

Whenever You See A Rainbow

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you could, with the Lord's help, if you could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in Genesis chapter 9. Genesis chapter 9 and if we read again at verse 12. Genesis chapter 9 and verse 12. And God said, this is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for all future generations.

I have set my bow in the cloud and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh and so on. Mr. Noah built an ark. The people thought it such a lark. Mr. Noah pleaded so, but into the ark they would not go. Down came the rain and torrents, down came the rain and torrents, down came the rain and torrents and only eight were saved. The animals went in two by two. The elephant, the giraffe and the kangaroo all were safely stowed away on that great and awful day. Whenever you see a rainbow, whenever you see a rainbow, whenever you see a rainbow, remember God is love. You know we're familiar with the children's chorus having probably sung it as a child or even taught it to children, but it's not only a happy hymn, it's also a very solemn song isn't it, because it reminds us about the sad reality that hearts can harden to the warnings of God's word. Hearts can harden to the warnings of God's word.

But you know what ought to arise from the well-known Bible story of Noah and the ark, it is not only the horror of God's punishment of sin, but also the hope of God's promise of salvation.

And as we read the hope of God's promise, it came in the form of that rainbow and we're familiar with the sight of a rainbow, not only in the sky, but we've also become very familiar with the sight of a rainbow in the homes of, in the windows of many homes throughout our nation.

Of course since the 1970s the rainbow had become a symbol of the LGBT pride movement, but thankfully the rainbow has been reclaimed and it's been redefined over the past few weeks as this symbol of thanksgiving, where children and adults, they've placed rainbows in their window as this symbol of thanksgiving to our NHS staff and all the key workers who are putting themselves at risk during this coronavirus pandemic.

[3 : 1 0] But you know to use the words of the children's chorus, whenever you see a rainbow, remember. And what do you to remember? Well you're to remember as the children's chorus went, remember God's love, but at present whenever you see a rainbow, remember to pray for the NHS, remember to pray for the care workers, remember to pray for the key workers, whenever you see a rainbow, remember to pray, but more so whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope, whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope. But you know our hope is not in our government as helpful as it is, our hope is not in our NHS as important as it is, our hope is not even in ourselves, no matter how much care and compassion we show to one another. My friend our only hope in the midst of this storm is in the maker of heaven and earth. Why? Because he created the rainbow.

He created the rainbow, regardless of how it's redefined, our covenant making and covenant keeping God, he's the one who put the rainbow in the sky. And so whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope, whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope. And I just want us to think about the rainbow this morning and see that the rainbow is a symbol, it's a symbol of restraint, the rainbow is a symbol of renewal, and the rainbow is a symbol of revelation. So the rainbow is a symbol of restraint, a symbol of renewal and a symbol of revelation. So first of all the rainbow is a symbol of restraint. A symbol of restraint. We'll read again in verse 13. It says, I have set my bow in the cloud and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. Now the biblical narrative of Noah's ark, it's very familiar to us. Even those who have never even read the Bible, they know about this man, Noah, who saved his family from a devastating flood which destroyed the world. And as you know, the story of Noah and the flood, it's so well known to us that it even became a Hollywood blockbuster back in 2014. But as I've said before, you know, I don't think it would matter how many special effects were used to create that Hollywood movie. The reality was far worse because the death of all mankind, it certainly wasn't entertainment for Noah and his family. Watching the world dying before their eyes, it wasn't movie material and it wouldn't have been award-winning to see the whole of Noah's community being drowned by this unstoppable flood. My friend, when God spoke to the world, it was a scene that Noah and his family would have etched in their minds for the rest of their lives. But as we said, when the horror of God's punishment of sin, when it fell upon this world, it was always intertwined with the hope of God's promise of salvation. The horror of

God's punishment of sin was always intertwined with the hope of God's promise of salvation. And you know, we can see that when you read through the narrative of Genesis, because when we're introduced to Noah in Genesis 6, we're told that there's a problem. And the problem is sin. And the sin of man had become so awful that the Lord said, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven.

Everything, he says, that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife and your sons' wives with you.

