

This week we are starting a sermon series which will look at some of the men and women in the bible and what they can teach us. Over the next few weeks, we will look at Gideon, Solomon, Ruth, Hannah and Esther but today we are starting with Noah.

I think that Noah and his Ark is probably one of the best known stories of the bible. Even people who don't know the Bible and never come to church know about Noah. His big boat, and all those animals coming in two by two is a story that has been told to children since the year dot. Most people also know that the story is about a great flood, which destroyed everything in its path except for those on the ark and then how the rainbow appeared as a sign of hope and it is a sign we see everyday at the moment isn't it as lots of us have rainbows in our windows as our sign of hope during this coronavirus. There have been films made about Noah: some animated; some not – my favourite is Evan Almighty – anyone seen it? I love it!! And of course there are toys for children and endless story books and songs all telling the tale of Noah and the animals.

And it is a great story to tell – one of hope and courage, love and faithfulness. Here is Noah a man who stood out in the crowd. A man who was faithful to God when all others had turned their back on him. A man God choose to save the world!

Someone once said “All I need to know in life I learned from Noah’s Ark.” And then he listed 10 things he had learned. Well we haven’t got time for all 10 so we are going to look at just 5 of them this morning. They are:-

1. Remember we are all in the same boat
2. Plan ahead
3. Stay fit and never do it alone
4. When the doo-doo gets really deep, don’t sit there and complain – shovel.
5. When you are with God there’s always a rainbow waiting.

So let’s look at them one at a time!

1. Remember that we are all in the same boat.

And that is definitely true for us today isn’t it – the whole world has been affected by Covid19. For some it is the stress of being locked down and not seeing those we care about. For others it is the pain of losing someone they love or suffering from the virus itself. But we have to remember that we are all in this boat together, metaphorically speaking although of course at the required 2metres from one another. The metaphorical boat may have been different in Noah’s time – they were living with violence as an everyday occurrence, but the feeling is the same. Noah wanted a new world – a new life where things would be different and God gave it to him! We want to live a different way too and it may be that the “new normal” will bring us new life and new ways to find joy and

peace! We just need to trust God and ask him to show us what to do now!

2. Plan ahead.

It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark, yet he did it. Can you imagine what the reaction would have been if God had told us that we would all be confined to our homes and not allowed to see our family's and friends and people would die from an unknown virus. There would have been a lot of "you are joking, right"! or "That will never happen!" Thankfully Noah didn't react in that way when God asked him to build the ark! There was no – I'm not sure about this or maybe it doesn't need to be as big or I think I'll use oak instead of gopher wood – no Noah just did what God asked. Noah had no idea when the floods would come but he didn't say I'll just wait a day or two to see if it's needed – he made a plan and he got on with it because that is what God asked.

We need to plan for the future now and begin to think about what we are going to do when this is all over. The world needs to take stock and look at how it can learn from this situation and we all need to play our part in that. So talk to God and ask him to show you what you can do because you may well be the one person he needs to make his plan work!!

The next lesson learned is

3. Stay fit and never do it alone. When you're 600 years old someone may ask you to do something really big.

We need to be fit and ready for the next steps in this new normal! Being fit is not about going to the Gym or even about walking miles each day (although that can help) it is about reading our bibles, praying and listening to God and trusting him with your whole being. And we are not alone in this – remember point 1 – we are all in this together and if we work together we will get through it. Noah was never alone he had his family and he had God – right there helping him and showing him how to do it. We have God too and he is there helping us through this!

On to Number

4. When the doo-doo gets really deep, don't sit there and complain – shovel.

Now let's get practical for a moment! With all those animals there must have been some work to do mucking out! Nowhere in the story does it say that Noah complained about the mess and the smell – he just got on with the job in hand. Complaining wouldn't have helped and it wouldn't have changed anything. It doesn't help us either it just annoys those around us or causes them to worry about us. We are in this pandemic like it or not and all we can do now is look forward with hope and try to find the rainbow! Which brings me nicely to point 5!

5 When you are with God there's always a rainbow waiting.

And that is the overwhelming message of the story of Noah – hope. The rainbow gave Noah hope for the future and God gives us that same hope. All we have to do is to be like Noah and follow God and he will be with us always. So if we think about those 5 lessons and Noah we can't go far wrong because Noah saved the whole world by just listening to God and obeying his commands even though he didn't understand the whys and wherefores. And we can do the same.

Amen