**FAITH #2 *MM online***

**Do you remember how we were looking at “faith” last week and how we took inspiration from Hebrews 11, that classic chapter on heroes – and heroines – of faith? Do you remember we thought about Abel’s faith, which meant he had to die; and Enoch’s faith which meant he never died? We recognized that even Cain the murderer had a sort of faith….and then we ran out of time!**

**So who’s next in Hebrews hall of fame? Verse 7: *By faith Noah….*Noah! You know Noah - Mr. Noah, who built the ark! The one with all the cute and cuddly animals. Every picture I’ve seen of him shows him with a long, white beard. He had three sons, Shem, Ham and Chips….no, wait a minute, *Japheth!* -Shem, Ham and Japheth. And three daughters-in-law and he had a wife. Now, her name’s not given in the Bible, but everyone knows it was Joan – Joan of Ark! And it’s the happiest and fluffiest Bible story of them all and because it’s all about saving the animals, it’s the only Bible story that’s acceptable everywhere. I bet it’s David Attenborough’s favourite! There’s even a song about Noah:**

 ***Mr. Noah built an ark, the people thought it such a lark!***

 ***Mr. Noah pleaded so, but into the ark they would not go.***

 ***Down came the rain in torrents (splish-splash!),***

 ***Down came the rain in torrents (splish-splash!),***

 ***Down came the rain in torrents and only eight were saved.***

 ***The animals came in two-by-two, the bear, the giraffe and the kangaroo,***

 ***All were safely stored away against that great and terrible day, when***

 ***Down came the rain in torrents (splish-splash!),***

 ***Down came the rain in torrents (splish-splash!),***

 ***Down came the rain in torrents and*** ***only eight were saved.***

**What a great story! I didn’t know faith could be such fun or, as the song says, *such a lark*! Who’s next? Oh, hang on a minute – Hebrews has got a bit more to say about Noah:**

***By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith (v. 7).***

**Some of these words are suggesting that faith isn’t always such fun: Noah was *warned* about something – something bad; he acted on it *in holy fear – he was scared; he did it to save his family –* they were in danger*;* and *his actions condemned the world* – the world was damned*.* Even the children’s song admits that Noah’s day was a *terrible day* and it declares loud and clear (and repetitively) that *only eight were saved.* Never forget that, like Noah, by faith, we quite rightly celebrate our salvation: but that means that, like Noah, by faith we have something terrible that we have been saved from. In Noah’s day that was from a terrible death by drowning. Yeah, but that was then, this is now - things were different then: we’re told quite specifically that God has promised that *never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth (Gen. 9:11)*. So that’s all right, then. Isn’t it….?**

**Are things really so different now? Genesis 6 tells us: *The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time (v. 5).* Now, thankfully, *every inclination* of mankind’s heart is no longer *evil* *all the time.* Even Ian Brady made braille books for the blind, I’m told. But neither can it be said today that, *The LORD sees how great man’s goodness on the earth has become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart is only good all the time,* can it? We are all hopelessly mixed up. Perhaps we can say that *The LORD sees….that many inclinations of the thoughts of our heart are evil.* None of us would like all our most private thoughts to be broadcast loud and clear to everyone, would we? I thought not!**

**We’re told how that wickedness manifested itself in Noah’s day. At the beginning of Genesis 6, strange sexual practices are alluded to that have puzzled commentators ever since (vv. 1-4)! Perhaps we can summarise it by saying that people did things with each other that they shouldn’t! Is there not great sexual confusion today? In v. 11 we read that *the earth was corrupt….and was full of violence.* Once again, I can rejoice that the earth is no longer *full of violence,* but violence is everywhere. One of our neighbours was stabbed and someone’s been charged with attempted murder; a man who was being helped by a church I work with was stabbed to death outside the local library; a friend was brutally assaulted, apparently for no reason at all….I’m sure you can add your own sorry tales to the list. If not, just look in the local paper. I think Noah would recognize many of the headlines.**

***By faith,* we’re told, *Noah [was] warned about things not yet seen.* God warned Noah that He would judge the earth. It took faith to believe it, because, as Jesus Himself said, *in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away (Mt. 24:38-9).* They *didn’t* believe it even though Noah told them: Peter tells us that Noah was *a preacher of righteousness* *(2 Pet. 2:5).* Do you see the difference between Noah and his neighbours? Faith! Noah believed God – and acted upon it! Hebrews says that *in holy fear he built an ark to save his family*.**

**So, have faith: believe what God says. He’ll speak to you today through His Bible and through your conscience. That’s faith. This world is not thoroughly wicked but it is thoroughly under His judgment. We can’t be sure that God *sent* the coronavirus like He sent the Flood, but we *can* be sure that He is calling us all to consider our mortality as we carry on *eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage* (ie carrying on as normal) as best we can in the circumstances. We don’t need to build an *ark* of wood because Jesus the carpenter has already died on a *cross* of wood so that we, too, can be saved from the judgment to come – and not just eight of us, but all who will believe.**

**How does the song end? With Noah’s rainbow:**

***Whenever you see a rainbow, whenever you see a rainbow,***

 ***Whenever you see a rainbow, remember, God loves you!***

**We can all see it and say,** **“Ah, a**[**meteorological**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meteorology)**phenomenon resulting in a**[**spectrum**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optical_spectrum)**of light appearing in the sky”. Or we can see it and say, “Ah, a**[**meteorological**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meteorology)**phenomenon resulting in a**[**spectrum**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optical_spectrum)**of light appearing in the sky” and add, by *faith*, “and God said, *Never again will all life be cut off….(Gen. 9:11)* because He was making a covenant with us and providing a way of salvation”. Or, *Whenever you see a rainbow, remember, God loves you!* And that’s faith!**