[7 : 40] And so what we see there is right at the beginning before the flood even took place, the horror of God's punishment of sin was being intertwined with the hope of God's promise of salvation. And we see that because for 120 years, for 120 years, Noah, he not only prepared the way of salvation by building an ark, he also preached the way of salvation by calling people to come into the ark. Because Noah, as the Bible affirms to us, Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

Noah was a man who pointed people to safety. Noah was a man who urged his community to be ready. He exhorted and encouraged lost sinners to seek redemption inside the ark. And you know, for a whole lifetime before the horror of God's punishment, for a whole lifetime, the hope of God's promise of salvation was being held out to lost sinners. But as we know the story, the awful tragedy was that the people of Noah's community, they heard the gospel their whole life.

But sadly, they became complacent. They were comfortable with their life. And they were content with their lot. And the result was that they refused to listen. They ignored the warnings. They walked away from the preacher of righteousness. And you know what happened? Their door of opportunity, it finally shut with the door of the ark. And you know, my unconverted friend, like the people of Noah's day, you've had years of opportunity. You've had years of hearing the gospel. You've had years of being reminded about sin, righteousness, and the judgment to come. You've heard that Jesus Christ is the remedy to our ruin. He's the solution to our sin.

He's the cure to our chaos. You've heard all that before. But you know, with all that's going on, in our nation, and indeed our world, you know, we're being reminded what the world of Noah's day was being reminded. Because we're being reminded that the wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. My friend, our greatest problem is not the coronavirus as devastating as it is. Our greatest problem is sin, the sin within our own heart.

Because as the Bible affirms to us, the wages of sin is death. And because the wages of sin is death, you know, Noah, he witnessed the horror of this world becoming an increasingly, increasingly bigger graveyard. Because the wages of sin is death, Noah witnessed the horror of this world becoming an increasingly bigger graveyard. Because you know, when you read through the narrative of Genesis, up until this chapter, the fall takes place in Genesis 3. The wages of sin enter. And the wages of sin is clearly seen in Genesis 4, because there's the first burial there.

[11 : 10] Adam's son, Abel, is buried. Then in Genesis 5, you have what I would describe as the most solemn chapter in the whole Bible, because all it is is a list of burials. And he died, and he died, and he died, and he died, and he died, and they all died. Why? Because the wages of sin is death.

And when they died, the world was becoming an increasingly bigger graveyard. And as it was with the flood, Noah witnessed the horror of this world becoming an increasingly bigger graveyard.

And you know, even over the past few weeks, we've been reminded of this with those harrowing pictures of mass graves in New York, or makeshift morgues in London, and even the Daily News reports of the ever rising death toll. My friend, it's because of the wages of sin. The wages of sin is death.

And because of it, this world is becoming an increasingly bigger graveyard. But whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope. Because the rainbow, as we said, it's a symbol of restraint. Because God promised, Noah, that he would never again destroy the world with a flood.

Of course, God spoke to his world through the flood, and God has been speaking to us throughout the generations, and he's spoken to us through different plagues and pestilences and pandemics.

[12 : 49] And there's no doubt God is speaking to us with the coronavirus as well. But you know, after the flood, and with the symbol of the rainbow clearly seen, God was promising that his wrath against sin would be restrained. And it would be restrained until the cross. God's wrath against sin would be restrained until the cross, because the cross was the hope of God's promise of salvation.

It was at the cross that the horror of God's punishment of sin would be poured out on his only begotten son, who hung condemned in the place of sinners. That was the hope of God's promise of salvation. That was the hope of the rainbow, that Jesus Christ would be the propitiation for our sins, that he would be the atoning sacrifice to restrain and to remove the wrath of God against our sin. My friend, the cross of Jesus Christ was the hope of God's promise of salvation.

