

# Facing the Floods of Life

A Sermon by Rev. Joel Christian Glenn

28 September, 2025

## Children's Talk:

What do you do when you find weeds in a garden? You pull them out! That is because weeds are not something that you want in your garden. They will kill the other plants by stealing all their shade and water. Which is interesting, because the Lord tells a story about weeding, but at first He tells people that they should not pull out the weeds. Here is His story:

<sup>24</sup> Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup> but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. <sup>26</sup> But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. <sup>27</sup> So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' <sup>28</sup> He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' <sup>29</sup> But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

So the Lord wanted to have people wait until they could really tell the difference between the wheat and the weeds before they started pulling out plants.

When the Lord told this story He was talking about us. The wheat stands for all of the true things that He plants in our mind, things that will eventually grow into love for others. On the other hand, the weeds stand for all of the false things the evil spirits plant in our minds, things that can eventually grow into cruelty towards others.

Oddly enough, the Lord is kind of saying to let both continue to grow until you can really tell the difference between them. Sometimes we are so scared that something we have said or done is wrong that we try to hide from it. That's like looking at a plant and thinking that it is a weed, pulling it out; but later you find out it was actually wheat.

Here's an example: you may have heard that it is wrong to tattle on someone, but you also need to tell an adult if someone does something wrong. Those two

ideas are hard to tell apart. So maybe, because you know tattling is wrong, you don't tell on someone and he ends up doing something very hurtful. That is like pulling out wheat because you think it is a weed.

On the other hand, imagine if you decide to wait and see, or in other words, you do tell an adult. It might be the right thing to do, and that's great. But if it is the wrong thing to do, and it really is just tattling on someone, then the adult can explain that to you and help you know the difference between the two ideas. That is like waiting for the plants to grow enough that you can tell the difference between the wheat and tares.

This is true for a lot of people when they are young: you are not ready to tell the difference between right and wrong, and so you decide not to do the right thing because you are afraid that it might be wrong. The solution is to not be so quick to judge: yes try to do the right thing, but don't be afraid of doing something wrong. That is how you learn to tell the difference, and eventually it will be able to become clear. *Amen.*

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There is a general truth about building something new: sometimes you have to tear down before you can build up. A house can fall into such disrepair over time that it is not worth it to renovate. It would actually be more effective to tear the house down entirely and start over from scratch. There are also cases where an older building is in fine repair but can no longer be modified to suit the needs of its owners. It too will have to be torn down to make way for a more useful building. And sometimes we're like that too. In our spiritual lives we reach a point when we are too far gone to simply renovate, or when we can no longer achieve our full potential with our current tools. Those are the times when we have to let parts of ourselves be torn down so that the Lord can rebuild us. Spiritual growth is in fact a destructive process. Without the destruction of old habits, old ways of thinking, old wants and desires, there would be no room for the Lord to build us up as angels. If we want that end result, we need to face the reality of destruction and even embrace it when the time comes.

The story of the Flood begins with God looking out over humanity and finding that the people He had created to be loving and caring beings had over time become corrupted. What's more, they were getting worse. Let's read what it was that was going wrong,

Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup>that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

<sup>3</sup>And Jehovah said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." <sup>4</sup>The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

<sup>5</sup> Then Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.  
<sup>6</sup> And Jehovah repented that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. <sup>7</sup> So Jehovah said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I repent that I have made them." (Genesis 6:1-7, NKJV modified)

At first glance it's not entirely clear what the problem was. What is so wrong with the so-called "sons of God" mating with the daughters of men? For whatever reason though it led to more and more evil people being born into the world, so much so that in time "every intent of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually."

That sounds bad enough when talking about the Lord looking out over humanity. It becomes worse when you realize this story is really the Lord looking out over an individual and seeing that evil is festering, breeding, and spreading, fuelled by selfish desires. That's what the teachings for the New Church say this story is about: people being led astray by their wants and desires, to the point that they start to justify getting their way no matter what, at the expense of truth and goodness (*Secrets of Heaven* §568). The nature of evil is that it is never satisfied and so it longs to grow and spread. That's also part of being human. We want things, that want grows into selfishness, the selfishness becomes justification, and soon we find ourselves doing all sorts of things that we know we really shouldn't. So God looks out on that landscape that we create within ourselves, and He decides the best way to deal with it is to tear it all down; to wipe it out; eradicate virtually everything, and only then think about moving forward again.

