

Medieval Theatre

Mystery Play - WALKING ON WATER

On a rocky hillside, he took two smelly fish and five crusty loaves of bread and fed over five thousand people.

“WOW!” The disciples must have thought, “We should open a restaurant!”

Well, maybe they didn’t think the restaurant part - but they were amazed by the miracle they just saw Jesus do.

The crowd was still buzzing about the whole thing when Jesus took Peter by the arm and said, “You guys go on ahead to the other side of the lake. I’ll catch up with you later.”

Okay, we don’t really know what Jesus said *exactly*. For one thing, he was speaking in Aramaic and not English. And chances are pretty good he didn’t call the disciples ‘you guys.’ But we do know that Jesus told the disciples to get in their boat and go across the lake. He needed some time to be alone.

Well, imagine if you had crowds of people following you around everywhere you went, always wanting something from you. You’d want to get away to be alone sometimes too! But what Jesus really needed was time to pray. We all do!

So Jesus blessed the people and sent them on their way home. And he sent them away full - not just with a good meal, but with the word of God. They all left knowing a little better just how much God loved them. So Jesus watched the last few stragglers pick their way through the rocks, and then he turned and climbed up the mountain a ways.

When night came, Jesus was still there praying, alone on the mountainside. Of course, he wasn’t really alone. He was with his Father. No one is ever really alone. God is always with us.

Meanwhile, the disciples were on the lake below, trying to row across it.

It was very dark now, and a strong wind was blowing right in their faces. Well, right in the faces of the lucky ones who weren’t trying to row against it. Those poor guys had their backs to the wind and were rowing against it with all their might - and hardly getting anywhere!

“This is just great!” they were probably grumbling to each other as sprays of water splashed in their faces and the waves tossed their little boat every which way - except the way they wanted to go! “Jesus sends us out across the lake with this blasted wind doing its best to blow us back! Couldn’t he *do* something about that?!” (We like to grumble whenever things get hard, don’t we.)

But Jesus could see that they were in trouble.

The wind was howling, the sea was still tossing their boat this way and that, when one of the disciples happened to look out into the night.

“WHAT IS THAT?!!!”

There was a man walking on the water!!!

In the dark of the night they saw a man coming towards them on the water - his hair was blowing wildly, his robe was being whipped by the wind like a flag in a windstorm.

They were terrified!

...well, wouldn't YOU be?!

"IT'S A GHOST!!" they screamed.

But just then, they heard a voice say, "Take courage! Don't be afraid. It is me!"

It was Jesus!

"Lord, is it really you?" Peter said, holding his hand over his eyes to block the spray of the splashing waves.

"If it really IS you, tell me to come out to you on the water!"

Peter was a brave man! Or he was crazy!

Jesus said, "Come."

Peter stuck one leg out over the side of the boat and set his foot on the water. It didn't sink in!

He stepped out with his other foot, and it didn't sink. He stood up. He was standing on the water! He took one step, and then another, and then another. He was walking on the water, just like Jesus!

Peter was walking on the water!

He might have even been thinking to himself, "Hey! Look at me. I am walking on the water! Aren't I great!"

But wait a minute. People can't walk on water. And then Peter started to look around him. All of a sudden, the boat seemed awfully small and far away. There was nothing but black, churning water all around him. The waves were lapping at his feet, water was stinging his eyes.

And then, just like that, the water under his feet let go.

"Help me, Lord!" Peter gulped, splashing wildly as the cold water swallowed him down. "Save me!"

But before the water could gulp Peter down entirely, Jesus reached down with his strong hand (he WAS a carpenter after all) and grabbed him by the arm.

"Oh you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

And with that, Jesus pulled Peter up out of the water and carried him, dripping wet, back to the boat.

Just as they were climbing over the side of the boat, the wind died away and the sea turned smooth as glass. Everything was suddenly peaceful and quiet.

One minute the wind was roaring and the sea was crashing, the next all was peaceful and calm. Some of the disciples must have remembered just then the Psalm they learned in Hebrew school -

"Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper, the waves of the sea were hushed."

(That was from Psalm 107, in case you haven't been to Hebrew school yet.)