God's promise of salvation. And it was clearly seen in Noah's day through the symbol of the rainbow. So whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope, hope in Jesus Christ. Whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope, because the rainbow is a symbol of restraint. But secondly, the rainbow is a symbol of renewal. It's a symbol of renewal. We'll read again in verse 14, a symbol of renewal, when I bring clouds over the earth, and when the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the water shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

You know, up until the coronavirus outbreak, we had a toddler group that ran here in the church hall every Thursday morning. And it was for parents and toddlers to come along. And as you know, the toddler group is called Little Rainbows. And the reason it was given such a name is because of this passage here in the Bible, because it's in this passage that God makes a covenant with his creation. God makes this binding promise with those whom he has fearfully and wonderfully made.

And that's who our God is. He's a covenant making and covenant keeping God. And he calls us to be his covenant people. And he calls us to raise covenant children. And that's why the toddler group is called Little Rainbows. Because our longing as a congregation is that the parents of our community is that they'll come to know and love this covenant making and covenant keeping God revealed in the Bible. And that both they and their little rainbow will claim the covenant promises of God in their lives. And as you can see from this passage, that's the word which is emphasized here, the word covenant. Because out of the nine verses that we read earlier, the word covenant appears seven times. And as you know, a covenant, it's a promise. It's a contract.

[16 : 23] It's a commitment, it's an act of commitment, just like a marriage. A marriage is a covenant. It's a promise. It's a it's a commitment between a man and a woman. And that's what God was doing with Noah. God was making a covenant promise of commitment, assuring Noah and his descendants that he would never again destroy the world with a flood. And this covenant with Noah, it was a covenant of renewal. It was a covenant of renewal. And we can actually see that from the language used in this chapter because we're told in verse one, we didn't read it, but it says in verse one, God blessed Noah and his sons and sent to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

Now, where did we first hear that command? Where was that command first given? The command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Of course, we first heard that command when it was given to our first parents, Adam and Eve. It was given to them in the Garden of Eden.

We're told back in Genesis one, God blessed Adam and Eve saying, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And it's the exact same language. Noah receives the same command as Adam and Eve.

And that was because Noah's world post flood. In many ways, Noah's world was now a new world. It wasn't the world of Adam and Eve, which had been created in all its beauty and perfection.

It was now a different world. And yet at the same time, it was a new world. And so this covenant with Noah, it was a covenant of renewal. Because even though Adam was the head of the original creation, Noah, in many ways, was the head of this new creation. Post flood, Noah was the new Adam.

[18 : 23] And it's with Noah, the new Adam, that God commands him and his family to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And it's after he gives that command that God makes his covenant, his covenant of renewal. He says in verse nine, behold, I establish my covenant with you and you're offspring after you. And with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock and the beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark, it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

And as we said, God's covenant of renewal, it was marked by a symbol, the symbol of the rainbow. The symbol of the rainbow. And it was a symbol of renewal. And for Noah and his family, the covenant symbol of the rainbow, it must have been the greatest comfort to them.

Because every time it rained after the flood, Noah and his family, they were probably wondered, maybe even worried that there might be another flood. Because prior to the flood, it had never rained. There had never been any rain. Genesis chapter two, at verse five, it tells us the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land because a mist went up from the land to water the ground. And so pre flood, Noah had never seen rain. That's why building an ark in the middle of the desert was a great act of faith. Because God commanded Noah to build this great ship. And it was to be a place of safety and security in which he and his family could self isolate for months. In fact, Noah and his family, they were in lockdown, living in self isolation in this ark with all these animals. And they were there for over a year. But as a preacher of righteousness,

Noah preached that the only way to be saved was to follow God's plan of salvation. And my friend, that's the message of your Bible from Genesis all the way through to Revelation. That's the message.

The only way to be saved is to follow God's plan of salvation, not your own plan or purposes of salvation, not your own means or method of salvation, not even your own technique or timing of salvation. No, the only way to be saved is to follow God's plan of salvation. And God's plan of salvation is what the rainbow was pointing to. It was a plan of renewal. Because whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope. Remember there is hope. And as you know, a rainbow appears because the light of the sun, it hits the raindroplets and it forms this prism of light is formed. And when this prism of light is formed, it spreads out into the shape of a colorful rainbow. But you know, have you ever wondered why it's called a rainbow? Why didn't they call it a rain ark?

