Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

A book that some of us may have read in our school days is called ‘***Lord of the Flies***.’ It is a fictional account of a group of young boys who get marooned on a tropical Island. Initially, they are excited about this adventure. But soon reality hits and they start thinking about food and shelter and rescue. And I apologize for the spoilers, but things quickly go wrong, to the point that they turn on each other, with hatred and violence, and eventually even murder. And these are *really* young boys! And many have described the book as an allegory or parable about sinful depravity and our need for a redemption from outside ourselves. One Christian school-teacher reviewer said, “The book reveals the fall and its effects, showing that mankind needs deliverance.”

Now, if you are looking for a book that reveals the fall and its effects, showing that mankind needs deliverance, (hold up Bible) this book is far better! For a start, it is the Word of *God*! And as with all man-made parables, ‘*Lord of the Flies’* has its failings. But the episode before us today reminded me of the ‘*Lord of the Flies*.’ Both are about sin and its consequences. And while both describe awful things, they do so without going into gory detail. What both are more interested in is the bigger theme of sin and redemption. Let’s see how this is so with what is described in this part of Genesis 9. The Noah section of Genesis began back in chapter 6. Here is how it began: “*These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth*.” And after the flood and the ark and the covenant, we come to the end of the Noah section. And it ends with a kind of **double footnote**.

* **Verses 18-19** basically repeat how the Noah section started, with the mention of Noah and his three sons. And it sounds promising, initially. Noah and his sons and their wives obeyed the command to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth. For we are told that “*from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed*.” And the Hebrew word translated as “dispersed” can also mean populated. So, that’s positive. That’s covenant obedience. But after the mention of Noah’s three sons, here, we have words in brackets: “(*Ham was the father of Canaan.)*”
* And the reason for the addition of Canaan’s name becomes apparent in the next footnote – **verses 20-29**. For Canaan will figure prominently in this passage. And this footnote is made up of two major parts – verses 20-23, which is where we see the actions of Noah and his sons, and verses 24-27, which is where Noah speaks words of curse and blessing. And this is **a most unpleasant episode**. It raises some tough questions that we need to consider. Chief of these is, Why does Canaan get cursed for Ham’s sin? But there are also questions about what Noah did and what Ham did? Was it sin? And, if so, what were the sins?

Well, as we noted earlier, there is not a lot of detail in this episode. It is simply and briefly stated. What is more in focus is the bigger theme of sin and redemption. And there is plenty here for us to unpack and consider, so we will deal with this passage over two sermons.