Is that really the best system? Couldn't God have thought of a better way of doing things, maybe more like gradually changing and tweaking things along the way and making sure we never get to the point that we're justifying all sorts of selfishness? The Lord, for the most part, lets evil take its course in our lives. He does

not step in and make it obvious when we make mistakes and He allows us to get away with basically murder (spiritually speaking). There is a reason the Lord does this, a reason that He illustrated with a parable:

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup> but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. <sup>26</sup> But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. <sup>27</sup> So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" <sup>28</sup> He said to them, "An enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Do you want us then to go and gather them up?" <sup>29</sup> But he said, "No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" (Matthew 13:24-30)

The thrust of this parable is that if the tares were removed as soon as they appeared the wheat would be uprooted along with them. It was better to let the wheat and tares grow up alongside each other and then only separate them at harvest time.

The tares are like the evil in our own lives and the wheat is like the goodness. The Lord does want to remove the evil from within us, but if He did so as soon as it appeared the good would actually be harmed too. If we were not given the chance to explore right and wrong, to wrestle with truth and falsity, to choose sometimes to do good and other times to do evil, we would have no real choice, and even the good we did would be hollow. That's why the Lord sometimes allows evil to grow in our hearts almost to the point of no return. Letting evil build lets us see the implications of all our smaller choices taken together and to truly understand the meaning of evil.

But that build up also means that when the time comes there is a real reckoning. At some point, we do need to deal with that build-up of gunk, and when we do it is a violent and destructive experience. Often the flood will be brought on by big life events: getting married, having a child, starting a new job, moving, getting a wake-up call from friends, and so on. Habits that have built up over years, unhealthy

defence mechanisms that served us for a time, attitudes that made sense you were younger but now are really immature for your age, all now need to be cleaned out to make way for a new you. For a time it has been ok that you've done x and thought y and said z, but now enough is enough and you have to move on. And you can't just modify or make some adjustment here and there. You need to rebuild, which means letting some parts of you that you really love die.

The flood will come and we need to see it coming and not ignore it. It is a little too easy to get caught up in the mind-set that says, "The Lord wants what's good for me, so if something is causing turmoil He wants me to avoid it." Yes the Lord wants what is best for you, but He also know that to get there you might need to go through an awful lot of turmoil. There are a couple of places in the prophets where the prophet condemns the priests and other prophets who are going around saying, "peace, peace!" because that is not the message the Lord is actually sending. Heading into a flood might be exactly where the Lord wants to take your life, and we don't do ourselves any favours by ignoring that fact.

It is true that the Lord is ultimately trying to lead us to peace and happiness, and we see glimpses of this in how Noah is described. The name Noah even means quietness or rest. Even as the storms rage around us and it feels like life is falling apart, the Lord preserves that peace within us, and will eventually use it to rebuild us from the inside out. That is why after deciding to destroy the earth for all the evil in it we read, "but Noah found grace in the eyes of Jehovah" (Genesis 6:8). This phrase has an important spiritual meaning that is explained in the teachings of the New Church:

*He found grace in Jehovah's eyes* means that the Lord foresaw that this was the way the human race could be saved. The Lord's mercy concerns the salvation of the whole human race and looks toward this. His grace does too, which is why the human race's salvation is symbolized here. Noah symbolizes

not only a new church but also the faith of that church—the faith that came of charity. So the Lord foresaw that the human race could be saved by the faith that comes of charity. (*Secrets of Heaven* §598, Cooper modified)

This statement about what Noah stands for is important to remember when you are facing something that is turning your life upside down: the part of you that the Lord can bring through it unscathed is not blind faith, it is not empty trust, it is not sheer determination; it is the kind of deep faith that comes from true love, charity, and kindness. That is where our peace and rest come from even when we are overwhelmed: in keeping faith in loving kindness.

If we can hold on to that faith then no matter how much of ourselves we lose and no matter how shaped and moulded into a new person we are, we will still have that from which we can rebuild. That final rebuilding is always the Lord's purpose and intent when He allows us to undergo challenges. We might just see the flood coming, but He sees how much better life will be after the flood has passed. We cannot avoid the flood, but maybe we can accept it more readily if we hold onto that Divine sight of what is being prepared for us on the other side. I want to end by reading a passage from Isaiah that captures this Divine perspective. This passage talks about the temporary anger of the Lord, but really it is the temporary anger of hell that the Lord is protecting us from.

“For a mere moment I have forsaken you,  
But with great mercies I will gather you.

<sup>8</sup> With [a flood of anger] I hid My face from you for a moment;  
But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,”  
Says Jehovah, your Redeemer.

<sup>9</sup> “For this is like the waters of Noah to Me;  
For as I have sworn  
That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth,  
So have I sworn  
That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.

<sup>10</sup> For the mountains shall depart  
And the hills be removed,  
But My kindness shall not depart from you,



Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,"  
Says Jehovah, who has mercy on you.  
<sup>11</sup> O you afflicted one,  
Tossed with tempest, and not comforted,  
Behold, I will lay your stones with colourful gems,  
And lay your foundations with sapphires. (Isaiah 54:7-11, NKJV modified)

*Amen.*