

I was watching the television show *Psych* with the kids last week. It opens with 2 little boys, Shawn & Gus sitting in the pew of a Catholic church. Shawn's father (a police officer) comes up the aisle and meets the priest who thanks him for coming quickly. Evidently Shawn is questioning everything in the story of Noah on the ark in Sunday school. He keeps interrupting the lecture. Shawn's holding a children's bible and says "this makes no sense, if the story took place in the middle east how did the Koala's get on the ark." Gus says, "because God helped them." The priest then adds, "God helped get the animals onto the ark." Shawn asks "why didn't God build the ark himself?" The priest says, "because God likes creation to accomplish things on their own." Shawn says, "except the Koalas." Henry, his dad says, "you're getting too caught up in the details." Shawn asks "then how did the zebras survive with the lions on board?" Now Henry says "that's a good question because lions easily could've eat them by then, because lions eat 5000 lbs a year." The priest looks at them both and asks, "have you two ever thought about being Methodists?"

These are all good questions. I don't have any good answers for Shawn. There are lots of questions and if you're reading very closely we have some differences between chapter 7 and the end of chapter 6. In 6 we have God giving Noah very specific instructions for building the ark and bringing 2 pairs of every animal, bird, mammal, & reptile. In chapter 7 we have God telling 7 pairs of the clean animals & 2 pairs of the unclean animals. How is it that we have a different account and God hasn't said anything about clean & unclean. If you've read ahead you know that comes later. In the Torah, the first 5 books of the Bible we have 4 different sources, much like we have 4 Gospel accounts. Except these sources were brought together to tell the whole story. We have J, E, D & P. Since the story wasn't written down for generations an editor was able to use all the sources to put the story together. In particular, chapter 7 – scholars explain it as a shift between the P and J sources. The P source focuses on ritual & cultural traditions while the J source's focus which is about telling the story. Early readers may not read it as a problem because of understanding. So is it a problem for us? I doesn't have to be. Knowing the context helps make sense of the differences. The story doesn't really change.

We have Noah & family, with all creatures on the ark along with the forecast of rain to begin in 7 days. So what happens next. God closes the door. That may not seem important but it is a sign of care. Think back to

when you would visit your parents at home and how they would walk you to the car, sometimes even closing the door before they saw you off, waving until you couldn't see each other anymore. It's a detail that is unparalleled. It's also striking given what God shared in the beginning of chapter 6 where he was remorseful and grieving everything that went wrong.

Big picture what does this tell us about God. That even in the flood, with death and destruction to come, God is with us. I know for many of us the idea of a flood is no longer metaphorical or imaginative but a reality. We've been cut off from each other because of water. Some of us have been rescued by boat, more than once. Both times we had little warning because storms did not go as planned. And yet we've told the stories of the way that God was faithful, even when we did not see how it was possible.

In all that is going on today, with a pandemic and growing awareness that we cannot allow racism to endanger our neighbors any longer we may be asking ourselves, what in the world is going on. If only God could give us a clear picture of what to expect and how things will get better. For that, we must wait for the next chapter. We must sit in the boat. We must trust that there is a greater purpose for all that we are enduring. For God is still at work in us, through us and around us. Thanks be to God. Amen.