

Sun., March 10: First Sunday of Lent

Threshold: God closing the door of Noah's Ark (God's protection)

Sermon: Thresholds #2: Door of God's Protection

Scripture: Genesis 7:1-24 (The Ark)

Text: "Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed." Psalm 57:1

Memory Verse: "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in." -Psalm 24:7

Children's Lesson: Noah's Ark -Andrew

Missions Moment: Youth Mission Trip

Blurb: We continue our Lenten message series: "Thresholds: The Story of the Bible, the Story of Salvation." We are following the overall story of the Bible, and we are telling the story by the thresholds we see. Sin brings death and destruction. In the Bible, Adam and Eve's defiance of God leads to a closed door to Paradise and a sin-corrupted world rampant with death and destruction. The flood washes the earth, but Noah and his family are spared on the ark. When the rains came, God closed them in by shutting the ark's door. This sign shows God's saving grace: God provides a door of protection for us! Come this Sunday to hear how God provides a door of protection as you face destruction, death, and the storms of life.

Call to Worship: *Threshold of Glory* -Sanctify

Welcome: -Pastor David

Memory Verse:

"Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in." -Psalm 24:7

Worship Music: - Sanctify

My Lighthouse

Good, Good Father

Simple Pursuit

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Serve Moment: Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser -Cassi

Offering: *Lift Up Your Heads* - Sanctify

Kids Moment: Noah's Ark -Andrew

Prayers: -Andrew

Message Bumper

Message: Thresholds #2: The Door of God's Protection

PP#1: “Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.” Psalm 57:1

Where do you go for protection? When things are too big for you, where do you turn? Others can provide help, yes. Family, friends offer support. But where do you go when things get even worse? When the sun is shining and things are calm, you can feel confident. But when things go wrong, that’s when we realize how vulnerable we are, how fragile our lives.

I want you to hear this amazing prayer from David in Psalm 57:1. And I want us to adopt this prayer as our own. It helps us put our trust in God, to go to Him when we are in trouble, to seek His protection. God’s people trust in God for their protection! “Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.”

PP#2: *Image of Lent.*

We are heading to Easter, now. This season of 40 days before Easter we call Lent. It’s a time of preparation, self reflection, getting honest with ourselves before God for why Jesus had to come, and admitting how much our world—and we individually—need a savior.

Since New Year’s, our message series has been about being Jesus’ disciples. Now we transition from learning *about* being disciples of Jesus to actually *following* Jesus as He journeys to Jerusalem, to His cross, and to His death. Human salvation unfolds as we first watch Jesus carry His cross, and then when we pick up ours. Discipleship, from here on out, begins a steep uphill climb.

PP#3: Thresholds: The Door of God’s Protection

“Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.” Psalm 57:1

During Lent this year, we’re going to go back into the story of the Bible. It’s the story of why humanity needed a savior, and why we as humans need a savior! The Bible has a grand story. Yes, it’s full of smaller stories, people, places, events. But these all tell a larger story: the story of human salvation, told from the beginning to the end of the Bible.

Now, I’ve noticed that at most of the key points in the Bible’s story, there are mentions of doorways, of entrances, of portals, of gateways. So, I’ve crafted this message series around these intriguing images of thresholds. I’m calling it, “Thresholds: The Story of the Bible, The Story of Salvation.” Today, it’s “Thresholds: The Door of God’s Protection.” Psalm 57:1, “Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.”

PP#4: *Image of the seraphim blocking the entrance to the Garden of Eden, subtitled*

“God drove out the human. To the east of the garden of Eden, He stationed winged creatures wielding flaming swords to guard the way to the tree of life.” -Genesis 3:24

This past Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, we heard the story of the first threshold of the Bible. It’s back in the creation story, after when Adam and Eve turned their trust away from God and onto themselves. The story says that they ate the forbidden fruit, and with that, God’s intended paradise was corrupted. God’s perfect image in people was fallen. The paradise that God created for

humanity, the perfection He created us for, was lost, *Paradise Lost*. Genesis 3, verse 24, says, “God drove out the human. To the east of the garden of Eden, He stationed winged creatures wielding flaming swords to guard the way to the tree of life.” So, the first threshold of the Bible, in the story of human salvation, is the barrier that comes as the result of sin and seals off eternal life. God created all things good, but people, ever since Adam and Eve, have chosen to put their trust in themselves over God, and the result is the irreparable damage and the corruption of all creation.