1. And our focus today is **the Fall of Noah**. And once we have understood what happened here, we will conclude with some application points. But let’s first consider **the few details in this passage**.
   1. And I use the word Fall, quite deliberately, for that is precisely what we are meant to see here. As we have seen, the Lord has restarted creation; it is a new, cleansed world. And Noah was essentially a new Adam in this new world. And with the reference in verse 21 to Noah being a man of the soil and planting a vineyard, we are meant to think – garden and gardener, as it was with Adam. And sadly, just as it was by the fruit of a tree that Adam fell, so it is by the fruit of a tree or a vine that Noah fell. Let’s look a little closer at the how this happened:
      1. And first off, just to be clear, **Noah’s sin was not the *drinking* of wine**. And I say that because there are many in the Christian world today who teach that drinking any alcohol is sinful. But in Psalm 104:15, God is praised for giving “*wine to gladden the heart of man*.” In Deuteronomy 14:26, the people of Israel were commanded to bring a tithe of their produce to where the tabernacle orf temple was, and to exchange it for money, and to spend it on wine or strong drink, or whatever their appetite craved, in order to feast and rejoice. And you will recall that Jesus performed His first miracle by turning water into wine. And He would not have done that if wine, in and of itself, was somehow inherently evil. And Paul also instructed Timothy to drink some wine with his meal, and not just water, because of its medicinal properties. So, drinking wine or other alcoholic drinks is not evil, in and of itself. It is a gift from God to be enjoyed and appreciated.
      2. But Noah **drank to *excess***. Noah became drunk. **Proverbs 23:20** says, “*Be not among drunkards*.” And Galatians calls drunkenness a sin of the flesh and says of those who fall into regular and unrepentant drunkenness “*that* *those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*.” So, Noah’s sin was getting drunk. His thinking and behaviour were influenced by alcohol, rather than the Holy Spirit and his own self-control.
      3. And Noah then added to his sin by lying uncovered, or naked, in his tent. And it is worth pointing out here that while nakedness is something to be enjoyed within the confines of marriage, in private, **public nakedness is not OK**. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. But after the fall, their first concern was their nakedness, despite being the only two people on the planet. And so, first they and then God covered their nakedness. And whenever public nakedness is referred to in Scripture, it is always in the context of embarrassment or shame or ridicule. And I am sure that the idea of being naked in public is the worst nightmare of every one of us. It is just how God has made it to be. And so, even though Noah was in his tent, he must have been able to be seen by others.
   2. And that brings us to **what happened next**. And again, we are not given a lot of detail. But one of Noah’s sons, Ham, saw his naked father. And he went and told his brothers, who then covered their father.
      1. And note, again, **the parallel with Adam’s fall** that we see here. For what followed immediately from Adam’s sin was one of his sons murdering the other. And here too, immediately after the father’s sin, the sin of a son is described.
      2. And throughout the ages, Bible commentators have come up with all sorts of suggestions for how to interpret what happened here. They take individual words from verse 23, or other similar episodes in Scripture, to suggest that Ham did way worse than just see his naked father. But our text just does not say that. What it says is that he saw his naked father and told his brothers.
         1. And the actions of his brothers, in contrast to Ham’s actions, make it clear that his telling his brothers, and most likely *how* he told his brothers, or his *opinion* on what is father had done, was the problem. To put it most simply, Ham dishonoured his father, while Shem and Japheth honoured their father.
         2. In terms of any more detail, in verse 24, Ham is described, specifically, as Noah’s youngest son. And back in 8:21, God said that “*the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth*.” So, we can easily imagine young Ham mocking his father to his brothers, perhaps saying something like, ‘Look at our Dad, the so-called “righteous man!” Pfff. Lying there with everything on display. What a fool! What a hypocrite! So much for his God!’
         3. But regardless of exactly what Ham said, Shem and Japheth, rather than join Ham in his sin, acted righteously to protect their father’s honour. And the detail that we are given as to exactly how they went about doing this, walking backwards, carefully, compared to the little we are told about exactly what Ham did or said, highlights the righteousness of their actions in contrast with Ham’s.
2. So, that is the details of the account of the Fall of Noah. As we have seen, his sin was that of drunkenness and the improper behaviour that followed. And with the remainder of our time this morning, let’s consider **five brief points of application**:
   1. The first is that **Noah is clearly** **not the promised Messiah**. Back in Genesis 5:29, Noah’s father said of Noah when he was born: “*Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands*.” Well, the Lord did save Noah and use him to restart creation. But Noah did not bring relief from work and the painful toil of our hands. In fact, Noah sinned in relation to these exact things. For it was from the ground and as a result of his work that he sinned. And so, the lesson here is that we need a sinless Saviour.
      1. We need a Saviour who does not fall into drunkenness or debauchery. And although Jesus created wine at a wedding, He did not get drunk. And although He, more than anyone, was entitled to get drunk to avoid the pain of the cross, He refused even the sip of wine that was offered to Him. And He did this in order to feel every ounce of the punishment that the Father rained down on Him because of Noah’s sins and our sins.
