

Matthew 9:35-10:8 Blessed
Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7
June 14, 2026

According to the Book of Genesis, writing about the time of Noah, we read the following; "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them." (Genesis 6:11-13).

By contrast, in Matthew's gospel, when Jesus looked and saw the people, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd; *corrupted, harassed, and helpless*. Neither is a flattering assessment of human life.

The biblical story offers two examples of divine response to these realities; regret and destruction, on the one hand; and on the other: compassion, mercy, and redemption.

This past Sunday, I did something I rarely do. I went to see a movie. I went to the 10:30pm showing of a film called, "Pressure," about the weather forecast in England in June of 1944, and the way it became a central feature of the Allied invasion of France during The Second World War. I ended up being the only person there. I had the whole theater to myself. A

private showing. I didn't know what to do, I just sat there and watched.

I was already familiar with the D-day story but this movie focused on one of the lesser known features of the plot. I don't have to worry about spoiler issues here, since everyone already knows the outcome. The main plot of the film is about a conflict among the meteorologists over whether it would be sunny and calm or tempestuous and stormy.

On the side of sunny and calm was a person who wanted to see things more positive than they actually were, and on the side of tempestuous and stormy a realist who felt it necessary to give an unwanted message of a more dangerous reality.

At one point the movie portrayed a worship service on the Sunday before before the invasion. I am usually interested in the way Hollywood portrays worship services. The congregation sang, "All Creatures of Our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing, Alleluia," as the rain began to fall that proved the realist right, the optimist wrong, and threatened the success of the mission.

I am not at all sure that it actually happened that way. But we know this much, that there was an invasion of France, and it was among the factors that shaped the outcome of the war. There was a question about the weather. What everyone wanted to hear, and once the decision was made, the result they sought involved

the deaths of tens of thousands of people in the fighting. It was one of history's more violent periods.

The tragedy is not diminished by its necessity or the courage of the ones who gave the order or the bravery of the one's who obeyed. For all the positive ways it affects our lives all these decades later, it still represents the failure of humanity to obey God's commands, and to live under God's conditions, proving that what God found true in the time of Noah, as well as what Jesus saw in his time; that people are corrupted, harassed, and helpless, is still true today.

The story of the invasion of France in WW2 is inspirational and yet sad, that all this time since the promise to Abraham and Sarah that the whole world would be blessed through their offspring, down though all of Israel's history to the time when the redemption of Christ was revealed, and the nearly 2,000 years since, there are still stories about the tragic nature of human life.

The gospel text for the day presents Jesus near the beginning of his public ministry. He has chosen disciples and sent them out with the following instructions:

"proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give."

The first response to the human situation in the biblical story was to flood it, to start all over again. Needless to say, it didn't work. The human story is that the people after the flood were as bad as the people were before it. Sadly, we have no choice but to conclude that the world of people is still basically untransformed. That is not a popular message.

The second response was the decision on God's part to redeem broken humanity. That effort began with the election of Abram, about which we read last week. It began as a calling, one that led to a comedic history, in which the prospective father of a great nation and his wife were childless late in life.

The story is continued in today's Old Testament reading, about the birth of Isaac, whose name means, "laughter." When the messengers arrived to proclaim the birth of the promised child, Abraham and Sarah laughed. It is a story about lifelong frustration at the refusal of the world to yield to the promise of God.

The Redemption story culminates in the life of Jesus, who, *had* compassion for the people, "*because* they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

I have mentioned before that the word translated, "compassion," is related to the word for, "stomach." It refers to that sick feeling in the pit of the stomach at the sight of pain and suffering that occasionally rises when we stumble upon tragedy.

One of the aspects of these judgments against the human race that stands out is not just that it is always true, but that it is always rather discouraging to hear, especially when all around people are trying to create positive environments, to convince themselves that it is not true. And it is right that we should. No matter the historical period or the particular civilization, folks don't like the news that, "all the world is corrupt in God's sight.

And, of course, it has to be admitted that this truth about us can be used as a blunt instrument to create a false guilt or to use guilt as a weapon to control people, which has unfortunately happened too often in the life of the church. That is unnecessary, and more than that, it is wrong.

No matter how hard we try to convince ourselves that, "people are basically good, we keep bumping into the reality that we are not so good after all, which always has a way of carrying the day. One such collision was the Second World War. The message about human brokenness is meant only to help interpret life when collisions with reality occur, to simply tell the part of the truth that life is tempestuous and stormy and we are responsible.

It is meant to open up the possibility that we might also hear the other part of the truth about the way things are, that when God sees us as we are, we are essentially valued; every person is valuable in God's sight, and God turns out to be merciful and kind. We

are found to be in the throws not just of the storms of life, but of God's grace.

The news about the tragedy of sin is the context in which everyone lives, and yet the good news is that God has compassion and redeems the world is also a part of the context in which everyone lives. And with that news fresh on our minds, it is possible to see that God's mercy and love and promise of blessing, are the foundation of our lives, the source of our own love and mercy, our own compassion, and of our blessed hope.

Thus we can see ourselves and other people along with us, as, *blessed*, just like the promise said, and bear witness to the new birth of life and goodness that has come into the world in Christ, and let it work in us a confession of humble gratitude and praise.

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