

Any person who has ever gone to Sunday School knows the story of Noah's Ark, and even if a person hasn't, s/he probably still knows the classic story of the two-by-two animals, the large boat, and the universal flood. It would have been much the same in Christ's day. Every Jew would have grown up hearing this remarkable tale of contrasts—destruction and salvation, judgement and grace, punishment and pardon, reckoning and redemption. As we get older, and we really begin to think about all the details, the story becomes even more fantastical, and I would say even more disturbing. Before Christ, the events of the flood were resigned to history. They formed a part of a particular people's collective memory of the past, but not part of its collective future. Christ changed all of that. He reached back in time and salvaged this catastrophic event from the dustpan of history. He brought it forward, and gave it new meaning. In fact, He projected it onto the future as an upcoming reality rather than just a completed action. In doing so, Christ committed the gravest of offenses. For if there is one thing you never do, it's tamper with history. History to the Jewish people is not mundane, but Divine, orchestrated by God's very hand. As such, is not permitted for anyone to play fast and loose with the Sacred writings. And yet, Christ does just that. He reinterprets all of Scripture in view of Himself. He takes all the classic tales of sacred writ and challenges us to find Him therein. Now either he is a heretic of heretics or He is who He says He is—God's very Son. And for those of us who believe the latter, Christ invites us to see more in the story of Noah than just an isolated event, which happened a long, long time ago. Christ teaches us a new way to understand all of history, where the past foreshadows the future; where history is not simply one thing after another, but one thing in another; an interlocking, cyclical pattern culminating in Christ, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

What we see this morning is Christ repurposing the story of the flood to describe the coming of the Eschaton, the End Times. He asks us to let our minds wander to see the parallels between then and now. The Flood, which was sent to bring an end to the perverse universe becomes an image of the true and final End of this fallen world. In the days of Noah, the earth was full of violence, it is the same in ours. In the days of Noah, the earth was full of unbelief and rejection of God, it is the same in ours. In the days of Noah, evil consumed the earth, and yet God was silent. God held back His judgement. But His delay was not due to negligence, but was instead deliberate. God was patient, and His delay proved to be a great mercy for Noah and His family. As it was

then, so it is now. We live between the times, between Christ's death and Christ return. The time of waiting feels long. God seems silent. But God's delay is for our benefit not wanting anyone to perish but for all to come to the knowledge of truth. But that doesn't mean God will abide with this earth forever. God's grace knows no limits, but this earth has an expiration date. Christ has promised to come again. The victory of Yahweh over the deep waters prefigures His final victory in Christ over the depth of wickedness. For Noah and His family were saved by water and the ark. The mystery of the deliverance of Noah transitions into the mystery of our salvation. St. Peter gives us a little help this morning by calling our attention to the parallel between Baptism and the Flood; that is, how we are baptized into Christ. His very body becomes the ark, which ferries us safely through our own watery deaths into a blessed renewal, a new creation.

With St. Peter's permission, the earliest Christians found Christ writ large throughout the entire story. Consider just a sampling of how the type becomes the antitype, the shadow becomes the reality. The ark prefigures the Church, Noah is Christ, the dove is the Holy Spirit. The olive branch is the divine pardon and philanthropy. As Noah overcame the sea of death and came forth a victor, so Christ, the new Noah, goes down into His own death and emerges victorious as the head of the new human race. Off the ark stepped 8 souls, out of the grave stepped our Lord on the 8th day. And on dry ground we stand, as we gather in this place each Sunday, our own 8th day, to celebrate the mystery of life in death, and life through death. Water and wood. These are the fundamental elements, which saved Noah. They save us too. For the wood of the Cross when fastened together form the crossbeams of the Church herself. Held together by our Lord, we now reside safely in this modern-day ark. We float upon the stormy waters of history; we feel the waves of sin crash against our stern and bow. The spray of the water, the violent gusts of wind, the creaking sounds of the unknown just below our feet. The earth gives way. the mountains fall into the sea. But we are not afraid. Though darkness surrounds us, we sing hymns to the night for in her dark gaze is the eternal mystery of God's miraculous intervention. Christ has promised to bring us safely to harbor, and He never lies. This is our destiny. The storms will one day subside. The waters will recede. The dry ground of Paradise awaits us. The new day of the new creation where all things begin again, and life, like hope, springs eternal. Amen.