of your confidence on him, he will forgive your sins, cleanse you, give you a brand new start, and an eternal home in his presence. That's outrageous. But you need to run to that. Continually run to that, because he and he alone is the anchor of your soul.

But the problem with us, and you and I know this, the problem with us is that our inclination is to do just the opposite - to run from him, rather than run to him.

Maybe this analogy will help. Probably my mother's favorite story of my childhood. Now I need to temper this for a minute, because all of my mother's stories are.. I'll just leave it like that. For example, my mother, who obviously raised us, and also nannied many, many other children, said that I was the happiest boy she ever met. Now those of you who have

known me for longer than five minutes, do any of you possibly think that?
I'm not sure.

So, this is the story. My mother's young. She doesn't have her driver's license. David and I are 3, 4 years old. And so, she wanted to go shopping downtown, probably at the old Sears building on Main and Jefferson. We went by bus. So we're waiting at the bus to come back home. And across the street, they're opening up a gas station. And they're celebrating by having a man dressed up as Yogi Bear passing out balloons. Well, I was scared of Yogi Bear. I mean, who isn't, right? And I took one look at him, and I ran the other way. And the way the story goes, you know, mother's guilt, by the time she caught up with me and brought us back to the bus stop, we had missed the bus and had to wait another hour.

Now as I look back at that story, some few years back, I recognize something. I'm in an environment where I don't know where I am. I know nobody. And I run away from the only person who can give me safety. The only person who can bring me comfort. The only person who can be an anchor for my little soul.

And that's you. That's me. That may be you right now. That rather than running to Christ, you're running to porn. Rather than running to Christ, you're running to a drink. Rather than running to Christ, you're running away from your marriage. Rather than running to Christ, you're staying super busy at work, so that you forget the alienation in your heart, because you are so distant from him.

And if I understand the writer of Hebrews and what it teaches me about faith, I run to him. Because he is the only one who can keep me safe. The only one. That doesn't mean that the things that happen to people in a broken world won't happen to me. It means that he's the only one that can be an anchor. So when you lose a child, you run to the ark. When your husband or wife walks out on you, you run to the ark. When you lose a job, you run to the ark. Because he is the only one that can keep you safe.

There's words that I love to wash over me. And maybe they will be words that do the same for you, and provide comfort. See these words, hear these words, almost in the lens of what we're talking about with this great flood. I'm reading from Isaiah 43, starting with verse 1. "But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

I mentioned at the beginning that sometimes it feels like we walk alone. I want you to understand something. When you and I choose to run away from God, it's the only time when we are alone. In the midst of all of those things, and all the experiences of life that we face, I am never alone when I am running into the presence of Christ. And I am safe. Because Jesus said, in John 10, that my Father is greater than any, and no one is able to pluck me out of his hand. I encourage you, my word of encouragement, is that you walk by faith, and you run to Christ. Would you pray with me?

As our heads are bowed, and our eyes are closed, my voice isn't the one that you need to hear right now. It's the Spirit of God, who would simply ask you, what direction are you headed? Are you running to Christ or away?

And maybe if your answer is that I'm running away from Christ, maybe you would tell Him today that you're tired of running. Cause running away from Christ has to be pretty exhausting. It's time that you stopped running away from Him, and running to other things that you think will make you happy and satisfy you, and they don't. And running to Him, and running into His arms, and finding the safety that He has promised.

And so, Lord, I pray that you would speak to us. This might be one of those difficult Sundays to hear from Your voice, just because there is so many other variables, time changes and snow, and all those kinds of things. But we desperately need to push those things aside and hear from You.

Because I dare say that unless we have reached some kind of perfection, that there is something in our lives, one area of our lives, where You have spoken to us, and we just keep running. And You're asking us to stop. Stop running from You. Stop running to something else as the cure, and running instead to You.

Lord, I pray that You would impress on each of our hearts our desperate need of You. To recognize that the only joy in life comes from pursuing all of you with all of us. Lord, I so desperately want that for each of the people who have listened to me this morning. But Lord, I know to a greater degree

that I can't even fathom, this is Your heart. You want us close to You, so that You can speak to us. And that we can walk this journey with You.

So thankful, this morning, Lord. So very thankful for the anchor of my soul who is Christ. And I pray, Lord, that that would be all of us. For Christ's sake I pray, amen.

Thank you everyone. You have a wonderful day.