

Now I'm standing here in the sun. Who of you thinks the Noah's Ark story is a children's story? You can raise your right arm anonymously. Who says it's a children's story? You can join in too.

Well, I always find that, if you grow up in church and go to children's services or any kind of children's group, Noah's Ark is often a very popular story. It's cute with the animals and it's a great story to tell, but I also often think, well, to be honest, there's quite a lot of death in the story. And I don't even know if I would tell my son a story like this: look here, a story like this, where lots of people die, but a few survive.

Great, right? And they're really sweet, the ones who survive. We just heard that God makes a deal with people. We'll find out exactly what it is.

I can't spoil everything. If you haven't read this far in the Bible, be curious, but one... I think there are three things we can learn about God from this Noah's Ark story, whether it's a children's story or an adult story. One is, God is peaceful.

It may sound paradoxical at first, because there isn't all that much peace in it, but at its core, this story is about God not sending another flood of meaning, even though "deluge" often appears up there. So, Noah's Ark is a story about a God who promises us to remain peaceful. He could be different, but he says, "I won't be anymore."

The second thing is, God is understanding. God was really angry with people, not just because of the mosquitoes, but in general. I think God could still be pretty angry about the crap we spout.

Maybe not necessarily about us personally, but viewed globally, I think he generally has enough good reasons to be angry. God was so angry that he sent the flood. Part of the deal he made was that he would show more understanding for us.

For me, Noah's Ark is a story about how God knows we're not perfect, but he promises us that from now on, I'll have understanding. And the third thing is, the God of the Bible is emotional. In this story of Noah's Ark, God is angry.

He literally acts out of emotion. You could say, God, well, that's enough now, yes, people aren't like that, but he doesn't have to immediately send a flood and ruin everything again. That's an emotional, an emotional God.

And at the end of the story, small spoiler, he regrets what he did, or he repents, it's a word-picking exercise at the end of the day, but in any case, God is not a cold machine. He isn't someone who says, "I already know everything, I always know what, how, and perfectly to do things." Rather, he is someone who acts with us, who lives with us. God as an emotional being, but also one who promises us to be peaceful and understanding.

Now we are baptizing you today, Maja. And baptism is, in a way, also a deal. In the story, God makes a deal with us humans, with all humans. In baptism, you make a deal with God, and God with you.

Baptism is a kind of turning to the God of the Bible, to the God who is emotional, understanding, and peaceful. We baptize in the church, among other things, because Jesus said the following about 2,000 years ago: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and win the people of all nations to my cause."

Baptize them in the name of God the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and help them to live as I have shown you. And remember, I am with you until the end of the world. That's why we baptize, because we say it's a task for us as a church, for us as congregations.

I find it exciting that in this Great Commission, or baptismal command, Jesus says, "Go out to the people." In Noah's Ark, it's more like we retreat into our ark. And sometimes, I think, we in the church are actually quite good at crawling back into the ark.

But actually, I think Jesus is saying, "Go out and baptize, make people my disciples." If you also grew up in a church setting, you may have a slightly different translation of this Great Commission in the original. It says, "Teach them to keep everything I have commanded you."

Now, in this somewhat more modern translation, it says, "Help them to live the way I have shown you." This is definitely a very important part of baptism, because although we're baptizing Maya today, we're baptizing her in a certain way—like, "caught up," "hung up," or vice versa. So, you're all here and automatically part of this baptism, because we always baptize into the congregation.

We don't baptize just like that. Yes, now you're baptized, but you're part of worldwide Christianity, you're part of this congregation with your baptism. And baptism also includes the fact that it's always a command to all other Christians: help them live the way I've shown them. Another reason why there's a confirmation course is that they say, well, when children are baptized, for example, they need a place of instruction.

A place where they're helped to live the way Jesus showed them. So parents, in your case, there are no godparents, because that would be invalid again four weeks later with the confirmation, but parents, godparents, we as a congregation, we are part of this baptism. The promise at the end of the missionary command or baptismal command: I am always with you, every day until the end of the world, or today for you, I am always with you, every day until the end of your world.

I think we must always read this promise in the context of the Noah's Ark story, namely how God is described there. So, the peaceful, understanding, and compassionate God says, "I am always with you." This is not a given when considering Noah's Ark.

The God of the Bible is not a kind God who simply cannot help but love us; he could do otherwise, he could send floods of power every day. The God of the Bible is not a kind God, but a loving God. In the Noah's Ark story, this God made a deal with us humans, and Jesus picks up on this and confirms it.

He says, "Neither a flood nor anything else will come." I will remain by your side, and that applies equally to all of you who have already been baptized or perhaps still want to be baptized. Through all the ups and downs that come with it.

God dances with you for joy over HSV's victory or promotion, and he weeps with you for grief over the loss that hurts and hurts. We celebrate this today in your baptism, too: that this God walks with you through all the highs and lows that come with it. That's why, for me, a baptism fits perfectly into this service about Noah's Ark and about a God who makes a deal with us.

Because, at the end of the day, baptism is a celebration that the peaceful, understanding, and compassionate God is always with you. And if you've already been baptized, then perhaps today is the reminder of you, the joyful reminder that the peaceful, understanding, and compassionate God is with you. Amen