

International Conversation Cafe

Old Testament: Justice and Mercy, Genesis 6

In the beginning, God created the world and people to be in harmony with each other. Adam and Eve did not follow God and as a result, suffered shame and loss. God has two laws for us. They are:

1. To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
2. To love others as yourself.
 - *What things do we put in a greater place of importance than God? How do we try to put God out of our mind?*
 - *What causes conflicts between people?*

What happens to people who break laws in society?

When someone breaks a law, we expect that they will be punished. This is called, justice. Through justice comes peace.

- *For example, if you were the victim of a robbery, how would you feel if the thief was not punished and restitution was not made?*
- *Can you give another example of peace through justice?*

God demands justice when we break his laws. Jesus satisfied God's justice because he took our punishment when he died on the cross. God can now show mercy to all people and offer them forgiveness.

"Jesus died for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," 1 Peter 3:18. In this way, God's justice and mercy were satisfied. He offers to restore our relationship with him.

Still, like Adam and Eve, God gives us a choice. We must decide if we will follow Jesus or go our own way. Long ago, there were people who hated God and were violent toward others in an outrageous way. The following story about Noah illustrates choices and consequences

Genesis 6.

⁵ The Lord saw how bad the sins of man had become on the earth. All of the thoughts in man's heart were always directed only toward what was evil. ⁶ The Lord was very sad that he had made man on the earth. His heart was filled with pain. ⁷ So the Lord said, "I created man on the earth. But I will wipe them out. I will destroy people and animals alike. I will also destroy the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air. I am very sad that I have made man."

- *Why was God's heart filled with pain?*
- *Can you tell give an example of injustice that hurts children or the poor. How does this injustice make you feel?*

But just as God loved and sought to rescue Adam and Eve, so God sought to save these people. In this case, God sent Noah to save them.

⁸ But the Lord was pleased with Noah. ⁹ Here is the story of Noah. Noah was a godly man. He was without blame among the people of his time. He walked with God.

One of the better known characters is the Chinese symbol for ship (large boat), being the combination of symbols for boat, eight and mouth (or person to feed). In other words, a concept of a large boat originated with the famous eight-person boat, Noah's Ark. Following images from Voo K.S (TJ 2005).

God told Noah to build a boat, for he was going to destroy the world and everything in it with a great flood. So Noah warned people about the coming flood and urged them to join him on the ark. Anyone who would listen to Noah and his warnings could be saved.

2 Peter 2:5 Noah preached about the right way to live. God kept him safe. He also saved seven others.

No one else besides Noah's family listened and believed Noah. Everyone else died when the flood came. The story of Noah serves as a warning to us, not to turn away from God.

Today, God offers us forgiveness and peace with God through Jesus Christ if we turn to God in faith.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

What does this passage say about God?

What does this passage say about people?

What is the choice God gives to people?

Do you think this is fair? Why or why not?

How do these concepts change your attitude about God?