Those disciples knew that only God has the power to calm the wind and the waves - and that's just what Jesus did.

"Truly you ARE the Son of God!" they said to Jesus in awe and wonder. And they bowed down and worshipped him

right then and there.

Now, we don't know for sure, but maybe Peter sat there shivering in the back of the boat with a blanket wrapped around his shoulders, thinking about all that had just happened. And maybe he was hearing over and over in his head the words Jesus had calmly said, 'Why did you doubt?'

'Oh, you of little faith. Why did you doubt?'

Why DID Peter doubt?

Just the day before he saw Jesus turn two fish and five loaves of bread into enough to feed five thousand people. And now he saw Jesus walking on the water. Jesus said it was okay, so he stepped out onto the water. He trusted Jesus.

He stepped out of the boat because Jesus had called him, and his faith held him up.

But then he saw the darkness all around him, he felt the the wind stinging his face, he saw the swirling black water beneath him... and he doubted. He took his eyes off Jesus and he became afraid.

He forgot about Jesus.

And he sank.

And it may be that Peter learned a lesson that night that he never forgot. When trouble is all around - keep your eyes on Jesus. He will never let you sink.

Medieval Theatre

Mystery Play – Creation

IN THE BEGINNING....God created the heavens and the earth.

Before there was anything, there was **GOD**.

Before there was ice cream and chocolate sauce; or popcorn and pop; or computers, VCRs and TVs; or the sun, the moon and the stars - or even space itself - God was there. There wouldn't be anything at all if God hadn't thought it all up.

But God DID think it all up.

But in the very beginning there was no shape to God's creation at all, and everywhere it was black as night.

So God said,

"Let there be light!"

And there was light.

God saw that the light was good, and so he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "Day," and the darkness he called, "Night." And then for the first time ever, there was evening and there was morning. The first day in all of creation had come to an end and a new day was ready to begin.

On the morning of the second day God put the blue sky between the deep waters that covered the earth and the blackness of space. At first, the earth was completely covered with water. There wasn't any dry ground anywhere.

And there was evening and there was morning. The second day was over, and a new day was ready to begin.

Morning came on the third day, and God gathered the waters together and made the dry land appear. God called the dry land "Earth" and the water he called "Sea."

God looked at all that he had made, and he saw that it was good.

It was all very good.

Then God said, "Let there be plants on the earth, and all the things that grow!" And all the different kinds of plants and trees began to grow; apple trees and banana trees, grass and dandelions and roses, wheat to make bread, and corn so kids would have a vegetable they would like; but God made spinach and broccoli too.

And God looked at all that he had made, and he saw that it was good, even the broccoli and the spinach.

There was evening and there was morning, the third day. A new day was waiting to begin.

On the fourth day God said, "Let the great lights appear in the sky!" (so we would know when to go to bed and when to get up for school). And just by his word, God made the sun and the moon and the stars. He made them out of nothing at all!

And God looked at all that he had made, and he saw that it was good.

There was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

On the morning of the fifth day God said, "Let there be swimming things in the oceans and lakes, and birds in the air!" And the oceans were filled with hammerhead sharks and dolphins and whales. And in the sky there were robins and eagles, blue jays, cardinals and yellow bellied sapsuckers. Until then the earth must have been a very quiet place. But not any more!

And God looked at all that he had made, and it was wonderfully good.

There was evening and there was morning, now the fifth day had come and gone.

Then God said, "Let there be animals upon the earth!" God made giraffes, and zebras, and lions and tigers and bears. He made moose with great big antlers, and little gophers and chipmunks and squirrels. He made monkeys swinging through the trees and giant gorillas sitting in the forests eating bananas. He made huge elephants, and he made hippopotamuses rolling around in the mud. How did God think of all those things?!

What a great imagination God has!

Then God said, "Let us make people in our own image" (God said, "us" because God the Father was there, and so was Jesus, and so was the Holy Spirit - but still he was just one God). So God made people in his own image.

When you look at yourself in a mirror, you see an image of yourself. You see a reflection of what you are like. God made us in his image. We are a reflection of what God is like. When God sees us, he sees a reflection of himself.

