

Sunday 10 May 2020, 11am

Christ Church New Southgate & Friern Barnet  
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*Reading: Genesis 9.8-17*

<sup>8</sup>God said to Noah and his sons, <sup>9</sup>“I am now making my covenant with you and with your descendants, <sup>10</sup>and with all living beings—all birds and all animals—everything that came out of the boat with you. <sup>11</sup>With these words I make my covenant with you: I promise that never again will all living beings be destroyed by a flood; never again will a flood destroy the earth. <sup>12</sup>As a sign of this everlasting covenant which I am making with you and with all living beings, <sup>13</sup>I am putting my bow in the clouds. It will be the sign of my covenant with the world. <sup>14</sup>Whenever I cover the sky with clouds and the rainbow appears, <sup>15</sup>I will remember my promise to you and to all the animals that a flood will never again destroy all living beings. <sup>16</sup>When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between me and all living beings on earth. <sup>17</sup>That is the sign of the promise which I am making to all living beings.”

*Sermon*

We are not forgotten, we are remembered by God

As lockdown began, so a trend began as rainbows appeared in our windows and across the internet. Rainbows to spot on our daily walk, rainbows to encourage one another to stay safe and to support the NHS. Did you make one? It was one of the first activities we did in our home-school. A rainbow is a symbol that we love, a symbol that the rain has ended, and sunshine has appeared. Rainbows make us smile and think of our favourite things!

While rainbows appeal to all of us, they have a special place in the bible, right at the beginning of the story of God and humanity – the story of Noah, the flood and the ark.

God is said to have seen the wickedness of humanity and so destroys it with a flood, all except one good man – Noah, all of his family and every animal who went into the ark two by two. After 40 days and nights, the rain stops and as sign that the earth would never flood again, God puts a rainbow in the sky. God promises to remember us and not forget us.

A few years ago, I went with my Dad to visit my aunt in hospital, she was incredibly ill and close to death from a condition called Lupus. As we emerged bleary eyed from the ward and stepped into the busy London street, it seemed incredible to us that the buses were still running, cabbies were honking their horns and children still playing in the school yard. Our world was stopping and everything else was in full flow. How did they not know?

For some of us our experience of this pandemic is painful – some of us have lost loved ones, some of us are incredibly lonely, our mental health may be failing, our financial outlook is bleak. For too many of us Covid 19 has left our world broken, chaotic and exposed great injustice in our society.

Equally some have been able to find peace, spend more time with our households, gardens have been tended and hobbies created. We have delighted in a slower life where we have appreciated everything more and cherished our relationships with each other. What has your experience been so far?

Rainbows are a refraction of light between the sun and water in the air. As light bends moving from air through water it does so at an angle. The water changes the direction of the light and so bends at a different angle creating a bow, a rainbow. The critical thing about a rainbow is that they only appear in

the sky when there has been rain, when there has been a storm.

Perhaps you are in a storm today. What kind of storm is it? It might be an annoyingly long grey drizzle kind of storm, or could be a full on one with lightening, thunder clashes and driving rain.

Hear today that God has not forgotten you. Our lives may be broken, it might seem like everything good has ended – God has not forgotten you. Only in the storm does a rainbow come. Only when it's raining, does a rainbow come. And that rainbow is not trite, that rainbow is not a twee image but an overarching sign that God has not forgotten you. God has not forgotten any of us, for it he that has created the world, he that has brought light into darkness and created beauty.

The Met office website tells us that when we see a rainbow, we see it as a rainbow in front of us, and it is centred on our shadow. Now in week 8 of lockdown, the shadow is cast long behind us. We grieve for those who have died. We intercede for those who have been so brave in hospitals caring for others, in nursing homes with the elderly, for those essential workers paid little to be on the frontline.

When we think of Noah, we realise he knew a bit about lockdown- family and animals all crammed into the ark – running low on food and supplies, and desperate for good news by raven or dove post. Tonight, we'll listen with bated breath to what our government will say we can do next. We stand now with a long shadow of lockdown behind us, and we are casting our eyes to the horizon hoping to see a rainbow.

The promise God makes to Noah, he also makes to all living beings – to all animals, and to all of humanity. He acknowledges that storms exist, that evil and great sorrow exists and may come to us, but still he holds us and

does not forget us but remembers us. This image is from a window in New York, a rainbow made of post it notes. A rainbow is a note to all of us to remember that God does not forget us, he remembers us.



Rainbows are unsurprisingly used by charities supporting the bereaved, and as symbol of struggle and hope for the gay community. God's promise to Noah is to remember us, and this promise is echoed throughout the bible, that God always remembers us and is present with us at all times, in the trials and triumphs of life.

While most rainbows in windows have been made by children, some artists have also taken on the challenge. Damien Hirst released a free image recently of a rainbow. In each colour are wings of butterflies. For rainbows are a sign of a new life, a fresh start, the time after the storm has passed and a new dawn is coming.



Jesus Christ came into this broken world and discovered all of its shadows and darkness.

Into our world he brought light, just as he brought light to the world in creation. Into our lives now, Jesus brings light. It might be light that is refracted, that looks a bit awkward, that looks the wrong shape, but it is the shape of God's arms holding our world.

He understands our shadowlands, and only from this he brings not even just light but every colour of the rainbow. As king of all kings, he sends his Spirit, he shows us love, hope, life, and cares for us all. For each of us in darkness, or weary from our storm please hear that God has not forgotten you, he has remembered you. For each of us, able to see the sunshine, may we hold those who have enough to you in prayer.

May we as a community not give up bearing with each other, praying for each other and caring for each other for these are signs of God's light, love and hope. God remembers us because he made us, he remembers us because he knows us, he remembers us because he loves us. Storms have come, storms may remain, but God also remains constant in his love for us. He remembers us, he has not forgotten us.

May we be encouraged by the next rainbow we see, not just to think happy thoughts but know that we are not forgotten. The shadows and storms of today are not to be forgotten but understood as a place in time from which we will be able to see a new light for God. Light that brings hope, light that bends and brings out the fullness of God's light and light that assures us of God's presence with us in every storm.