PP#5: Genesis 4:23-24

23 Lamech said to his wives, “Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice; wives of Lamech, pay attention to my words: I killed a man for wounding me, a boy for striking me; 24 so Cain will be paid back seven times and Lamech seventy-seven times.”

Sin spreads wildly like an epidemic. Cain, the first person born, kills his younger brother out of anger. That’s early chapter four of Genesis. But look at verse 23. Cain’s great-great-grandson, Lamech, brags about his life of sin, revenge, and wanton killing. He boasts, “Lamech said to his wives, “Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice; wives of Lamech, pay attention to my words: I killed a man for wounding me, a boy for striking me; so Cain will be paid back seven times, and Lamech seventy-seven times.” He is bragging about taking Cain’s sin to the extreme. This is the tragic spread of sin. But wait, there’s more!

Turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 6. At the beginning of this chapter is a strange story about the Nephilim, the legendary people of old. In a narrative that sounds a bit like ancient mythological writings, it seems that some of the fallen angels procreated with human women. It doesn’t say enough to get any detail, besides that this is more evidence of a fallen creation.

PP#6: Genesis 6:5-8

5 The Lord saw that humanity had become thoroughly evil on the earth and that every idea their minds thought up was always completely evil. 6 The Lord regretted making human beings on the earth, and He was heartbroken. 7 So the Lord said, “I will wipe off of the land the human race that I’ve created: from human beings to livestock to the crawling things to the birds in the skies, because I regret I ever made them.”

8 But God’s eyes found favor on a man named Noah.

But look at verse 5. This is one of the saddest and terrible descriptions in the Bible. We have here a vivid description of God’s pain at human sin. Verse 5, “The Lord saw that humanity had become *thoroughly evil* on the earth and that *every* idea their minds thought up was *always completely evil*. [There is no good left. The light was gone. Darkness again completely covered the deep. And then, that most woeful of all statements, verse 6] The Lord *regretted* making human beings on the earth, and He was *heartbroken*. [We so often characterize God in the Old Testament as being angry, violent, a God of punishment. But do you see this? This is the foundation of God’s actions in the Old Testament. Not anger, not punishment, but being heartbroken. Keep this in mind as we move forward. Verse 7,] So the Lord said, “I will wipe off of the land the human race that I’ve created: from human beings to livestock to the crawling things to the birds in the skies, because I regret I ever made them.”

God admits that His creation is lost beyond His control. Can you see God, angrily sobbing, screaming, “But I made it all, and it was good!” The life He go happily created has become a Frankenstein monster, unleashing murder and violence over the entire earth.

We worry today about nuclear destruction of the earth, at our own hand, or climate change, or some other catastrophic, earth-killing cause we do as humans. Do you see that we've already done this in our history? Humanity, before antiquity, destroyed the earth! And it is only God's watchful eye, eyes filled with tears, that creation is saved from our self-inflicted, utter destruction!

The only faint flicker of light—goodness—left in the barren wasteland of human evil across the entire earth, is one person, named Noah. God's weeping eyes see the faint flicker of His image still remaining.

And as we *will come* to known God, we see here already that God always protects even the slightest of good.

PP#7: *A collage of images: seraphim at the Garden entrance, Noah's ark, Passover doorway covered in blood, Ark of Covenant behind the temple curtain, the tomb and stone.*

Before we move further into the familiar story, I want to stop here and be sure you see the story of salvation. God's reaction to His people in a self-made sin-mess is NOT to smite, and kill, and punish. It is to grieve. It is to remember all the intentions He made us for. It is sorrow at the current state. And then, we see God move to intervene, to take action. We see God come with help: rescuing, fixing, redeeming, salvation. And just like when we need to tend a deep wound, first steps require exposing, diagnosing, and cleansing, so we see this in God's salvation when He comes to bring healing. What we may understand as violent and ungodly, the Bible tells as the painful part of the healing that God brings.