You are the image of God. Always remember that.

So God looked at all that he had made, and he saw that it was good.

And there was evening, and there was morning, and that was the sixth day.

On the morning of the seventh day God saw that the whole universe and everything in it was finished. Nothing else needed to be made. And it was all very good.

And so God rested on the seventh day. He celebrated all the good work he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

What does that mean?

When something is "holy," that means that it is special. It belongs to God. When God made the seventh day holy, he made it his day. It belongs to him. He made the seventh day a special day, different from all the rest.

God rested from his work on the seventh day and enjoyed all that he had made. That is what God wants us to do too. On the seventh day of every week, God wants us to rest and enjoy all that he has made. That way we will always remember that all good things come from God.

Medieval Theatre

Mystery Play – Adam and Eve

Back in the day when God first made the Earth, God looked down and he saw that there was no one to take care of it.

So God reached down into the ground and scooped up some stuff from the earth. He took the stuff from the earth into his hands and formed it into a man. But the man just laid there on the ground like a lump of clay. There was no life in him. So God bent down again and breathed into the man - and the man became alive!

The man's body was made from the earth, but his life came from the breath of God. Always remember that. Your life is the breath of God.

God called the man, 'Adam.'

Then God planted a garden in Eden for Adam to live in. And since God is God, he is a pretty good gardener. He planted all kinds of trees in his garden; apple trees, and pear trees, banana trees and mango trees, fig trees and who knows what other kinds of trees in his garden. God wanted to make sure there was plenty of good things to eat. (Don't ask me why he didn't plant any candy trees!).

In the middle of the garden God also planted two special trees. One was called the Tree of Life, and the other was called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

And God made a stream of clear, cool water to flow through the middle of the garden to water it and keep it green.

Then God brought Adam to the garden and he told him, "Take care of my garden. You may eat the fruit of any of the trees that I have made to grow there. But be careful. Do not eat any of the fruit from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you eat any of that fruit, you will die."

So Adam began to live and work in the garden God had made for him.

The garden was a wonderful, beautiful place.

Even though the garden God had made for him was the most beautiful place there could ever be, Adam was lonely.

Adam needed some company. So God reached into the ground again and took some more stuff from the earth. This time he made every kind of animal and every kind of bird. He brought them all to Adam to see what he would call them.

It must have taken a long, long time to think up all those names!

Luckily, he didn't call them things like 'Foo Foo' or 'Snuggems' or 'Pooky' or anything like that. Instead, he called them 'gerbils' and 'rabbits' and 'rhinoceroses.' And he called the birds 'eagles' and 'egrets' and 'ruby throated warblers.'

Well, actually, we don't know WHAT Adam named them. He didn't speak English. But he named each kind, and that's important because people are the only ones that name things. Your dog knows what a squirrel is, but he doesn't call it a squirrel. He just barks at it! But naming things is one of the things that shows we are different from all the other creatures that God made.

But even with all the animals around to keep him company, God saw that Adam was still sad. Monkeys are fun to play with, but they don't have very much to say... and they have terrible table manners.

So God made Adam fall asleep (he must have conked him on the head or something), and while Adam was sleeping, God took one of his ribs.

God took Adam's rib and he made a woman from it. When Adam woke up, God brought Eve to him (that's what Adam named her later on), and Adam said,

"At last! Here is someone like me! Her bones were made from my bones, and her body was made from my body. I will call her 'woman' because that means she was taken out of man."

At last Adam was happy.

And so Adam and Eve lived together in God's garden. And do you know what? They were naked and nobody cared... or thought it was funny!

Things were going along nicely, there in the perfect place that God had made for Adam and Eve. But then one perfect, warm sunny day, Eve was walking through the garden. And there, in the middle of the garden, she met the serpent.

You need to know that the serpent was the one we call the devil, or sometimes we call him Satan. Satan is an angel who decided he didn't want to do what God said anymore, so God sent him out of heaven. And from that day on, Satan became God's enemy.

And since people can't see angels - or the devil - the devil appeared to Eve as a serpent. "Serpent" is another word for snake. Except this snake wasn't like the snakes we know today. He didn't crawl on the ground - yet. And somehow, he could talk.

