

Sunday's Sermon

GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

February 18, 2018

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Look Up and Remember
Genesis 9:8-17

May God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, give you grace and peace.
Amen.

For this first Sunday in Lent, as we journey through these days of self-examination and repentance, our Hebrew scripture encourages us to “look up and remember.”

When we want someone to recall something, we prefer to encourage the positive, so we say, “please remember.” And to that end, we use lots of things to jog our memories.

The most practical way is to actually write down a note or record the information on our Google calendar so that we can receive an alert. Another way may be to tie a string around our finger, or in the olden days, men used to tie a knot in their handkerchiefs to remind themselves that there is something that needs to be brought to mind.

Today our minds are drawn to God's desire to be in relationship with us through the making of “covenants.”

This particular covenant that God makes with us is not dependent on us at all, it is not a bilateral agreement like a contract, with God and us having equal privileges and responsibilities, but it is a unilateral, one sided promise that God establishes, and for which He holds Himself accountable.

It is God's way of saying “I'm committed to you so deeply, I am intimately invested in your well-being, I am bound to you with an everlasting love, so I am willing to bear the weight of the responsibility to keep this relationship intact.”

Specifically, our eyes are directed toward recalling a sacred agreement that is presented to us in the form of a visual aid, the rainbow.

Some look up at the rainbow and remember the childhood story that presents the rainbow as a moral lesson about how God wants all people of all colors to respect each other and to live together in harmony and peace.

Others have grown up with the myth of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow; envisioning a stash of cash.

And others, during difficult times, often use the quote “without the rain, there would be no rainbow,” to reassure themselves that their difficult situation will eventually pass.

For believers, to look up and remember, is to remind ourselves of a visible promise God has made with Himself and with all creation.

*“Rainbows are beautiful, I love their soft hue.
It brings God’s promise to me in clear view.
A covenant of love after the flood had gone:
To show my own heart the glorious new dawn.”*

By Patricia Kubicki

The unique thing about this covenant is that it is made with all living creatures; those made in His image and those created by His wonderful imagination, whether human or animal, wild or tame, flowers or weeds, rocks or sand, all of God’s creation is precious to Him.

This promise comes about after a God who looked at His creation and said, “it is beautiful and good”, to a time where God looked at His creation and expressed “grief and regret.”

Listen to how *The Voice* translation puts it.

*By Noah’s time nearly all people were drugged on the fumes of their egos.
Wickedness had become the number one, all-consuming human addiction.*

The Eternal One saw that wickedness was rampaging throughout the earth and that evil had become the first thought on every mind, the constant purpose of every person.

At that point God’s heart broke, and He regretted having ever made man in the first place.

So, what is God to do? Wipe them all out.

*“So, the Lord came down to look around a spell
And there He found Noah behavin’ mighty well
And that is the reason the Scriptures record
Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”*

The Statler Brothers

It was God's grace that provided the rescue for Noah and his family. The scriptures say that God was pleased with Noah.

God saw someone worth saving and someone with whom to begin humanity's fresh start and a new future.

And in the aftermath of the watery death and destruction of what was once precious to God, He gives His Word, a forever promise.

The rainbow is not just a pretty fixture in the sky, but more importantly, it is a reminder to God of His everlasting commitment to us.

Despite what humanity does or does not do, God says, "**I** will not flood all the earth again, but this is what **I** will do. **I** will continue to display my graciousness in the midst of a sinful world."

This past week our country experienced another gun related tragedy. If you saw the pictures that were being shown, one of the scenes was of a parent consoling and comforting their child. On the parent's forehead was something unexpected. Apparently, the mom had received ashes before being re-united with her child.

I couldn't take my eyes off of that picture. Just think about it. The ashes, a reminder of our mortality; in the shape of the cross, a reminder of another covenant made with us, sealed with Christ's own body and blood. In the midst of death and destruction, God gives His Word; a testimony to the promise of life, right there on her forehead, how powerful.

The cross, just like the rainbow, reminds **us** that God does not give up on us, and reminds **God** not give up on us. That truth should comfort our hearts and fill us with hope.

Today you have heard the words of poets and songwriters in an effort to help you better understand the extent of God's desire to be in relationship with us through the making of "covenants."

So, my final offering to you is this, a rephrasing of a line from the great theologian Dr. Seuss from the book *Horton Hears a Who!*

"I meant what I said, and I said what I meant,

Look up and remember,

God keeps His promises, 100%."

Amen.