The world is dying—bleeding out—literally!, with human blood spilled on the ground. God is horrified. Weeping and betrayed, God comes to redeem. He painfully washes away the sin, and makes a path for new life to flourish. He saves and protects the glimmer of good, and tenderly nurtures it back to vitality. God starts again. God gives a second chance. God brings new life. God redeems.

This is the God we see in the Old Testament. We see it right away in early Genesis, as we see God reacting to incomprehensible human sin. God intervenes after Adam and Eve sin, and He sends them off, helping them to rebuild life. God intervenes after Cain kills Able, and sends him off, helping him rebuild life. God intervenes during the days of Lamech, saves the tiny good He finds in Noah, washes the sin away in a flood, and sends Noah off, helping him to start new life.

Remember, sin is a real problem. It's corruption must be healed. It's effect of death is the result. It is wrong to blame God for being so violent in the Old Testament. God is working within the reality that we humans have created. I hope you can see that in the midst of sin and vengeance and death, God acts to preserve and protect: here in a tiny little ark, a plan of redemption.

PP#8: *A cute image of Noah's ark with smiling animals, perhaps a kid's storybook cover.*

The story of Noah's Ark is a beloved story we often tell our kids. A cute little boat with smiling animals all happy together. But the story we hear in the Bible is not that at all. It is a violent, turbulent storm, waves crashing, thunder rolling, wind howling, and the screams of dying animals and people as they drown. Yes, let's tell this story to our kids at bedtime!

Genesis 4. On a clear day during the dry season on the middle of a desert plane, God appears to a man over 500 years old. And, by the way, this "middle-aged" man has three young sons, newly married. This is Lamech's son, Noah. God tells Noah to build a vast ark, because, God says, He was going to bring a flood some 75 years in the future, and in this ark will be a sampling of all the animals.

A key element in each of the stories of redemption in the Bible is the need to put radical trust back on God. Remember, in the Garden of Eden, people took their trust off God and put it on themselves. When God works redemption, the human response is to put our trust back on God.

Noah is an awesome example of this! Old man told to build a ship in the middle of desert.

Will Noah trust God? Will he stand firm as he is ridiculed by everyone he knows? Will he convince his family to join him? Will he commit all his resources and time to this crazy venture. Will Noah trust God? This is the key question of this story! Genesis 6:22, “Noah did everything exactly as God commanded him.” A glimmer of light in a dark world.

PP#9: *Image of the ark museum exterior, personal picture.*

Years go by, and Noah and his family keep at the work.

Last fall Reese took our family down to Kentucky to see the life-size replica of Noah’s ark. It’s made to the exact measurements God gave Noah in the Bible. It was pretty amazing! We got to tour through it, and see how it was actually possible, practically, for this ark to really work and house all the animals it needed to. Can you imagine this wooden monstrosity towering over the village where Noah was living? I imagine it was a top tourist stop for people from far and near!

And I’m sure Noah wondered, especially as it was nearing completion, if he was crazy, or if God would do what He said.

PP#10: Genesis 7:1-24 (CEB)

1 The Lord said to Noah, “Go into the ark with your whole household, because among this generation I’ve seen that you are a moral man. 2 From every clean animal, take seven pairs, a male and his mate; and from every unclean animal, take one pair, a male and his mate; 3 and from the birds in the sky as well, take seven pairs, male and female, so that their offspring will survive throughout the earth. 4 In seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. I will wipe off from the fertile land every living thing that I have made.” 5 Noah did everything the Lord commanded him.

Well, Turn to Genesis 7. The skies are still sunny, but the ark is pretty well finished. Verse 1, “The Lord said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark with your whole household, because among this generation I’ve seen that you are a moral man. From every clean animal, take seven pairs, a male and his mate; and from every unclean animal, take one pair, a male and his mate; and from the birds in the sky as well, take seven pairs, male and female, so that their offspring will survive throughout the earth. [So, notice, some animals just one male and female, while others seven of each. Did you catch that trivia? Verse 4,] In seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. I will wipe off from the fertile land every living thing that I have made.’ Noah did everything the Lord commanded him.” Noah remained faithful. He kept his trust in God.