Now, the thing is, Satan is a liar. He has always been a liar. And he is tricky too. And because he is God's enemy, he hates everything God loves, and does everything he can to ruin it.

So Satan said to Eve,

"Did God really tell you that you couldn't eat the fruit from any tree in the garden?"

That's not what God said at all, and Eve knew it. So she said to the serpent,

"God said we may eat the fruit from *any* tree in the garden - *except* the fruit from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If we even touch that fruit, we will die." Well, that wasn't quite true either, was it. God never said anything about touching the fruit.

The serpent answered, "That's not true at all! You will not die! God only said that because he knows if you eat that fruit you will become like him. You will become wise. You will know what is good and what is bad."

And this is where Eve made her big mistake.

Instead of leaving right then, she stayed a while. She saw that the fruit on the tree looked very good. And she started thinking how nice it would be to be like God and know everything. But she also knew that God had said not to eat the fruit from that tree. Except now she was starting to think maybe it would be okay anyway. That fruit did look good. And the more she looked at it, the more she wanted it - and the more she forgot what God had said.

That is how temptation works. It is when you know something is wrong, but you want to do it anyway. And pretty soon the wrong thing you want to do starts to look good. And you think maybe just this one time it will be okay to go ahead and do it. You think the bad things that always come when you do what is wrong won't happen this time.

But they always do.

That's why things are wrong, because when you do them someone always gets hurt, sooner or later. But Eve wasn't thinking about that. She was only thinking about how delicious the forbidden fruit looked.

So Eve took some of the fruit, and she ate it.

And she gave some to Adam, and he ate it.

And all of a sudden they knew that they were naked.

Before that they were like little kids who run around naked and nobody cares - because little kids don't know any better. That's how Adam and Eve were before they ate the fruit God told them not to. Before that, they didn't know any better. They didn't know the difference between right and wrong. Now they did. Now they knew they were naked. And they were embarrassed.

Later that day.....

God was walking through the garden in the cool of the evening as he liked to do. But when Adam and Eve heard him coming they hid from him in the bushes. They were embarrassed and afraid. God called to them, "Adam! Eve! Where are you?" (Of course, God knew where they were).

Adam answered from behind the bushes, "Right here, Lord... I heard you coming... so I hid from you... because I am naked."

"Who told you that you were naked?" God asked. "Did you eat the fruit I told not to eat?" God knew that he had. He always knows.

"It wasn't me!" Adam said, "the woman you gave me, she made me do it!"

So God said to Eve, "Is that true?"

And Eve said, "It wasn't me! The serpent made me do it!"

They were in big trouble now.

ADAM AND EVE KNEW BETTER....

They knew God said not to eat the fruit from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But they did it anyway. They turned away from the way God wanted them to go. They turned away from God.

Adam and Eve brought sin into God's perfect world.

Sin is knowing what God wants, but doing what you want instead. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and at that moment, everything changed.

Even though Adam tried to blame Eve for eating the fruit, and Eve tried to blame the serpent, God knew the truth. They all had disobeyed him.

So first, God said to the serpent,

"Because you lied to my children and tricked them into disobeying me, you will crawl on your belly from this day on, and you will eat dust as long as you live."

And then, because God knows what is going to happen today and every day after that, he said to the serpent (remember, the serpent was really Satan), "You will hate Eve and her children, and all the people who are ever born after them. You will be their enemy. And you will do everything you can to hurt them. You will do everything you can to keep them from knowing how much I love them. But one day a child will be born. You will bite his heel, but he will crush your head."

The child that God was talking about is Jesus.

Way back at the beginning of time, God already knew that one day Satan would hurt Jesus - on the day that Jesus died on the cross. But just as sure as that, God knows of another day that is still coming - the day when Jesus will get rid of Satan forever.

Now God turned to Adam and Eve.

God said to Eve, "Because you sinned and disobeyed me, this is what is going to happen. When you have children, it will not be easy. It is going to hurt. "

And he said to Adam, "Because you disobeyed me, you will have to work hard all your life for the food you eat and the things you need. Weeds and prickly things will grow along with your food, and you will sweat to make things grow. All your life you will have trouble."

