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Text: 1 Peter 3:13-22
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Setting: Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Ark as Church

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Water, water everywhere. This spring has been particularly wet weather-wise. In the news reports we hear about flooding down in the St. Louis area as well as flooding in the drought ridden south-west which desperately needs rain. Unfortunately, the rain came to much at one time and flooding occurred. Here in Iowa City, you are familiar with flooding. Flood watches and warnings are a common occurrence. What will the Iowa River do? Will it go down, stay steady where it's at or perhaps rise over its banks?

Water is powerful. Tsunami's, floods, storm surge, you name a water disaster and it has the power to destroy. Houses float away in response to its destructive force. While it can be destructive, water also does good things. As we have seen this spring, a seed that is watered will grow and have life. Water in the middle of a desert brings life and attracts animals to come and drink. Water is used to wash what has become dirty. When we wash our cars, whether at the car wash or at home, we use water to wash away the grim and dirt that we have driven through.

Water has great power. It has even greater power when it has been combined with God's Holy Word. As we learned this year in 7th Grade confirmation: Baptism is water combined with God's Word. This water has power, both for destruction and growth. How can these baptismal waters bring destruction? These waters bring the destruction of the Old Adam in us that works to lead us astray from our faith in God. This Old Adam that works to derail our faith in Christ. The

Old Adam that works to turn our gaze from the cross and the empty tomb, in which our hope is found, back toward ourselves and our own sinful desires.

Much like today, back in the time of Noah, the world was indulging in the acts of the Old Adam within them. God looked at His creation. “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and the birds of the heaven, for I am sorry that I have made them.’” (Gen. 5:5-7) The Old Adam continually was wicked; every intention of the thoughts of his heart were only evil. This relentless surge to do evil was the everyday life of God’s creation and God choose to destroy it with water.

We may want to point fingers back at the people of Noah’s time and say they were wicked people and we aren’t. But the more we point back, the more we are pointing back at ourselves. We do things that go against God’s plan and will for us. We sin. We fail to love our neighbors as ourselves. The power of the flood destroyed the sinful men of the world. The flood was destructive, leaving nothing alive, or so you would think.

As water has the power to destroy, it has the power to give life as well. As we are made alive in Christ, through the waters of our baptism, the Old Adam in us is drown. As Noah and his family were saved in the Ark through the flood that covered the entire world, we find community and fellowship within the church.

We even look at the beautiful stain glass windows that we have here at Our Redeemer. The *Baptism Window* in the back corner depicts this scene. We see the Ark riding out the stormy

flood that God had sent. The storm rages as the Ark floats higher and higher as the world is cleansed, the world is washed, the world is made new. We see in the cloud above the ark, the shell, symbolizing the water that is poured out in baptism. In our baptism we ourselves are cleansed, we are washed, we are made new. To the left of the Ark is the rainbow. A sign from God that He would not flood the entire world again. A promise God made to His people.

As this window was inspired by this passage in 1 Peter, church architecture has also been influenced by this passage. Even aspects of the naming of church parts comes from this. The *Nave* of the church is where you, the congregation, are sitting. The word *nave*, is the Latin word for *ship*. The shape of the building is even reminiscent of a ship or boat. If we were to look at other church architecture throughout the ages, we would see that it looks like the underside of a ship. As we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ we become part of this Ark known as the church. As the Ark protected Noah and his family, and all the animals, you are part of this Ark called the church.

As this water has the power to destroy, it is also used to bring life. As our Lord Jesus, commanded baptism in Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” God has the power to make you new, He comes into your life and claims you as His own. Your sins are washed away and you are made clean. We gather week after week in this Ark called the church and we remember our baptisms as the Invocation is spoken, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” We remember whose we are. Not running away from here when we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, but actively turning back to Christ in repentance.

We are washed, we are claimed, we are loved, by God. We are brought together as the Ark called the church. And while the architecture may be reminiscent of a church, the true Ark,

the true church, is you, the people of God. You are the church. We celebrate what God has done for us through Jesus death on the cross and resurrection, so that we can be forgiven of our sins and have life in Him. Together, as His people. Amen.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine... to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen."

Ephesians 3:20-21