

Genesis 8

Seasons and Transitions in Our Lives

In the last weeks I have spoken with people going through transitions or what may become transitions. Seasons of change. Some are facing imminent death, either their own or that of a loved one. Some are struggling in their relationships with parents, children, spouse or partner. Some people are moving or have just moved, are starting a new job or retiring from a job. Business owners, teachers, students, and parents have spent the last two years in constant states of transition.

As Rachel Bouwkamp writes in the introduction to this sermon series that I using for the next few weeks, "Transitions close one chapter of our lives and open a new one. Transition means change, and with change always comes some element of fear. Our natural reaction is to resist change to our normal routines. Transitions, especially large ones, challenge us by moving us away from the familiarity of life to a place or people that are unknown."¹

We cannot escape transitions and change. Our bodies alone simply remind us daily that we are changing. Aging and life experience constantly transition us from who we were and are to who we are becoming, certainly physically, but emotionally, socially, economically, mentally, and spiritually as well. And yet we often fight this ongoing transition rather than living and embracing change in ways that create new opportunities for living as fully as we can.

When looking to scripture to help us through transitions, the story of Noah is one that hits on many themes. Though Noah doesn't actually speak through the story of the flood we can imagine some of what he may have been thinking and feeling. Like, who takes on a challenge that goes against not only what the majority are doing, but also invites taunts, bullying, and being singled out as nuts. There is no indication that a flood is imminent, at least not to most people, but God has spoken to Noah and Noah has obeyed. Noah trusted God. There was going to be a great flood and in that there would be no sign of hope. Waters would rise, living things, plant, animal, and human would die. Rain for forty days would mean nothing but darkness for that period of time as well. Even with all that, Noah accepted the words of God, trusting that God would be present whatever would be experienced, and that God would bring Noah, his family, and all the animals through safely.

In Hebrews 11:7(NRSV) we read, "By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household, by this he

¹ Bouwkamp, Rachel. [Transitions in Life | Reformed Worship](#). Accessed March 3, 2022.

condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.”

By faith and with faith, Noah moved through the transition, really a judgement on the whole earth, where God essentially started over with people and the creation. Now Noah wasn't chosen because he was perfect but because he had a heart for God where no one else did. God started over and then realized that people would not change. In verse 21 of the scripture after the flood was over and the waters had receded, we read, “²¹And when the LORD smelt the pleasing odour [of the burnt offering of Noah], the LORD said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.’”

People didn't change, but God's heart did. And it might be worth noting a few more things about the story. One, this is a flood story such as can be found in a number of ancient cultures. Two, as I mentioned already, the flood wasn't because God was angry, it was because God was grieving human sinfulness. Genesis 6:5-6 says, “⁵The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. ⁶And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.” And third, whether you believe the story or not, it is an example both of God's heart for people and the desire that people live full, beautiful lives in the midst of a full and beautiful creation. The intent of the story is to show the faithfulness of God and, that people's faith in God is valuable and life changing.

Like Noah, when we go through times of transition, of change, we may be mocked, questioned, teased, or even bullied. We might be ignored completely and left to figure it out ourselves. The changes might bring times that we question ourselves or feel like the unknowns are just like darkness that hinder our hope and imaginations. Fear present. Fear of the unknowns really intimidating. This can happen as individuals, but it can affect our families and all those closest to us. It doesn't mean stop, or fight the transitions, it just means that change is difficult, sometimes down right hard and heartbreaking, but we cannot stay static. Nature does not allow it, nor do relationships.

If we didn't change we would not deepen our relationship with our spouse, our children or our own parents as they age. If we didn't allow for transitions we would not grow and mature as people and in faith. Our lived experience would be very narrow in scope. The grounding factor in all of this is God as God does not change. Not that God cannot change God's own mind, but what does not change is God's steadfast presence with people and creation and God's deep love.

We know and trust that God wants the best for us even if we cannot see or understand it in our times of greatest turmoil and uncertainty. God is with us even if things around us feel as dark as storm clouds. God is present and goes ahead of us in events as yet unseen. It is by faith and with faith that we look fear in the face and move on anyway

because we do not go this way alone. In seasons of transitions in our lives we trust...we live by faith...we live in faith.

This is the way for individuals. It is also the way for the church. In this time of great turmoil in our world with war and the long lingering effects of a pandemic, we live in hope for what God is doing in, through, and with us. Our transitions may be from life to death, from one place to another, from one path to another, but God is faithful, present, and will not let us go. We live in this hope, in faith and by faith, knowing that our hope is not in vain, but has been proven in the lives of the faithful since the time of Noah. May God go with us into our transitions so that we can become more fully people of God and beacons of hope and light to those around us.