

## **Feb, 18 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent Year B 2024**

\*Genesis 9:8-17 The rainbow Psalm 25:1-10 In God trust,  
1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:18-22 The cleansing of sin Mark 1:9-15 Baptism,  
temptation, preaching **Sermon: The Sign of Love**

Today our text is literally one of the colorful and graphic in all of scripture, it is the sign of the rainbow after the flood in the story of Noah. The story of Noah is full of symbolism and power. Many other cultures have flood and or rainbow stories, but only the Hebrews connect the two narratives. For the rainbow is the sign of God's peace after great trial. The last time I preached this text was when the grandson of Pete Halper, named Noah was baptized here at Trinity. There are many baptismal and theological parallels. In my first church, many years ago some folks come up to me and wanted to be baptized, and they desired full immersion. As a young pastor I looked for advice from the Session and indeed the Book of Order does provide for sprinkling, pouring or immersion. These are all methods used in the early church. But we had no baptismal pool. So the Session members suggested three possible alternatives. 1. We could do it in the Snake river, frontier style, this was a very common and dangerous method in Idaho 2. (Perhaps my favorite) The woman's guild volunteered to decorate a horse trough, with some nice handmaid lace covering. 3. The most interesting was from a Session member who owned an amphibious vehicle called a duck, which the whole church could fit

into, we would drive it down to the lake, the Pastor and the family would go over the side and presto.

Well, I proposed this to the family and I was a bit relieved but not surprised when they decided to join another church.

I tell that story because the Presbyterian Duck had much in common with Noah's Ark. We could fit the whole church on that Duck and we used to do it for our Annual church picnic. The Ark also carried everybody, Noah's family, and all the animals. It also carried them to safety like the Ark, and like the Ark it was not an elegant but it was a useful vehicle. Ark in Hebrew means box, like the box Moses was set adrift in, and it means stable, and Noah's Ark certainly was a stable, loaded with every kind of animal.

The Duck was also handed down from past generations like the **promise that was given Noah, that is handed down from generation to generation about God's peace given to us.**

The Duck was also very strange, it was a hybrid of a land vehicle and sea going vehicle, It was not stylish but it could go anywhere.

For many years Noah's Ark has been considered a sign and symbol of the church. The Church is not stylish, it is a strange hybrid of many different organizations, but it can go anywhere from our neighborhood to the most distant and isolated mission field. The Duck has another

similarity with today's passage, it was once a weapon of war, that we were using for peaceful purposes.

**The rainbow, is the sign of God's covenant, and Hebrew word for Bow means war bow.**

**To see the bow laid down as in a rainbow**, rather than upright was a sign of peace, a sign that was seen in the clouds which for ancient people was the place where you understood events. In my first rodeo as Interim here a young couple sought Trinity out because they wanted to baptize their child but their home Roman Catholic church barred Gay couples from being the God parents, which eliminated the child's uncle from that role. I was very proud of our Session everyone took it seriously and considered carefully what to do. But more important they were all in for inclusion as opposed to exclusion. The rainbow flag and Noah's rainbow have something in common. Fortunately a few years ago the Catholics and Presbyterians signed an agreement that they would recognize each other's baptisms. For me the sacrament was special. The church was not at war, it was choosing peace and reconciliation. On a somewhat humorous note we had to agree to use water, say the name of the Trinity and be willing "upon demand" to produce evidence of the Baptism. I sometimes fantasize that Swiss Guards from the Vatican will challenge our record keeping but we will be ready. I know that in these traumatic days our ethics of inclusion and love will be challenged, but I know Trinity is ready.