

## **LENT 1**

**February 18, 2018**

**Pastor David P. Nelson**

**“When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between you and me and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.”**

**Grace and peace be unto you from God our creator and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

**There are a million jokes and funny stories about Noah and his ark and those great 40 days and 40 nights. My grandson Lucas once asked me, “who designed Noah’s ark”. I don’t know Lucas, who?.....He said, an ark-itect.**

**But the story of Noah and the ark and the great flood that destroyed the earth is anything but a cute, fairy tale with a happy ending. It is not a story that tells us that even if there is bad weather in our lives there will be a smile and a rainbow at the end. It doesn’t say that at all. The story is actually in some ways terrifying. And much like the season of Lent this story makes us tell the truth about who we are and who God is.**

**It is the story of a world made good and very good by a loving and creative God. It is the story of a sinful and rebellious humanity bent on doing things their way. It is the story of the breaking and debasing of what God intended and it is the story of the righteous wrath of God literally rained down upon all creation.**

**And in the part we read today, this is also a story of a rainbow and a promise. It is startling when you read this closely. We are so used to thinking that the rainbow is primarily for us....a beautiful sign in the sky to remind us that God will never do it again.....never destroy the earth out of righteous anger. Instead, the text says God puts the rainbow in the sky to remind God not to do it again. It is a sign to God to restrain, to check God's own wrath. It is an amazing act of self-limiting by God. That rainbow is a reminder to God of a promise to find another way.**

**And this week especially it got me thinking. Got me to thinking that God's restraint and self-limiting does not mean we cannot inflict unimaginable pain and horror upon one another and upon our world. And we surely do....day after painful day. Night after broken night. And when we do, God must again be in such awful despair at what we do to one another or what we will not do for one another. And that we are still here must mean God is looking at the rainbow.**

**17 innocent men, women, and children killed in Parkland. God must be looking at the rainbow.**

**Scores of innocents brutally killed by ISIS. God must be looking at the rainbow.**

**Thousands killed in the name of God. God must be looking at the rainbow.**

**Human beings trafficked...sold like commodities day after day. God must be looking at the rainbow.**

**A whole world full of food and child after child after child gets none. God must be looking at the rainbow.**

**Human dignity robbed and people with small voices run over while the things that are needed are kept in fewer and fewer hands. God must be looking at the rainbow.**

**People made in the image of God denigrated for the color of their skin or the place of their birth. God must be looking at the rainbow.**

**For me these continued tragedies of our inhumanity are signs that God sees the rainbow – God restrains God’s hand, even as the Divine heart breaks and God promises to find another way.**

**For me, Lent is about just this.....It is recognizing God’s rainbow colored way of looking at the world—God allowing us to live and go on even in our wickedness. But Lent is also the time when God doesn’t just NOT do something but does the most amazing and most gracious of all things. God finds another way. It is the way of the Cross. It is the way of God’s deepest expression of love for us ...not when we were at our best but when we were at our worst.....WHILE we were yet sinners.**

**In these 40 days when the rains don't come.....we travel towards the cross where God rather than seek to punish shares the consequences of our sin.....no not just shares but bears what we have done.....bears it in wounded hands and the giving of life itself. In Jesus life and death God says that retribution and destruction and punishment are not God's final word. Forgiveness is the final word.....Love is what God does.**

**These 40 days of repentance remind us to tell the truth.....the truth about us and about our God. They remind us of the great 40 days and 40 nights of rain that flooded over human sin. These days remind us of rainbows and crosses. Not sweet signs of rosy days ahead but signs of truth....signs of just how lost and broken we are. A rainbow as a sign to God to hold back...to find another way. A cross. A sign of the way God found. A suffering God who found a way to us when we could not find a way to God. A Savior who bore the sin of a world which had no other way to be forgiven and healed.**

**These are the days of rainbows and crosses. These are the days and nights of God's promise kept at the most unspeakable of costs. Take these things to heart. They are for us and for the life of the world.**