Their hard life would always remind them what sin can do.

And he said to both of them, "And then one day you will die, just as I said you would. I made your bodies from the dust from the ground, and one day they will become dust in the ground again."

All this happened because Adam and Eve disobeyed God.

It wasn't that God was being mean or unfair. God had made a place where everything worked together perfectly. And it was wonderful. Everything was just the way God wanted it. But when Adam and Eve sinned, they chose to do something different from what God wanted. Now everything wasn't working together so perfectly. And that messes up everything. That is why sin is so terrible.

So God made clothes out of animal skins for Adam and Eve to wear. And then God sent them out of the beautiful, perfect garden he had made for them. God put an angel with a flaming sword on guard at the garden's gate to protect the perfect place from the terrible things sin can do.

Adam and Eve began to learn that when we choose to do what we want instead of what God wants, we ruin the good things God has made for us.

But even though Adam and Eve had sinned, God still loved them.

The very moment Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin came between God and his children.

Because we are all God's children, sin has separated us all from God. We can't live apart from God, so now God had to make a way to bring us back to him. And that is what the rest of the Bible is all about!

Medieval Theatre

Mystery Play – CAIN AND ABEL

So God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden. Now they were going to have to work hard for their food and their clothes. And because of their sin, so would every one who ever lives.

God loves us more than we will ever know, and his blessings are always with us. But there will always be trouble in our lives too, sometimes little, and sometimes big - because sin is in the world now.

Sin always brings trouble.

But even though Adam and Eve had sinned, God still loved them as much as he ever did. And soon he blessed them with a baby - the first baby ever born! That must have been exciting. Of course, there wasn't a hospital to go to. And there weren't any doctors or nurses around (because they hadn't been born yet!). So God must have helped them.

They named their first baby Cain. And after that they had another baby, Cain's little brother, and they named him Abel.

They had other children after Cain and Abel too, and their children had children, and their children's children had children. And that is how the world began to be filled with people.

When Cain got older he became a farmer. He grew things from the ground. And when Abel grew up he became a shepherd. He took care of the sheep.

So it happened one day that Cain and Abel brought gifts to God to thank him for all the good things he had done for them. They built an altar for a sacrifice.

A sacrifice is when you give something to God that you would have liked to keep for yourself. You give him your very best.

Cain brought some of the things he had grown. He brought some wheat, and grapes and figs and things like that, and he burned them on the altar to give to God. Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep.

God was happy with Abel's gift, because he saw that Abel really wanted to please God and always do what God wanted.

But God knew that Cain wasn't so sure he wanted to do what God wanted. So God wasn't happy with Cain's gift.

That made Cain mad.

God loved Cain, and he said to him, "Why are you scowling? If you always do what is right, you will be happy. But be careful. Bad thoughts will ruin your life. Learn to control them."

But Cain didn't listen to God.

Instead he blamed his brother.

And even though God loved both brothers as much as anyone could ever be loved, Cain thought God loved Abel more than him. So from that day on, Cain began to think mean things about his younger brother.

He kept thinking them and thinking them. And the more he thought them, the harder it was to stop. And the more he thought them, the meaner his thoughts became. Until one day he planned a terrible thing.

He said to his brother on a bright, sunny morning, "Abel, come with me out into the fields."

"Sure," Abel said, because he loved his big brother, and trusted him. And so he walked with his brother out into the fields. And when Cain got Abel out where nobody could see or hear them, he took a rock and he killed his brother Abel.

Later that day God found Cain working in the hot sun. God said to him, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"How should I know?" Cain said. "Am I supposed to take care of my brother?"

But God knew the terrible thing Cain had done.

God said to him, "I see your brother's blood on the ground! Because you have spilled your brother's blood into the ground, the ground won't grow your crops for you anymore. From now on you will have to wander in far away places to find your food."

"Lord, the punishment is too hard for me!" Cain said. "My relatives will try to kill me when they hear what I have done. I will always be running."

