

## Men's In-Person Bible Study – Wednesday, July 21, 2021 (11am) – Pentecost IX

**TEXT: Genesis 9:8-17 — A Promise is a Promise when the Contract is with God! Sign Language!**

1. When one makes a contract, it is carefully considered, for one breaks a legal commitment under penalty of law. Here, **God makes a covenant with Noah and all of his offspring** to follow. In other words, he makes this covenant with everyone who will ever live. More than this, God makes his promise to all of his earthly creation. The promise is that he will never destroy the earth with a flood. He had just brought Noah and his family safely through the flood (I Peter 3:20) and commits to Noah that this will never happen again. As contracts are not entered into lightly, **God did not make an empty promise**. **The SIGN:** God sets **his bow** up in the sky; an instrument of war becomes a sign of God's peace. **What contracts have you entered in to?** What is the penalty for breach of contract? What promises are you most proud of?
2. 9:1 - God blesses Noah and says, "Be fruitful and multiply." What God blesses, He also enables; **a blessing is a performative word**. Humans and animals benefit from God's binding of Himself with an oath. This is **an EVERLASTING Covenant; no expiration date!** Permanent AND Forever!

**TEXT: Psalm 136:1-9 – God's Steadfast Love Endures FOREVER!**

1. The psalmist tries to list the deeds of our Lord's faithfulness. His account will fall short of a full accounting of God's steadfast love toward his creation. How could the poet hope to list all of **God's glorious deeds**? Yet his accounting is faithful, giving credit to the God of gods for the scope of his great wonders. **Each verse repeats the refrain, "For his steadfast love endures forever."** This is the covenant that was made with Noah and the whole earth. God's steadfast love for his creation will endure as he promised. We are incapable of recounting the steadfast love/deeds of the LORD, which endures forever; **our list falls short**. **Give an example** of God's steadfast love in your life! What would you put on your list of God's deeds of faithfulness?
2. How do you find yourself giving thanks (thank offerings)? Example: A parent gave a memorial in loving memory of his son who died in war; another parent gave a larger gift offering thanks to God for his son who did not die in war. Invitation to give thanks ... to the God of gods, and Lord of lords, for He is good and His steadfast love endures forever.

**TEXT: Ephesians 3:14-21 – Prayer for Spiritual Strength; Enablement!**

1. Toward the end of Paul's second missionary journey, Paul came to Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila (51-52 AD). The capital of Asia Minor, Ephesus was a large city (500,000; fourth largest city in Roman Empire). **On his third missionary journey** (52-57 AD), Paul made it back to Ephesus for an extended stay of **3 years**. **Ephesians is divided into two parts** (DOCTRINE/Theology/Beliefs – 1:3-3:21; & DUTY/ Discipleship/Behavior – 4:1-6:20). Paul preaches about **our riches & responsibilities in Christ** (code for Baptism). We are in Christ practicing resurrection & keeping company with Jesus. We are **CALLED to grow up**.
2. Ephesians 1 proclaims our **Spiritual Possessions** (adoption, redemption, and sealed inheritance) in Christ! BLESSING! Ephesians 2 proclaims our **Spiritual Position** in Christ. PEACE! Ephesians 3 – Doctrinal section ends with a prayer/doxology/Amen. Notice 3:1 and 3:14 – **"For this reason"**. Paul interrupts himself and goes on a tangent. The MYSTERY has been revealed. Yay God! **Everything is SOLI DEO GLORIA!**
3. God's great love extends far beyond keeping the sun and moon and stars in the sky. His mercy is greater than withholding floods and destruction. His will is to create "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (II Peter 3:13) To accomplish this, **God goes beyond his**

**covenant with Noah.** He now commits to make a way that keeps us from eternal and spiritual destruction too. He has made this happen when Christ dwells in the hearts of people through faith. God has expanded his former covenant, and done more than we could have thought to ask of him. His new covenant is that he might fill us with the very fullness of Himself, and in so doing equip us for the glories of eternal life.

**TEXT: Mark 6:45-56 – Our God is ABLE! Feeding of 5000+ and Walking on Water!**

1. Context: Mark 6:6b-7:23 = “Witness to Jews”. Having been **rebuffed at Nazareth (6:1-6)** Jesus begins his **third preaching tour**. Jesus commissions the TWELVE and sends them out in pairs with AUTHORITY. **Mark 6b-30** is another **Markan Sandwich**. The martyrdom of John the Baptist (first passion narrative) is sandwiched between the sending (6:6b-13) and the return of the Twelve (6:30). **We first heard of John’s arrest** at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry (1:14). The execution of John the Baptist in the context of the sending and return of the Twelve on their first missionary journey forces readers to consider **what John’s death means for Discipleship and Mission with Jesus**. Mark’s Gospel is a **Discipleship Manual**: “What does Baptism mean for Daily Living?” “Come and Die!”—Bonhoeffer. The Feeding of the 5000 Men plus women and children is a different kind of Banquet where **Jesus presides**; not to boost his standing, but to care for the poor. The feeding of the 5000 is a foreshadowing of a final banquet—The Lord’s Supper (14:22). First **prerequisite of Discipleship** is **being with Jesus and keeping company with Him** (Come away with me by yourselves). **Jesus’ compassion** is found in teaching and feeding the sheep. Disciples are coworkers with Jesus in the Mission Field. In Christ, we are Compassionate Observers. We don’t merely observe or watch others practice compassion and mercy; we actually practice compassion ourselves; we observe the love of Jesus in our ministry to others! **On the water the Wind is against them.** Jesus meant to pass them by. He says, “I, I AM!” (EGO EIMI) We are in the Boat with Jesus. **Hardened hearts?**
2. We cannot begin to comprehend the great faithfulness, steadfast love, and glory of God. The **disciples illustrate our inadequacy**. Though Jesus has done the impossible, feeding thousands with a five loaves and two fish, they were utterly astounded that he came walking to them on the sea. **Nothing is impossible for God.** (Luke 1:37) Since God has complete control over the elements, is he not able to calm our fears and grant us peace? Is he incapable of delivering us from this earthly life? **Indeed he is able and committed to do “far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.”** **Courage! I AM!** See also: Mark 4:35-41.
3. Immediately! At Once! Jesus commands his disciples, dismisses the crowds, and prays. He sees that the WIND is against those in the boat. **Bethsaida** was the home of at least three of Jesus’ disciples—Andrew and Peter (John 1:44) and Philip (John 12:21). Fourth Watch of the Night: Wee hours before dawn (3-6 am). Immediately – 41 times in Mark; only 10 more times in N.T. The healing ministry of Jesus continues everywhere He goes: Touch the fringe of his garment!

**Story:** This was the fourth time the brother had asked to be baptized. To be sure, this was at the third church in as many towns. Still this was the second time he had requested at the third church and it gave the pastor pause. “Why?” he asked the man. “Why do you need to be baptized again?” The question brought hardly any reflection and he quickly explained his reasons. The first baptism was not in the right church; the second not the correct mode; the third was not done in the right spirit. In this fourth try, he intended to get it right. The pastor tried to tell him that the promise is not in the act; the promise is in the One who promised. Christians are baptized into Christ—not into a denomination, a font, or a feeling. Many are slow to receive the promise because they have yet to receive the One who made it.