

Fruit That Is Always In Season: Faithfulness Genesis 6:11-22

What are some of the stickiest fruits you've handled? Mangos? Peaches? Watermelon? Others? The Fruit of the Spirit is also sticky. I say this because one of the characteristics of this **fruit is faithfulness**. Someone who is faithful is someone who sticks with you. **God is sticky**. Once he makes a promise, he holds on to it and will never let it go. No one and nothing can shake that promise from his hand. This same God calls us to be faithful and through **the Holy Spirit produces faithful-stickiness in us**. Let's see what that stickiness ought to look like in our lives as we study the interaction between God and Noah.

Our sermon text should remind us that there really is no such thing as the *"good ol' days."* Sin may have not been as obvious a couple of generations ago as it is today, but ever since Adam and Eve's declaration of independence, ***this world has been a sin-stinking place.***

That was true at the time of Noah, five or six thousand years ago. When God looked at the world of that time, he saw believers carelessly putting their faith in jeopardy. God saw a wanton disregard for life as the strong fell upon the weak and took for themselves whatever they wanted. While these unbelievers could no doubt act like "nice" people from time to time, God was not fooled. He saw that **"every inclination of...[their] hearts was only evil all the time"** (Genesis 6:5b). God was disgusted by what he saw and so he prepared to cleanse the world of these people who had no use for him. Friends, it's good for us to remember that it isn't just automobiles that can be recalled by their maker, so can human beings. And the day for total recall of all human beings is coming!

Now you've seen the cutesy pictures of the ark in children's books giving you the impression that Noah could have assembled that boat in a weekend or two. Not so. The ark he was to build was huge. ***It was about as high as a four-story house and a football field and a half long. It wasn't until 1884 that a ship of that size was built again! Besides his work on the ark, Noah also had to gather a year's worth of food for his family and for as many as 2,000 animals. It's no wonder God gave Noah his orders over a hundred years before he actually sent the flood. Noah would need the time to prepare for what God said was coming.***

Don't you wonder what kind of insults Noah faced as he worked on the ark? Noah was faithful because he knew God would be faithful to his promise to send that flood.

Like the people of Noah's day your friends must question the time you spend here at church. Your ark is your faith in Jesus because that's the only thing that will save you. We spend countless hours here at church and pour thousands of dollars into this place to support gospel ministry so that through Word and Sacrament our faith in Jesus will be strengthened. And it's not just our faith that we want strengthened. Noah didn't just build the ark for himself but for his wife, his three sons and their wives.

Likewise we invest much here because we want our loved ones and others to survive Judgment Day with us. Don't give up on your efforts. Stick to the plan because God is going to stick to his plan of destroying this world and judging mankind.

Now I'm sure that when Noah first got the command to build the ark he was a flurry of activity. But how long did that enthusiasm last? ***If he really worked on the ark for 120 years, there must have been days when he was tempted to quit. How did he stay focused? How did he stay faithful and stick to the plan?*** Hebrews 11:7a gives us the answer: ***"By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family."*** To stay focused Noah only had to regularly picture the places around him that would soon be under water. When he was tempted to waste hours in the town square listening to the gossip of the day, he just had to picture a rogue wave smashing everything there to bits and burying it under layers of mud.

Friends, we too are living in a world that's marked for destruction. Live in holy fear of the day of judgment that is coming! That doesn't mean we should hole up here in church and only venture out to get food. That's not what Noah did. We hear from the New Testament that he was a preacher of righteousness. While he built that ark **Noah also desperately tried to convince others to come on board. You could say that Noah stuck close to his friends as he faithfully witnessed to them. And we can show the same faithfulness to our friends as we too warn them about the coming judgment, and urge them to come on board with us here.** But faithfulness will show itself in other ways too. Someone who is faithful is dependable. When you tell a friend that you'll meet them for coffee, you do so! When you tell your parents you'll be home to help them with the yard work, you do that too and don't excuse your absence because "Something came up." **That's fickleness not faithfulness.**

Someone who is faithful is also a finisher. There are a lot of people who are good talkers, there are also dreamers, but few who are actually doers. This world struggles with faithfulness. One pastor said he saw a Hallmark card which read: "I can't promise you forever, but I can promise you today." In contrast the prophet Isaiah wrote about God's faithfulness: **"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you**" (Is. 54:10).

God proved his faithfulness in the person of Jesus. He was utterly dependable. **He was a finisher, no, THE finisher—the one who completely paid for our sins and therefore secured our salvation.** He didn't leave any loose ends for us to tie up. How can we not remain faithful and stick close to a savior like that? I pray that you are renewed in your desire to give Jesus your all—to lay your life on the line for him.

Noah stuck with it. That's because God stuck with him. And this God will also stick with you. Actually you could say that through baptism, God, in the person of Jesus, was stuck to you. Like a locomotive that's been attached to the rear of the train so it can push the train cars up over the mountain pass, Jesus, together with the Holy Spirit is pushing you so that you remain faithful—not just on the inside in your love for God, but faithful on the outside too in your love for others. Sticky inside and out, that's you—just like a bacuri fruit. Amen.