

“The Rainbow Connection”

Rev. Ken McGarry at The First Church in Stoneham, Massachusetts

February 21, 2021 – First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 9:8-17; Mark 1:9-15

“Why are there so many songs about rainbows and what’s on the other side?” We were once asked this in song by a banjo-plucking frog named Kermit at the beginning of the Muppet Movie. Kermit’s song echoed the ballad of Dorothy Gale of Kansas who sang decades before about a place somewhere over the rainbow, where dreams come true and “trouble melts like lemon drops.”

Both of these beautiful songs about rainbows were offered at the beginnings of journeys the singers would take to find something better in their lives. Kermit, along with his Muppet pals, was journeying to seek success and to make people happy in show business while staying away from the evil Doc Hopper, who was trying to capture Kermit to make him the spokesfrog of his struggling frog leg restaurant business. Dorothy was seeking a more colorful existence than she experienced in Kansas, while staying away from dog-hating Mrs. Gulch/The Wicked Witch of the West, only to find that all Dorothy ever really wanted was right in her own home.

As we begin the season of Lent and our own journeys through it, our songs and stories could echo those of Dorothy and Kermit, as we, too, journey to seek better things in life while

staying or turning away from the more wicked things in life. And as we step forward on this journey together today, we join with Dorothy and Kermit not only in seeking something better in life, but in pondering the rainbow, which is the subject of today's reading from the Hebrew scriptures.

Unfortunately, we often talk about the rainbow story in church with only our children, telling them that it was God's "all-clear" sign at the end of the story of Noah and the ark. But the sign of the rainbow is actually something much more than a just a signal to Noah and his family that the flood-time was over, and it conveys an important message for God's children of all ages. It is a message of God's great love for the world and it is a herald that calls for us to become so loving.

In the flood story of Genesis, we find the world returning to a state of chaos as it had been prior to the seven days of creation, in which God called a beautiful and good world to come out of the chaotic abyss. God created people to continue the work of creating a beautiful and good world, but since the beginning of time, people have worked to undo God's work, being violent and destructive. And so the flood was a reboot, a return to the beginning, when people could try again to get it right and God would love them just as they are, even when they act upon their potential to do great evil.

When the bow of God, a war bow, was hung in the sky, it was a sign that God's war against the disordered abyss was over, and that the world could be at peace knowing that God was at

peace. Even if people continued to be violent and destructive, there would be no more rebooting of all creation. The rainbow was a sign of this promise of God *to* all creation. And it was a sign *for* God to see, a reminder of this everlasting covenant through which God would view even the worst acts of people and remain loving.

God has hung up the bow, God and hopes that we, God's beloved children, will find a way to hang up our bows as well. God never seeks for us to destroy ourselves, others, or the world God cherishes; rather, God gazes upon us through the rainbow of divine love and is always looking expectantly for us to turn and return to God and a more blessed way of love. As God will not reboot us again, we must find a way to reboot ourselves, to begin again and start living in new ways that are not violent or destructive. We must find ourselves making peace in the world and bringing peace to the planet and all its creatures. We should look through the rainbow ourselves and see in its beautiful ROYGBIV a lesson that a united collection of various colors is glorious: A band of Red, Yellow, Black, White being united as one is glorious. A united ray of LGBTQ and Straight is glorious. One world of people talking a thousand different languages and worshipping the divine in a thousand different ways is glorious, if we can only find a way to be one.

So this Lenten season, let us ponder how we might reconfigure our lives so as to make them more peaceful and peace-making. Let us consider what we might need to get rid of or add to our

lives to do this. Let us rededicate ourselves to following God's way of hanging up the bow. Let us dream about what's on the other side of the rainbow, where peace reigns, and let us grasp that dream and bring it into our consciousness, making real the hope of a world filled with God's life and love, so that all of God's children alike can say, truly, there's no place like home. Amen.