

When I got up this morning and saw that it was raining, I was a little worried. Like, I don't know if today is the best day to be talking about the flood. But it worked out okay. I also decided not to read all four chapters. We started a Bible study this week with a bunch of pastors. They're all Lutheran pastors and myself. And we're all starting to do the same series. And they are like, are you gonna read all four chapters? I'm like, you know, I have a great congregation, and they will graciously sit there and act like they're listening and enjoy it. But no, I'm not gonna read all four chapters. Because we know the story, right? We know exactly what happens in this story. We learned it as kids, We learned that God found Noah. Told, noah, that it was going to rain a lot. That there was going to be a flood. He needed to get all the animals off; get his family to safety. God told Noah how to build the ark. He told him exactly which animals to take, how to set it all up, and then one day the rain stopped. God told Noah it was okay. Let everybody loose, go, and to remember that God loves you. God made a promise to you to protect you in all living things after this flood. And that's why we have rainbows. That's a story we learned as kids. That is not the same story that's in the Bible.

God got mad at everyone, every living thing and decided to kill them all off. It's a much different story, but we know that. That's not the important part today. We're sitting in this Bible study and all of these Lutheran pastors are looking at me, like, how can you say that? Easy, it's right there. Genesis chapter 6 God got mad at everything. God decided to kill him all off. All right there in the Bible.

They're, like, what are you going to talk about? No, so what are you going to talk about? I'm going to talk about the raven. We forget that the raven's in the story. We all know about the dove. We all know the importance of the dove, right? We always see doves everywhere with the olive branch showing peace and love and harmony, another symbol from this story. We don't ever talk about the raven.

Why don't we talk about the raven? The raven didn't do anything, right? It went out. It flew away. It never came back. So I always wonder why. What's the significance of that raven? Now, there's some people will tell you that the raven is simply in the story because the raven is evil. You know you see ravens all over the place on Halloween? One of my favorite poems is called The Raven. And that's all it's meant to be. It's meant to be the Counterpoint to the dove.

Well, that got me thinking, why is it the Counterpoint to the dove? And that got me thinking more and more about Noah because Noah made the choice. This is the first time in this entire story that Noah decides anything. God didn't go to Noah and ask him to do this. God went to Noah and told him he was going to do this.

Well, what may God choose Noah? My first thought is, if I'm going to save the world and I'm going to have this big boat built, Am I going to be a farmer to build a boat? And if I'm going to have this boat go out on the ocean, am I going to have a farmer sail it? Wouldn't it make more sense to go to a tradesmen, to go to a carpenter, because we know how God loves carpenters and have them build the boat instead of a farmer.. Wouldn't it make more sense for God to go to a fisherman? 'Cuz we know he likes fishermen, too, and have him sail the boat. So, what makes this farmer so special?

I asked that group cuz they were mostly big church pastors. They are down in Des Moines. They are in Ankeny. They're all these places. Why would God choose a farmer over everybody else? I love asking that question. It's great being at a small town and going to all

these big churches that say we are fantastic. And I am like well, Noah was a farmer, so he probably wouldn't have been welcome in your church. What do you do?

Why did God choose a farmer? As we read more into the story, Noah is sitting there and he looks out and he sees the rain stopped. He can see the mountaintops. He can hear the water subsiding, the little ripples. He sends the raven out. Noah knows, being a farmer, that the ravens are going to scavenge whenever they can, right? He knows that he has to chase him off from his field because they eat the corn, or in this case grapevines. He knows that a raven is going to do whatever it takes to survive. If the raven doesn't come back, then he knows that most of the animals will be okay, because there's somewhere that the raven has landed. There's enough resources out there that it can scavenge, So Noah knows all of the predatory animals will be okay.

He sends the dove out because the dove is an herbivore. It is going to need a lot more resources than the raven is, so he sends the dove out and the dove comes back. So Noah knows that the water hasn't dropped low enough that they got to vegetation, So there's nothing for the herbivores to eat. Sends the dove out and the dove comes back with the leaf. Noah knows now that the floods have gotten lower, to the point that there is vegetation. But since the dove came back, there isn't dry ground yet, because doves make their nests out of twigs they find on the ground. Once the dove never comes back, Noah knows now that the world is dry and now everything can live out in the country. All of the herbivores will be fine because they'll have grass. They'll have shelter. They'll have everything they need to survive. We know that the predators and the scavengers will be able to find their way too. This one farmer decides the fate of the world, because of observations he's made in his own field.

It's a wonderful way to look at Noah. It's a wonderful way to hear this story. How often do we wonder why we are put in a position? We end up being asked to do something that doesn't make sense to us. For example, a couple weeks ago, we had this big presentation, this big AMOS celebration. I asked Dick Schneider to go up with me and talk. So the two of us are up there talking in front of 1200 people. And Dick looks at me, and he says, what good, am I going to do talking to all of these people, because I'm just a farmer. I am like, but Dick, you are the only person that can give this message the way that you can. The way that it needs to be heard. And he did; he did a great job. So many times, we don't know why we're put somewhere. We don't know how, we don't know why we meet the people we do. But even at the most inconspicuous time in our lives, we can make a difference. We can say 30 seconds of words like a simple, hello to somebody that's struggling with depression, and we made the world to that person that day. We don't have to be the obvious person to make a difference. We just have to be ourselves. God places us where we need to be when we need to be there. We just need to hear it. We need to open our hearts and remember the love because there's signs everywhere. I guarantee right now there's a rainbow outside, now that the sun's coming up, after all that rain.

When we see a dove, a pigeon, a crow, we still see God's love there. We know that, that loves in us and works through us, so we don't always have to understand why we're somewhere. We just need to remember, we are the ones that make the difference.

Let us pray.