

## “As in the Days of Noah”

✦ **unexpected judgment** (vv.17-23a)

✦ **unsurpassed mercy** (v. 23b)

In the name of Jesus, our Advent King coming to rescue us, dearly redeemed family of God:

You heard Jesus describe His final Advent on Judgment Day in today’s Gospel Lesson: *“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”* (Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84) Did you notice that those who were taken away were condemned? Only Noah and his family were left behind and saved. That’s the opposite of the *Left Behind* series of books and movies that have messed up so many people. They’re based on the false teaching that Christ will set up a thousand-year rule on earth. But Jesus told Pilate, *“My kingdom is not of this world.”* (John 18:36) We need to listen more closely and pay attention to His warnings. Tribulation will continue with life as usual right up until the end – **“As in the Days of Noah.”**

✦ **unexpected judgment** (vv.17-23a)

Some of you paying close attention might take exception to our first point in the sermon outline: “Pastor, how was the Flood an **unexpected judgment**? How could people not know it was coming?”

Good question! Maybe even better than you realize. Let’s review. God created the world perfect and holy, set apart for His glory and praise. Adam and Eve enjoyed blissful union with the LORD God as He walked and talked with them in the Garden Paradise of Eden. How long this joyful fellowship lasted, we cannot tell from the Bible record. The sadness of sin set in all too soon when Adam and Eve listened to Satan instead of God. They lost God’s perfect image of holiness that united them with their loving Creator and with each other in the perfect love of marriage. They personally experienced evil shame toward God, blame toward each other, and violence among their own offspring. Their son Cain killed his brother Abel. Heartache came when God banished them from the Garden. Nature was corrupted because of God’s curse for Adam’s sin. None of this should have been **unexpected judgment**.

Totally unexpected was God’s gracious promise. Right away in the Garden the LORD God said the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head. (Genesis 3:15) The Virgin would conceive the Holy Conqueror, who would come to give them life again. By faith Adam named his wife, not “the mother of the dead,” but Eve – “the mother of the living.” Adam’s descendants proclaimed God’s **judgment** and His promise of a Savior in public worship. (Genesis 4:26) This should not have been **unexpected**.

We have a summary of their sermons. The Holy Spirit inspired Jesus’ brother Jude to write about people who ignore God’s warnings: *“Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’”* (Jude 14f) *“By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.”* (Hebrews 11:5; cf. Genesis 5:24)

The most ancient records available are preserved for us by God in the Bible. The world lasted about 2,000 years from Creation to the Flood. Finally the family line of the Savior-Seed reached Noah, *“a preacher of righteousness.”* (2 Peter 2:4) God called Noah *righteous-complete* (צַדִּיק תָּמִים) by faith in the coming Savior. Noah did not follow the prevailing practice of believers who lost their faith by

marrying unbelievers. (Genesis 6:2) He and his three sons – Shem, Ham and Japheth – continued to trust in God for salvation and reflected this by good works. Whatever the LORD God commanded, Noah did. ***“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 comes by faith.”*** (Hebrews 11:7 NIV84) Think of it! For over 100 years Noah preached to a dead audience. Billions of people on a planet green from pole to pole, probably all on one continent, yet Noah’s only congregation was his own family. These eight souls the LORD God preserved in faith through God’s Word. For them the worldwide Flood was not an **unexpected judgment**. The only reason? They were listening to God’s Word. He specifically said the Flood was coming 120 years in advance. But Noah’s family alone would survive when God destroyed all life except what could swim in the tidal waters of the coming violence.

### ✠ unsurpassed mercy (v. 23b)

Again, if you were paying close attention, especially if you picked up a written copy of today’s sermon, maybe you noticed something’s strange about our second main point. It only covers half of one final verse: ***“Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.”*** Since most people miss God’s warnings of judgment, His **unsurpassed mercy** never even blips their radar. Who needs **mercy**?

The LORD God could have destroyed the entire earth the way we crumple up a piece of paper or you delete a bad picture from your cell phone. All gone! No one left to complain. God could have finished off the whiners and self-righteous blasphemers by a simple word from His mouth. God does not need a delete key. But look around you. Look at the children of God from infancy to old age. Look at the teeming masses of people in cities across America, swirling across China and Asia and Europe. Every last one of us is a wretched sinner with nothing to offer God. But God is love. God created us to worship and praise Him. So Christ Jesus keeps on coming in Word and sacrament even now to call us back to His side. Pure love wants to give us **unsurpassed mercy**. He pictured this so powerfully in the Flood.

The Lord’s Apostle Peter puts it this way in his God-inspired record: ***“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in his physical body but made alive in his spiritual body. In this [glorified body] he went and preached to the spirits in prison. They disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In this ark only a few people, eight souls, were saved by water. In the same way also, baptism now saves us, not by washing dirt from the body, but by guaranteeing a good conscience before God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand where angels, authorities and powers have been put under him.”*** (1 Peter 3:18–22 TPA)

Can you appreciate this beautiful picture of Baptism? God the Holy Spirit, as the ***“Spirit of adoption”*** (Romans 8:15 ESV), uses the Flood to show how He adopts souls into God’s family. In the ark of the Church where Christ comes to us through Word and sacraments, God keeps us safe in His tender, loving care. Trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and you are ready now in God’s **unsurpassed mercy**.

Some of us are old enough to remember May 18, 1980. A year before Cindy and I were married, a scientist named David Alexander Johnston was holding his ground six miles north of Mount Saint Helens. Johnston felt that scientists must do what is necessary, including taking risks, to help protect the public from natural disasters. He and fellow scientists convinced authorities to keep the area closed though little had happened for months. His instruments still seemed fine minutes earlier. Johnston’s last words were, “Vancouver! Vancouver! This is it!” His body was never found, but his courage saved many lives.<sup>1</sup>

The cross of Jesus Christ still stands across the centuries as proof that cannot be argued away. How willing are we to stand with Jesus Christ on this solid ground of faith? How willing are we to put our lives on the line and our reputation for the sake of His dear Name? Christ died for all. He wants everyone to join in joyful worship. This is the Advent of our King! Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1980\\_eruption\\_of\\_Mount\\_St.\\_Helens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1980_eruption_of_Mount_St._Helens)