PP#11: Genesis 7:1-24 (CEB)

“Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters arrived on earth. 7 Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives with him entered the ark to escape the floodwaters. 8 From the clean and unclean animals, from the birds and everything crawling on the ground, 9 two of each, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, just as God commanded Noah. 10 After seven days, the floodwaters arrived on the earth. 11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day—on that day all the springs of the deep sea erupted, and the windows in the skies opened.

Verse 6, “Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters arrived on earth. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives with him entered the ark to escape the floodwaters. From the clean and unclean animals, from the birds and everything crawling on the ground, two of each, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, just as God commanded Noah. [See, the animals came to Noah!] After seven days, the floodwaters arrived on the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day—on that day all the springs of the deep sea erupted, and the windows in the skies opened.”

PP#12: Genesis 7:1-24 (CEB)

12 It rained on the earth forty days and forty nights. 13 That same day Noah, with his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, Noah’s wife, and his sons’ three wives, went into the ark. 14 They and every kind of animal—every kind of livestock, every kind that crawls on the ground, every kind of bird—15 they came to Noah and entered the ark, two of every creature that breathes. 16 Male and female of every creature went in, just as God had commanded him. Then the Lord closed the door behind them.

Verse 12, “It rained on the earth forty days and forty nights. That same day Noah, with his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, Noah’s wife, and his sons’ three wives, went into the ark. They and every kind of animal—every kind of livestock, every kind that crawls on the ground, every kind of bird—they came to Noah and entered the ark, two of every creature that breathes. Male and female of every creature went in [evidently by their own instinct], just as God had commanded him. [Now watch the end of this verse:] Then the Lord closed the door behind them.”

There it is! The next threshold in the biblical narrative! The Hebrew literally says, “The Lord closed them in.” God is sending the flood. Death and destruction caused by human sin. But do you hear the redemption language here? The Lord closed them in! It is He who saved Noah and his family. The Lord brings protection for His people when they put their trust in Him. The Lord spares those who trust in Him. This simple, little sentence summarizes the whole narrative of the Old Testament. The Lord closed the door behind them!

PP#13: *Picture of the cross on the ark door inside the ark museum.*

It was amazing on the inside of the ark museum. When we walked past the door, the museum had an outline of a cross in light on the ark’s door. They got the significance, didn’t they? The door is a symbol of Jesus’ cross: salvation, protection, life... performed by God to save His sin-sick people. In a few weeks from now, we’ll hear Jesus say, “I am the door of salvation.” Don’t miss the significance here!

In the rain I see God’s heartbroken tears. In the floodwaters I see God washing away human sin. In the ark I see God’s redeeming grace, and in the ark’s door I see God’s protection for those who put their trust in Him.

This is the story of salvation. This is the story of the Bible. Over and over again we see that this is what God does. This is the God of the Old Testament. This is Jesus. This is God right here, today, reaching out to you.

PP#14: “Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.” Psalm 57:1

Fifteen hundred years later, King David wrote about this same character of God. He writes in Psalm 57, "Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed." I can almost hear Noah saying this prayer as God shut him and his family in the ark.

And God's people have been praying it ever since! Noah, the Israelites during the Passover, King David, and even the thief dying on the cross next to Jesus.

We are not all that unlike Noah. God calls us to obey Him when things don't make sense. We behave not based on what we can see, but on God's voice. God calls us to trust Him while things are calm and nice. Then, floods and storms and disasters rise up around us. God continues to call us to keep putting our trust in Him, even when all seems hopeless. God promises us: I am coming. I will help you. I will deal with sin. Will you restore your trust in me?

What flood waters are you facing? Do you see water pooling up around your ankles? Do you fear that you are about to drown? God's got an ark for you, if only you will trust Him. God promises to shut you in amid the storm. God promises to protect you. You may experience hardships and trouble, but God will keep your heart safe. He will restore your life so you will live forever. God has plans for a new beginning, a new life, a new covenant. God provides a rainbow of promise to remind you that He is your protection. You can put your trust in Him.

Let's do that. Let's join our prayers with this prayer that God's people have been praying for millennia. I invite you to stand with me, and let's pray Psalm 57:1 together, as our testimony of trust.

Let's pray!

Closing Song: *Living Hope-Sanctify*

Memory Verse:

"Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in." -Psalm 24:7

Announcements: -Pastor David

Benediction