

**Wednesday March 8, 2006**  
**7:00 a.m. Holy Communion**  
**Sermon**

People were so horrible that God was willing to cull the whole flock and start over with one righteous man, his family, and two of every bird and land animal, or seven pairs of every clean animal, depending on which set of instructions Noah chose to follow. There was evil, corruption, drunkenness and debauchery. The flood wiped away all of that. So God set his rainbow in the clouds and promised never again to destroy all the earth. So what does Noah do? He gets blasted off of wine—apparently he had seven pair of every kind down in the hold of the Ark—and then he passes out naked on the lawn. Thank God drunkenness and debauchery had been destroyed!

You know this whole ordeal seems to have been a waste of time. Humankind before the flood and humankind after the flood are both humankind. Righteous Noah is wicked and sinful. The flood didn't do any good. If approached literally the flood certainly was a waste of time. If approached metaphorically the story might shed light on us in our Lenten journeys.

We refer to Noah and the flood in our Baptismal Liturgy, speaking of how God drowned the sinful and brought Noah safely to dry land. The waters have a purifying quality—they wash clean the earth. As we have just seen, scarcely have the bathwaters receded than people are up to no good again. In our baptisms Sin is put to death. The old Sinful person is drowned and a new, Righteous person emerges. We are clean and Christ lives in us. Yet the bathwaters do not eradicate Sin. All of us are living proof of that. Heck, I'm constantly providing opportunities for you to forgive your pastor. Our baptisms are wonderful things. They initiate us into the body of Christ and are constant reminders to us of God's promises of life and salvation. They are not the end of our story.

Every day as a baptized Christian is a struggle. I don't think I need to tell you that you have struggles in your lives. Baptism is not an end to struggles, but it is our strength in those struggles. Every day, every second, in a constant, ongoing act God is drowning Sin and raising up righteousness in each of us. The splash of water and the speaking of the Word happen to us once; God's work is ongoing. We spend every day on the Ark.

That rainbow still hangs in the sky, and God didn't put it there for nothing. I don't wear this rainbow stole because it looks good. The text tells us plainly enough that God hangs the rainbow in the clouds as a reminder of God's covenant never again to destroy life with a flood. One has to wonder if God's reason is that God knows that the flood doesn't do any good. The floodwaters had scarcely receded and Noah was blacked out in his birthday suit. The only way God could destroy Sin through wrath would be to destroy everything. The rainbow is God's radiant promise that this will not be God's course of action.

Friends of Christ, as haunting and cruel as the flood story is, the rainbow is the promise that God chooses love. God would rather love than destroy. God would rather justify than condemn. God would rather give life than death, and Friends of Christ God does give love, God does give life, and God does justify. As surely as a baptism is good now and forever the rainbow is good news now and forever. The sign in the clouds is that so long as there is light and water, so long as there is cloud and rain, so long as there is anything that is, our end is not in wrath, but in the boundless love of God.

Amen