

Genesis 9:8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ‘As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’ God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’ God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.’

Sermon

There’s a song by Patty Griffin called *Love Throws a Line*, that says that *Just before the flood comes, Love throws a line, to you and me.*

And I think that’s exactly what God is doing for humanity in the story of Noah.

The story begins with God recognizing and lamenting that we have pulled so far away from the hopes that God had for us. God sees that evil had entered into human minds, human lives, and human relationships. This story is told on the heels of the story of Cain and Abel, the brothers who let their pride and selfishness lead them down paths of jealousy, anger, and violence. And for generations, that kind of brokenness and sin continued to grow within the human race. And God saw this reality and was heartbroken. God saw the great waves of self-destruction, war, and division overwhelming humanity. But, *Just before the flood comes, Love throws a line, to you and me.*

And the animals are called together, and plans for an ark are laid out, and Noah and his family, the best of us, our greatest hope to become what God dreamed that we could be, were protected and safeguarded. They were set free from all that evil that had threatened to swallow them up. And they floated safely through the storm, as God washed away all that temptation to jealousy and anger, as the flood soaked through all those cycles of violence and competition, as God destroyed everything that would have held us back from the fullness of the life that we might live with God.

Lent is a time in which we Christians traditionally “give something up.” But, this year especially, it’s becoming more clear, that we’re not called into this season of sacrifice because God wants us to suffer. (In fact, I think God sees that we have all given up quite enough this year already.)

I think that Lent is far more helpful to us if we see it as a season that God can use to wash something out of our lives that is detrimental to our faith and our discipleship. Lent should be 40 days that God can use to remove whatever barriers we have built up between ourselves and God, and tear down the walls between us and the neighbors that God calls for us to love. It is 40 nights to cleanse our selfishness and pride. To scrub away our need for control or our idol of perfection. To drown out our worldly desire for wealth and material things.

So that on Easter Day, we are prepared, so that every part of us that is left can sing in full-throated joy at the news of resurrection. And so that our arms will be free of every burden and evil that might weigh us down, and we can grab hold to that life line that is thrown to us in Jesus our Lord. For our God will keep the promise of every rainbow, that He will pull us in, out of the flood, and toward the promise of New Life in Christ.

Thanks be to God. And Amen!



This sermon was first shared with Aurora First Presbyterian Church, by Rev. Doug Friesema. To receive future communications from the church, please contact:

1585 Kingston St. Aurora, CO 80010

firstauroraoffice@gmail.com

(303) 364-2609

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