

6/9/24 Sermon Genesis 9:8-17

In our Wednesday morning Bible study, we spend a lot of time talking about symbols. We talk about what they mean and how we perceive them. This week we got to talking about rainbows and it got me thinking that I haven't actually read the story of Noah in a very long time. And thinking about it, we all know the story of Noah. Right for the most part we know God came to him and said build an Ark. Take two of every animal. Sit out and wait and we will be good. That's the short version. But in the Bible, it takes three full chapters and I did not want to make Paul read all three of those chapters today. But as we read it we find out that there is so much more to the story of Noah. We find out that there is more than just him just building the ark and collecting the animals. Everybody is looking at me like dont ruin Noah, dont ruin Noah. You remember this time everybody on the earth was more nomads than they were anything else. So the first time I heard this story, I thought Noah was a farmer. He has all these animals all ready, so it has to be an easy choice for him to take them up. But they weren't. People were vegetarians and went from spot to spot wherever they could get food. They would finish it out and then move on. It seems pretty simple.

It seems like that wouldn't be a problem at all. But it created a huge problem because once somebody was done with the land, they would move on and somebody else would come in and there would be nothing for them. So everybody started fighting. Everybody started having wars over the land. Everybody started hating each other. They would get used to seeing people going to these parts, taking things and they knew there would be nothing left for them, So everybody at this time was fighting for survival. They were fighting for everything they could get. So instead of this nice little peaceful farmer with all of these animals. It was people in a very apocalyptic era. They were fighting for their lives. They were fighting for everything they could get their hands on. And God got fed up with them. God got very angry. Because he created us in his image. So by us fighting all the time and us hating one another we are creating the idea that God hates everything. That he hates all of us, that he wants war, that he wants blood shed, and he doesn't. That is the exact opposite of what he wanted. And he couldn't figure out what he had done wrong.

He couldn't figure out why all of these wonderful people that he had made in his image, why they were fighting. Why they hated each other. Why they couldn't help each other? Why they couldn't support each other? And he had enough. He said okay I made a mistake. People are terrible. They are born with sin. They are born with hate. They are born with anger. Somewhere I missed everything. So I am going to do a hard reboot to put it in terms we understand today. I am going to wipe everybody out and we are going to start from scratch. I am going to destroy the world. I am going to destroy everything on it. I am just going to start all over.

That is a much different image than the beginning of this story. Very different. And as God is thinking, he is getting ready to do all of this, he sees Noah and his family.

He sees them all doing their things, doing their things, supporting one another, trying to build a life for his family. And God says wait a minute. Maybe not everyone is terrible. Maybe there is some good still out there. So I am going to wipe out all of the bad and leave this one family. And we will see what happens. and he does. We know the floods come. We know that Noah and his family is on the ark with all the animals. We know Noah sends a raven one direction and a dove the other direction to find land, and he does. The waters receded. The ark landed. He built an altar to thank God for letting them survive. And God was happy. And God realized maybe I overreacted a little. Maybe I shouldn't have killed everybody. Maybe some of these traits that I see in the people are also in me. So he made the covenant with Noah. He made the agreement that he was not going to do that again and he put his bow in the sky so he could see it at all times and remember our covenant with him. If we try to live a righteous life. If we share love, if we help one another, if we do all the things that he has already laid out for us then we are good. And if we don't then he is going to find a better solution than he did the last time, than what he did that time. So it is a great thing. It is a great opportunity that God is sharing this covenant with us. The first covenant listed in the Bible, between himself and all of us through Noah.

And when we talk about symbols, we had an opportunity last week, we were thinking of symbols in terms we know. The way the symbols relate to us today, not necessarily how they relate to when the gospel was written. And that can change our perspective. But if we think about it, how often do we see symbols in our lives every day and we don't think about them.

Wednesday came in today, and I was really surprised because she noticed instantly that this symbol is different than last week. And I know this one gets noticed the absolute least in here. But she caught it right off hand. But how many other symbols are around here that we don't think about that means a covenant between us and God or us and something else. You know we have the symbol of God ever the choir lost, in three parts. We have the big cross. That is the obvious one that nobody misses. We have the cross up there talking about Jesus dying for us. We have a Bible over here. We have symbols everywhere. AND one of the biggest symbols we have, especially in the month of June, is a rainbow. And it has been raining a lot this month so we have been seeing them in the sky. But June is also PRIDE month. So we see rainbows in a lot of places throughout the world right now. Social media they are everywhere. People are wearing bright colors. And when we see that rainbow we are reminded aren't we of our covenant with God.

Most of the time we are not. Most of the time we do not think about it, what God did for us. We are still angry. We are still taking from people, still stealing. We are still hurting people. But everyday there is a rainbow somewhere to remind us that God loves us. It is there. It reminds us that He understands that we make mistakes, just like He did. We overreact to situations, just like He did. And that is his form of showing us

that He loves us. It is his reminder to us to take a second, take a step back when we get angry, and think about what is really going on in that situation. How can we find a better resolution to what is going on? He makes a point at the end of the story about shedding blood and how that is never the right thing. Taking somebody's life is never the right solution. Yet we do it all the time. We still do it all the time. And I know us, here, in this little church, in the middle of Iowa, 2000 years after Jesus, there is not a lot we can do to stop that.

But there are things we can do. If we see someone having a bad day, we can go up and talk to them. Like we said last week, one phone call can make a difference in someone's life. Even though someone is mad and angry and yelling at you, it doesn't mean they are mad and angry at you. It means they are mad and angry at something. And you can help stop that by simply saying a few kind words. You can change one person. And that one person is no longer angry at everybody and the next person they talk to they might be nice to. And then we can change things that way. We become a living rainbow. We become God's love that we see everywhere. When we see the symbols, we become the symbols ourselves. And if we do it often enough, people will not overlook us; they will see us sharing God's love. Sharing his teachings. Becoming a part of something so much greater than we are.