

God is grieved by the wickedness of man. Noah is an exception and so he and his family will be spared. How do we reconcile, God's solution of the great flood with his mercy? The flood is meant to purify. God who has created the earth seeks to renew the face of the earth. Origen, a Church Father from the third century explains it this way, "as the soul of man is immortal, the supposed threatening has for its object the conversion of the hearers."ⁱ With that insight, we are called to look inward to our own thoughts and deeds. As we hear of God's grief at our own wickedness, how might you take a look at your own desires and see them in the light of God's lament?

In our responsorial psalm today, we pray "Give to the LORD glory and praise, Give to the LORD the glory due his name" (Ps 1b-2a). Do we look at life with the eyes of God or do we find much to complain about? In the Book of Genesis, God created the world in six days. At the end of each day, God looks at what he has created and describes it as good. And after creating Adam on the sixth day, "God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good" (Gn 1:31). Is it not wicked to see what God has created and to find fault? Is it not wicked to be so self-absorbed with our own concerns that we fail to give glory to God for all he has done for us?

In our alleluia verse, Jesus teaches "Whoever loves me will keep my word" (Jn 14:23). Taking the verse literally, we can keep God's word in our thoughts and minds by meditating on the Gospels regularly. And as we encounter some difficulty or decision, we can try to answer: 'What would Jesus do?' by doing what he would do. In our first reading, God is grieved at how every desire that man's heart conceived was ever anything but evil. When we think selfishly, we can easily go down the path of wickedness. When we think selflessly, we are ready to serve others as Jesus did.

Another way of keeping Jesus's word is to keep the commandments. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). The law tells us, "You shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (Lk 10:27). Jesus uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to teach us that we are to treat others with mercy, especially those who have been hurt by the wicked. When we see someone in need, we should reach out with compassion and offer help.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, we find a parallel teaching: "Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up" (Dt:6:5-7). Loving God and keeping his commandments calls us to teach them to others. Parents have an awesome responsibility to help their children know and love God. Let us recall the words attributed to Saint Francis: "Preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary, use words."

In closing, let us return to Origen briefly. He taught that the story of the great flood was meant for the conversion of the hearers. We would do well to heed the words of the Prophet Isaiah. "Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their way, and sinners their thoughts; Let them turn to the LORD to find mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving" (55:6-7).

ⁱ Origen - catholiccrossreference.com/fathers/index.php/gen%206:5