

WELCOME TO...
The Presbyterian Church of
Saint David

February 22, 2015



***THE LENTEN
JOURNEY
BEGINS***

Gathering: *Great is our God and abundant in power, with wisdom beyond our understanding. It is God who numbers all the stars and gives each of them a name, yet bends and heals the broken hearted and binds up all their wounds. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. And also with you.*

Opening Prayer *Everlasting God, you give strength to the powerless and power to the faint; you raise up the sick and cast out demons. Make us agents of healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creations. Amen.*

Hymn: God when I stand (1-2) **679**

Confession

Hymn: God when I stand (3-4) **679**

Focus Reading **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."

Hymn: God of the sparrow (1-3) **307**

Reflection: The Noah story of destruction is a difficult one for preachers (not to mention church school teachers, unless they domesticate it with cute pictures of the animals riding in the boat, without mentioning the death and destruction that necessitated the ride; oddly, Noah and his boat are a popular theme for toys and

nursery decorations!). These early chapters of Genesis have marvellously diverse images of a God who on the one hand tenderly makes clothing for Adam and Eve and takes walks in the garden at evening time, and yet on the other hand orders the destruction of all living things in the wake of sin and wickedness. However, this text is about remembering and reminding, and about relationship. Even God needs to be reminded, in this case by a beautiful bow (ironically, an ancient weapon) in the sky, of a promise God makes out of tenderness and compassion. This is not Noah's idea, the text indicates. God initiates the whole plan, the promise and the bow and the reassurance it offers. Yes, Noah has offered a fragrant offering after landing on dry ground, but God is the one who comes up with the idea of a promise, along with a reminder in the rainbow.

Our Lenten readings will say much about the relationship of humans and God. What does this story tell us about our ancient ancestors and their view of the world? Their view of God? The first thought that occurs to God after Noah's offering is a resolution never again to "curse the ground because of humankind...nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done." Do you believe that God needs to be reminded of that promise, or of any promise God makes?

Readings in future weeks will speak of covenant in terms of Israel, but this covenant, this beautiful moment of reconciliation and peace, is a universal one with all peoples and with nature itself, all living creatures. The blessing is for all, too, a renewal of the blessing at creation, along with the command to exercise dominion. At the beginning of our Lenten journey, how does this text speak to us about our relationship with God today? How does it call us to remember our relationship with the earth and with all living creatures? The Noah story is one of power and the checking of power. What power do we have over nature, and how have we used and misused that power? What do we need to remember in order to be in right relationship with God, with the earth, and with all peoples? What vision of reconciliation might we hold out to the world, as people of faith?

Hymn: God of the sparrow (4-6)

307

Marcus Borg, 21st century

"God wills, comprehensively, our well-being — not just my well-being as an individual but the well-being of all of us and of the whole of creation. In short, God wills our salvation, our healing, here on earth. The Christian life is about participating in the salvation of God."

Invitation: *As we gather around table, we ask... **Where is the glory now?** All that light from Epiphany - all that wonder and mystery turns to dust and ashes and a single set of footprints in the sand. **Where is the glory now?** All that remains is bread and wine and a table waiting for those willing to pick up the cross. **There the glory is to be found!** Let us break bread together and begin this new journey finding in the crumbs and the dust the deeper, broken glory of love's way.*

~ adapted from Roddy Hamilton

Hymn: Here is bread: here is wine (1) 546

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Celebrating the Sacrament

Hymn: Here is bread: here is wine (2) 546

Prayer after Communion

We thank you, gracious God, for your gracious gifts. We pray that through these same gifts you will preserve us in faith in you, unite us in your love, and confirm us in the hope of everlasting life, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: Now to Christ who loved us 554

*My fellow servants, we are one. The bread we share makes us one. The cup we pour makes us one. Even as our dearest sisters and brothers come and go from us, we are one. Even as we scatter from this place to so many diverse pursuits throughout this city, this country, this globe, we are one. **With gratitude we share the Table. With gratitude we depart. With gratitude we release one another, trusting in the One who makes us one.***

Go in peace. May you run and not be weary. May you rise up on the wings of eagles. May you know without doubt that the everlasting God goes with you!

Aberjhani, 21st century

*"Rainbows introduce us to reflections
of different beautiful possibilities
so we never forget that pain and grief
are not the final options in life."*