So God put a mark on Cain to protect him. When anyone saw it they would know not to kill him because God was watching.

Then on a sad, sad day, Cain left his only home and family. Because of the evil thing Cain had done, Adam and Eve lost not just one son, but two. And Cain lost his family. But worse than that, God would not be with him anymore. That would be the hardest thing of all.

So Cain went away and lived in the land of Nod.

If only he had listened to God.

Medieval Theatre

Mystery Play – NOAH

God saw what a terrible place the world had become.

He saw that everyone was lying, and cheating, and killing. He saw that no one cared about doing what was good and right anymore. And God knew that in their hearts all they wanted to do was evil and bad.

But... God saw one good man.

His name was Noah.

Noah still cared about God. He listened to God, and he always tried to do what God said. And God was pleased with Noah.

God said to Noah, "Noah, I have decided to put an end to this mess people have made of my world, and start all over."

So God said to Noah, "I want you to build an ark."

"What's an ark?" Noah asked.

"It's a box to keep special things safe in," God said. "But your ark is going to be a boat too!"

"What's a boat?"

"You'll see!" God said. It was going to be a very BIG boat. God told Noah exactly how to make it. It was going to be longer than a football field, and higher than a three story house. It was going to have one door, and a window all around beneath the roof.

God called the boat an "ark."

This was going to be a big job for a 500 year old man!

That's how old Noah was when God gave him his little project to do. Now, Noah might have thought, "This job is too big, and I am too old!" And he didn't even have any power tools out back in his shed. But he did have God, and with God on your side, anything is possible.

So Noah went right to work. He did everything just as God had told him to.

His neighbors must have thought he was crazy. While they were spending all their time doing wicked things just to please themselves, Noah was hard at work, pleasing God. Noah kept on working, day after day, year after year. And day after day, year after year, people laughed at him.

And then one day Noah put down his hammer.

The ark was finished.

There it was, this giant boat, resting on dry land - and no lake in sight!

What was God thinking?

He was thinking he had another job for Noah!

A really BIG job.

God said to Noah, "Now I want you to find two of every kind of animal, a male and a female, and bring them into the ark. And bring enough food for them all too." (God also told Noah to bring extra pairs of some animals, some for food, and some for sacrifices.)

Just think what a noise that must have been. Cows mooing. Lions roaring. Dogs barking. Elephants trumpeting - all at once. What a noise!

And what a mess! (It must have smelled pretty bad too...)

And how do you keep the tigers from eating the little lambs?

Still, with God's help, Noah did it all, just as God told him to.

Until finally there was just one more animal to get up onto the ark.

Noah was pushing on the wrinkly behind of a big grumpy elephant - an elephant who really didn't want to go on a cruise - when Noah felt a drop of rain hit his head.

Noah looked up.

The sky was turning gray, and Noah thought to himself, "It looks like rain."

And so, with one, big last push, he got that reluctant elephant up into the ark.

Whew! 100 years is a long time to work on one job!

Noah sat down by the door of the ark and wiped the sweat from his forehead. At last he was finished with all that God had asked him to do. Noah was 600 years old when he did all that God asked him to.

Seven days went by, one for each day it took to make the world God was about wash clean.

And then the flood came.

"Now it's time for you and your family to get into the ark!" The Lord said to Noah.

So Noah and his wife, and his three sons; Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their wives; all got into the ark. Then the Lord himself reached down from heaven and shut the door.

Water poured from the sky and rushed up from the ground.

It rained.

And rained.

And rained.

The Great Flood had come.

Lightning flashed. Thunder crashed. The winds blew huge waves across the water.

The water lifted the giant wooden boat from the ground. It lifted it above Noah's house. It lifted it above the trees in his backyard.

The ark tossed in the storm above Noah's neighbor's house, above the whole town, and everyone who lived there.

It rained for forty days and forty nights.

It rained so hard that Noah's ark floated above even the highest mountains. There was no dry ground left at all.

And everything that breathed on the earth died.

What terrible things happen when people sin.

Noah and his family waited in the ark.

Up and down, and up and down, they tossed on the waves.

Everywhere they looked, they saw nothing but water.

