

"Rainbow Covenant" Genesis 9:1-17

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They have created an app to detect when iPhone users are using their phone out of boredom.

If the app detects boredom, it will pop up and tell the iPhone user to stop it and connect with something around them.

It can tell you're bored by how you use your phone.

When people are bored they tend to open lots of apps, check Facebook 10 times in 4 mins.

People are seeking connection and gratification.

We live in a world where people are constantly seeking connection.

Some will try to fill it by mindlessly using technology to connect

Some will try to fill it with shallow or cheap highs that don't last very long:

Some keep themselves so busy that it looks like they have connection,  
but actually feel quite alone.

People are looking for something deep and meaningful.

In a society where 1/4 people say they don't believe in God,

People are yearning for the divine.

A relationship with the Divine connects us deeply to something greater than ourselves,

connects us to a sacred community of real friendships,

and connects us to our best selves.

A relationship with the Divine grounds us through the storms of life.

A relationship with the Divine opens our eyes to the beauty around us,

so that we might enjoy, delight in our lives.

A relationship with the Divine helps to keep us from thinking we have all the answers,

gives us the humility to seek and as such keeps us from doing really stupid things that hurt us and those we care about.

So, this fall we look at how to tie into the sacred,  
how to get a taste of the divine,  
how to build deep connections that satisfy for the long-term.

We start this Sunday with what the divine has done for us:

God has not just asked us out on a date,  
God is hanging out at the altar,  
ready to love us, all of us - failings and victories together -  
for our whole lives;  
until death...brings us into the full embrace of the Divine.  
God has promised to show up.  
God has offered us a rainbow covenant.

#### PRAYER

Who has heard of Harvey Milk?

[first openly gay person to hold high public office in a major American city, San Francisco.]

In the early 1970s Harvey Milk met Gilbert Baker and they became friends.

When Harvey was elected to the SF Board of Supervisors, he asked Gilbert Baker

to come up with a symbol of pride for the gay community,  
a symbol of hope [instead of pink triangle associated with Nazis]

Harvey knew his time in office was going to be difficult -

indeed it was - he was assassinated -

and he wanted the gay community to have a symbol of hope and pride.

Gilbert Baker crafted the first rainbow gay pride flag as a sign of hope.

Since the 1970s the symbol has caught on and spread.

[<http://www.sanfrancisco.travel/article/brief-history-rainbow-flag>]

Rainbows are a symbol of hope even beyond the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.

Who here has seen the muppet movie?

The Muppet Movie begins with Kermit the Frog singing about the Rainbow Connection.

He is hoping for something more and eventually sets off to Hollywood to find it.

Out of the storms or swamps of life, rainbows are a symbol of hope.

Hope in something better,

or as Kermit alludes to, hope in a vision of a more beautiful world.

When God makes a covenant with Noah after the flood,

God chooses the rainbow as a symbol of that covenant, because it is a covenant of hope.

God is under no illusions: God knows that we are imperfect and fallible human beings.

God says as much in just a couple verses before our reading today.

But God has decided to stick with us and love us anyway.

God is a groom or bride that already knows their partner is a horrible gift-giver.

Only a few chapters earlier God decided to wipe out most of creation in a flood,

But

God changes over the course of the flood. God changes.

Instead of trying to wash away all the evil of the world,

God decides to hope,

and establishes a rainbow covenant of love.

Instead of wielding a mighty bow and shooting down evil,

God hangs up the bow in the sky,

chooses to hope,

and names a rainbow covenant of love.

Instead of using all of God's power for destruction,

God chooses to self-limit God's own power

and redirect it into love,

hoping that the world will respond in love.

Because God chooses to hope, God lifts up a symbol of hope:

a rainbow, a mystical, transient collection of color that inspires awe and wonder.

a rainbow that invites dreams and visions of what could be (as Kermit says).

When the world gets trying,

when the politicians push God's buttons,

and Joe Smo thinks he is God,

when children are starving and nations warring.

When God might be very well be tempted to wash it all away,

God might gather the clouds and prepare the rainstorm,

but with the clouds comes a rainbow.

And the rainbow reminds God of the covenant to love the whole world;

The rainbow reminds God to hold the whole world in compassionate hands of hope.

And God does just that: God holds out hope.

Instead of condemning and unjustly punishing,

God invites the world, including us, to lean on her everlasting arms.

The rainbow symbolizes not only God's promise to love us,

but also God's hope for us.

God hopes we will honor life and pursue life-giving activities.

God hopes we will love one another and care for all,

so that all might have enough.

God hopes we will forgive our brother, or sister or neighbor.

God hopes we will be our best selves.

God hopes because God made us and called us good.

God knows we are good.

God knows we are capable of tremendous goodness,  
tremendous love, tremendous compassion.

God knows we are smart enough to figure out the problems,  
if we can actually put down our pride and work together.

In the Song of Solomon the people of God are referred to as God's beloved.

I love that image for our relationship with God.

When we look at our beloved, we aren't blind to the other's faults,  
but we are open to their potential - we hope in them.

God is not blind to our faults, but God is hopeful and believes in our potential for goodness.

So God is there, waiting for us at the altar.

Ready to love us more than we can imagine.

As we begin this season of tying into the sacred,

imagine a God that is eager and willing to love us fully.

As we look at ways to strengthen our faith and belief in God,

imagine a God that hopes and believes in us.

As we seek a deep and meaningful relationship with the Divine,

imagine a God that wants a deep connection with us.

As we foster a commitment to lean in and know God through loving actions,

imagine a God that has made a rainbow covenant to stick with us through the storms,  
hoping in the goodness God knows is there.

May we be open to God's covenant to love us just as we are. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God, we bring to you the prayers for those we love and care for - for family, friends, and strangers. We bring to you prayers for healing, for compassion, for hope. We know that you hear our prayers and promise to be there with us through the storms and joys of our lives, as you have been with people throughout the ages - from the time of Noah up to today. So we join our voices together to say the prayer that your beloved people have said throughout the ages and around the world, Our Father...