

God Is Present In the Company of the Righteous

2½ weeks ago, several to N. KY: new Ark Encounter. May have read in Guide. Lot asked about; I'll tell. Safe travels. Nice place to stay. Lot of fun. Ark itself huge: size vs school; 3 levels above entrance; all beams, structural supports are wood. One of largest wooden frame buildings in world. Designed hull to withstand tremendous force of flood water on outside. Impressive structure. More impressive, exhibits inside. Food, water, supplies; cages, compartments for animals, all different sizes; replicas of animals, Noah's family; living quarters for family.

Most impressive: message that structure and exhibits were teaching. Ark Enc built to teach, remind us of incredible sin of people, and inc destruction God brought on people. Sometimes think of ark: newborn's nursery has cute little Noah's Ark painting, toy animals for toddlers; nightlight. Or Precious Moments books: happy people, animals on happy ark. Ark Enc replaces all those silly little childish notions of cute boat on gentle water with stark reality of worst natural disaster in history of world. Flood! Think millions died; think darkness; think terror. Pictures of parents on mnts pushing children to peak; people scrambling, fighting for floating timbers – try to stay alive, all in vain. Worst disaster God ever brought to this planet. Direct result of inc sinfulness of people. In one part of Ark Enc, exhibit trying to tactfully display sheer vileness of people, wickedness that enraged God enough to flood his creation. The wickedness must have been horrifying.

Wonder if Noah ever thought: **vs. 1**. In absolutely not self-righteous way, Noah: "I must be only one loves Lord. He told me build boat; told me how destroy world. I've been warning these people, but no one listens!" Video: conversation between Noah and locals, asking, mocking. **Ps 14:1-3**.

Ever feel that way: like you're only one (one of) who still cares about God, while rest of world (everyone around you) to "hell in hand-basket"? Christianity becoming less and less tolerated in our society. We can become discouraged, not only because we know at end of world there's another flood (God's anger) coming; but also because we get mocked for what we believe about Jesus, sin, grace, heaven, hell. Ever mocked for faith? Noah was. Ever persecuted for being Christian? Many have. **Vs. 4**.

People of Noah's day saw Noah building, but also, at end, animals entering. Mocked, wondered. Then when sky turned black, rain drops turned from trickle to torrent, and they recalled Noah's years of preaching (2 Pt 2 – "**preacher of righteousness**," like ancient John Baptist), recalled preaching: oh, the terror! **Vs. 5**. You can picture outside of ark: blood curdling screams of horror; fists pounding in panic against wooden hull, begging for entrance, until finally shouts drowned out by sound of dead bodies, dead animals, trees, tidal waves crashing into boat. You can probably imagine inside: chaotic chorus of cooped up animals crashing into crates, cages as waves jostle ark back, forth; darkness from stem to stern in what felt like oversized coffin buried in water; and the motion sickness; and the smell! But perhaps you can picture this: 8 people (Noah, Mrs, 3 boys & wives) huddled together around oil lantern, praying, thanking God that they together, inside boat, not outside it. They understood: "**these evildoers – vs. 5**."

And God is still present in company of righteous. In fact, what Advent all about. Jesus did come; born for us at Christmas; came to be present among people. While here on earth, lived and died and rose to free from sin and make us righteous; because of Jesus, that's how God sees us – righteous. So now, through faith in Christ, **vs. 5b**. With us; with his Church, just like with Noah's family in ark. In fact, God's Church and Noah's ark have lot in common: meet wrath of God if outside, safe on inside. People in Church sometimes feel like tossed back and forth by storms of life; but in Church always under God's protective care, and you'll land safe on God's mnt when storm is over. Even in your baptism, same water that destroys sin (like in flood) also washes landscape of heart clean, gives new life (like new life on earth after flood). In fact, many Christian churches built to look like ship. Look up – look like bottom of hull of ship? Call this room nave (from Latin *navis* for ship - nautical). Believers in Jesus are safe, secure inside holy ark of the Church, because there **vs. 5b**.

Of course, look for Jesus to come again at end of world on Judgment Day. For millions, flood was their Judgment Day; they met that day with fear. But we look forward to Jesus' return with eager anticipation and joy. **Vs. 7**. When Jesus comes back again, we don't have to fear any judgment, because then Lord will restore his people in heaven, and ark will land safely, and God will be present in company of righteous forever.

Psalm 14

For the director of music. Of David. ¹ The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. ² The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. ³ All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. ⁴ Do all these evildoers know nothing? They devour my people as though eating bread; they never call on the LORD. ⁵ But there they are, overwhelmed with dread, for God is present in the company of the righteous. ⁶ You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor, but the LORD is their refuge. ⁷ Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!