For 150 days the ark tossed on those waves.

That's longer than a whole summer vacation. A lot longer. Only this couldn't have been much of a vacation.

What do you suppose they did all day? There wasn't cable TV to watch. No portable CD players to listen to. No video games to play. Maybe that's when Shuffleboard and "Pin the Tail on the Donkey" were invented.

I'll bet the donkey wasn't too happy about that.

But there was probably enough work to do every day, just trying to keep all those animals fed and the ark cleaned up.

And maybe at the end of a long day, they sat around the kitchen fire and told stories, and tried to remember what it was like to take a walk through the trees on a warm summer evening.

But with the racket of all those animals, and the creaking of the heavy wooden beams of the ark, how did they get to sleep at night?

And how did they keep from rolling out of their beds? Maybe they didn't even HAVE beds.

But God hadn't forgotten about them.

One day God caused a warm wind to blow. The rain stopped, and the water began to go down.

It was another 150 days before the ark came to rest on the very top of a mountain called Ararat.

Noah and his family and all those animals had all been together in that ark for almost a year!

After 40 more days, Noah opened the window of the ark and let a raven fly out. He wanted to see whether it could find some dry ground. Noah waited and waited, but the raven never came back.

So Noah tried again. This time he sent out a dove. The dove flew around and around. But it couldn't find any dry ground, and it had to come back.

Noah waited seven more days, and then he let the dove fly out again.

That evening the dove came back with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. That was a sign for Noah. Now he knew the water had gone down, because the dove had found an olive bush growing on dry land.

Noah waited another seven days, and then he sent the dove out again. This time it didn't come back. It had found a new place to live.

Finally, God told Noah it was all right to leave the ark. Noah opened the door, and all those animals rushed out!

They found new homes in the world God had washed clean.

God had saved them!

God provided the ark, and it had brought them all safely through the water. It carried them to a new life.

Noah was 601 years old when he left the ark. And was he ever glad to be walking on dry ground again!

Noah did a strange thing.

At least it would seem very strange to us today.

The ark was safely on dry ground again. A few minutes before, it was filled with growling, barking, honking, purring animals. Now the door was wide open and the giant boat sat on a mountain top, all empty and quiet.

All the animals had rushed out the door to fill the earth again.

So what was Noah doing?

He was picking up rocks.

He was so thankful to be alive, he was going to build an altar to God. So Noah piled up the rocks to build a fire on them. Then he took the best of some special animals he had kept aside, killed them, and burned them on the altar. This was a sacrifice Noah offered to God to thank him for saving his life.

It might seem like a strange thing to do.

It couldn't have been an easy thing to do either. But that's what people did in those long ago days. That way they would know that dealing with God is a very serious thing.

God was pleased with Noah's sacrifice. But most of all, God was pleased that Noah was truly thankful. And so God made this promise to Noah,

“Never again will I destroy the world with a flood.

I make this covenant with you and with all creatures.

From this day on,
there will always come a time for planting,

and a time for gathering up what was planted.

Day will always follow night,
the warm days of summer
will always follow
the cold and snow of winter,
as long as the earth shall be."

God knew that there is something inside each of us that tries to keep us from doing what is right. That is what causes all the trouble in the world. God also knew that one day he would send his Son to save us from that.

God saved Noah and his family to show us that he has the power to save us all, and one day bring us to a new life with him in heaven.

So God blessed Noah and his family. He told them to have many children and fill the earth with people again. He gave them the plants and the animals for food. And he made people the boss of everything on earth (Think of it this way. You might have a pet dog or a cat. There aren't any dogs who have pet people!).

And then God said to Noah, "Look up in the sky."

Noah looked up. The storm clouds were drifting away, the bright sun was shining against Noah's back. And against the dark grey sky, God made a brilliant rainbow appear. God said to Noah,

"You see, I have set my rainbow in the sky. This will be the sign of the covenant I have made with you and all creatures, never again to destroy the earth by a flood. It will always remind us of the promise between you and me."

So, the next time you see a rainbow, think of Noah and the flood. Remember that God loves you, and that no matter how bad the storm, there will always come a bright new day.