      2. And He was also stripped naked before the watching crowd at His crucifixion. And so, He *became* shame and embarrassment, as part of what He had to endure to secure the forgiveness of Noah’s sins and our sins.
      3. And so, Jesus Christ is the obedient, humiliated Saviour that we sinners need. More than anything else, this story should make us rejoice that in Jesus Christ we have the sinless Saviour who obeyed in our place, and took away our sin and guilt.
   2. And secondly, and we can be very brief here, **let us not get drunk**.
      1. **Ephesians 5:18** says, “*Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit*.”
      2. And after the warning in **Proverbs 23** that we not be among the drunkards, we read the following: “*Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink."*” Be on your guard against the sin of drunkenness.
      3. And what is true of wine is true also of mind-altering drugs. Young people and adults, as the children of God, we are to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit and our own self-control, not excess alcohol or cannabis or so-called party drugs.
   3. But a third lesson from the Fall of Noah is that ***anyone* can fall into sin**. Think back to how Noah has been described in this section: “*Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God*.” Peter describes Noah as “*a preacher of righteousness*.” And surely, each one of us would like to be described like this by God Himself. But here is Noah, *drunk and naked*!
      1. And you know what? We could take every single righteous hero of the Bible and find the exact same thing – Abraham, the liar; Jacob, the liar; Moses, the murderer, and one who lost his temper; David who fell into sexual immorality and murder, and who failed, miserably, as a parent; Peter, who denied Jesus, three times.
      2. Have a read sometime of **Hebrews 11**, the chapter we call ‘the heroes of faith.’ And then read about the behaviour of men mentioned in that chapter, like Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Barak, and Samuel. They were wretched and wicked sinners like you and me.
      3. So, **no one is above and beyond temptation**. If righteous Noah sinned, then no one is exempt from falling into sin. And while this truth is in no way meant to make us unconcerned about sin, let us never be shocked when we see it in others, especially in others who we view as super godly, compared to ourselves. For, anyone can fall into sin.
   4. And the fourth lesson follows on closely from the second; it is that ***everyone* does fall into sin**. We have seen it now with Adam and with Noah. And we will see it on every page of the Bible as we continue through. And I hope you are honest enough to see it of yourself.
      1. Earlier we read from **Romans 3:10-12**: “*None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one … For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*.” Everyone falls into sin.
      2. And it is worth recalling that Noah was over 600 years old here. So, maybe Noah had lived a largely blameless life for centuries. And so, as James Montgomery Boice puts it in his commentary, by all means, let us call on each other, as per **Ecclesiastes 12:1**, to “*remember … your Creator in the days of your youth*.” But let us also call on each other to remember your Creator in middle age and old age too! For none of us is ever beyond temptation or the need of God’s sustaining grace.
   5. And this reality leads into the fifth and final lesson from Noah’s Fall, which is that given the inevitable drift toward sin, **only the power and grace of God can help us**. And it helps us both *before* sin and *after* sin:
      1. Last Sunday, we read about Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. And while there, He said to His disciples, “*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*.”
         1. So, did the disciples pray? No, they fell asleep. And do you pray, every day, for help to resist temptation? I am sure that none of us do. And even when we do pray this prayer, do we then never again fall into temptation? No. Sooner or later, everyone sins.
      2. And that is why **Jesus’ words to Peter** earlier that same evening are so important. For Peter was about to fall, by denying Jesus, three times. And when Jesus warned Peter about this, Peter boldly declared that he would never fall. Obviously, Peter had not learned the lessons of Noah’s fall! But Jesus said to Peter, “*Behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail*.” Did you catch that? Jesus prayed for Peter, even though Peter had not asked him to, and did not think He needed it! So, what brought Peter through his sin was not his prayers but Jesus’ prayers!
         1. **Romans 8:34** says, “*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died- more than that, who was raised- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us*.”
         2. **Hebrews 7:25** says, “*[Jesus] is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for [us]*.”
         3. Must we pray for strength to resist temptation? Absolutely! But by our own strength, we cannot resist temptation. The good news though is that Jesus prays for us, every day. And by His power and grace, we are made able to resist sin.
         4. One theologian summarized these gospel realities in this way: “Even in our best condition we cannot meet Satan; but in our weakened and debilitated state, sinning far more than we live virtuously, we are able to conquer him because Christ has given us the victory.”
      3. And even when we fail to resist temptation and fall into sin, we have His power and grace through confession and forgiveness and repentance.
         1. **1 John 1:9**, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*.”
         2. And from Him comes the power and grace to resist temptation that we gave into last time when they come knocking again. This is the power and grace of the Spirit of Jesus Christ at work in the child of God.

And brothers and sisters, we have the visible reminder of His power and grace on the table before us – the broken body and poured out blood of Jesus to remind us that in Him we have the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

Friends, this is the gospel of Noah’s Fall. Anyone can sin. Everyone does sin. But through faith in Christ, we have His power and grace to help us. Amen.