

## **The Covenant with Noah**

**Sunday, February 21, 2021**

*"Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."*

Genesis 9:15-16

There is always something exciting about seeing a rainbow. Sometimes stretched across the whole sky, sometimes brief and fleeting. They don't last long – they live in the liminal space between the storm and the sun.

Lent brings us to our own liminal space – a space without definition, where the spiritual and practical meet. A space of invitation and slowness. A space where we can reflect on what has been and might be. Noah and his family were in a liminal space in the Ark. They did not know how long they would spend afloat on floodwaters or what they would find when the water receded. While the instructions for building the Ark had a lot of details, weathering the storm and the rebuilding afterward didn't come with a handbook.

In many ways, the past year feels like its own floating ark. We have gathered the goods we need to survive, limited our circles and activities. We have shared extra work and the endless shifts. We have done our best to keep residents and patients comfortable, looking out through the portholes of our screens. In these months, we have caught glimpses of how Noah's family must have felt: cooped up, tired of having no place to go, utterly exhausted by the demands of everyday life on a floating zoo.

In the end, God gives Noah a rainbow as a promise that the world would never be destroyed again. While rebuilding after devastation is hard and does not come without loss – so too, a rainbow does not exist without rain. Illness and injuries of the body, mind and soul, leave us with scars. The process of healing is rarely a short or a straight path. Even with treatment plans that account for every possible unexpected outcome, how healing actually unfolds will never be fully known. Indeed, sometimes it doesn't unfold at all. We are limited in the promises that we can make.

The deepened prayer of Lent allows us to bring our fears and challenges to God, who cherishes our most guarded questions and worries. Frustrated and tired, we have so many of them. How long will I work from home? How long will I be furloughed? How soon can we get another nurse on this floor? How can I keep the residents' spirits up? Will my mother get better? Will I survive this? Will people take the vaccine? Why is God letting this happen? We do not know the answers to most of our questions. However, we do have God's promise to be with us and the knowledge that God's promises are not ours.

God makes a covenant with Noah, but also with his descendants. God does not promise there will never be another storm. God does not promise that storms will come without cost. Rather, God promises that all will not be lost; there will always be life after the storm.

The existence of a rainbow – born out of sun and storm - has unique beauty. It looks different each time, and it is only visible from that liminal place between sun and storm. No matter hard we may try to chase them, rainbows are elusive. Rather, they come to us when and where we are perhaps least prepared for them.

## **Brief daily reflections for the remainder of the week:**

### **Monday, February 22, 2021**

Like our experience of the last year, Noah didn't know how long the storm would last. Indeed, it feels as though we have been waiting for a rainbow for far too long. Where are you seeing flickers of rainbows?

### **Tuesday, February 23, 2021**

Life after a storm is rarely what we expect. Getting through something difficult does not come instantaneously or overnight. In what ways have we encountered the unexpected? How can we pivot our perspective this Lenten season?

### **Wednesday, February 24, 2021**

The covenant is made not just with Noah but with all living beings. God's promise is longer, wider and broader than we can ever imagine. Where have you experienced the



# Reflection for the First Week of Lent

promises of God's covenant in your own life?

## **Thursday, February 25, 2021**

Like Noah after the flood, many of us have been left reeling, wondering when we might finally enter the calm after the storm. We wonder how long it will take to heal. How can we build toward something that feels normal, knowing it cannot possibly be the same?

## **Friday, February 26, 2021**

The elusive nature of rainbows can make it seem as though all hope is lost. Yet, if nothing else, rainbows are our reminder of God's promise to show up. How is God showing up for you?

## **Saturday, February 27, 2021**

The sign God chooses to mark the covenant also reminds us that there is a necessary period of waiting. It will not be immediate and requires both the sun and the rain. We do not know what the sun will shine light upon, but we do know of its necessity. How have you experienced light in unexpected places this Lenten season?