[21 : 47] Or a rain semicircle? Why call it a rainbow? In fact, in this biblical narrative, it's not even called a rain bow, it's called a bow in the cloud. In verse 13, it says, I have set my bow in the cloud and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. And that word bow, it's the same word for a bow and arrow. And as you know, a bow and arrow, it's a weapon. It's the bow is the catapult for the arrow. And the bow and arrow is always directed towards your enemy. But you know, the interesting thing is, God put a bow in the clouds, not with the bow directing towards the earth, but with the bow directing towards heaven. My friend, whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope. And there's hope because the covenant of renewal was marked by this rainbow.

And the rainbow assured sinners that the horror of God's punishment of sin would be aimed and directed towards heaven. And through it, there would be the hope of God's promise of salvation.

And you know, that act of renewal, where did it take place? But at the cross. It took place at the cross when the darling of heaven, Jesus Christ, he became the target for God's bow and arrow of judgment. And you know, this is what I love about the cross of Jesus Christ. Because when the flood destroyed the world, when the flood destroyed the world, you can see that God was undoing his creative work. God was undoing, you could say, the days of creation. But he only undid the days of creation back to day two. Because at the flood, God was undoing the days of creation from day six all the way back to day two. But on day one, you'll remember, day one of God's creation was the day in which God separated the light from the darkness by saying, let there be light.

But you know, the hope of the rainbow, it lay in the covenant of renewal, because God promised that he was going, he was going to fulfill that act of complete renewal and undo the first day of creation. And where did God do it? But at Calvary. Because it was at Calvary, you'll remember, at Calvary, at the sixth hour, when the sun was at its highest, and its brightest in the sky, it was at Calvary in that moment when this world was plunged into darkness. And it was all because God's bow of judgment had been directed and aimed towards his own son. And in that moment, where Jesus is hanging upon the cross, crying, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? We know there and then that Jesus, the light of the world had been made sin for us, even though he knew no sin. And it was all so that we could have this great and wonderful hope of being renewed and made righteous by faith in him.

My friend, it's through faith in Jesus Christ that you're able to experience that complete renewal. And it's through faith in Jesus Christ that you're able to be made right with God. It's by faith in Jesus Christ that you're able to be made a new creation where the old will pass away and all will become new. And you know, my friend, it's all because God's bow was directed and aimed at our Jesus. God's bow was aimed at our Jesus. And so whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope.

[25 : 54] Hope in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope. Because the rainbow, it's a symbol of renewal. It's a symbol of restraint. It's a symbol of renewal.

It's a symbol of renewal. And it's a symbol of revelation. A symbol of revelation. That's our last point. A symbol of revelation. Look at verse 16. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth. God said to Noah, this is the sign of the covenant that I've established between me and all flesh that is on the earth. Do you know out of all the world and after all the opportunities that were given to lost sinners to experience redemption by coming into the ark, the Bible tells us that only eight were saved. Only eight were saved. But you know, God's covenant with Noah and this symbol of the rainbow, it promised and it assured that it assured Noah that in the generations to come, more than eight would be saved. And we know this to be true not only because of our own experience, but also because we're told in verse 16 that God's covenant with Noah was an everlasting covenant. Literally, it was a covenant from everlasting to everlasting. It was a covenant that will last until time is no more. And you know what I find fascinating and how this Bible is just such a wonderful book is that the creation itself, the creation which God made a covenant with here in this passage, the creation itself is longing for this everlasting covenant to reach its conclusion. It's not what Paul said in Romans eight that the creation is groaning. It's groaning and it's longing to be set free from its bondage to corruption. It's longing to obtain this freedom, the freedom of the glory of the children of God. But when will this happen? When will this everlasting covenant reach its conclusion? Well, it will reach its conclusion says Paul at the revelation or the apocalypse of the sons of God, but when will that be? When? When will it be?

It'll be at the revelation or the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. But when will that be? Well, was it not Jesus who said in relation to Noah, of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my father only. And as Jesus says, as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and took them all away. And Jesus says, so will it be. So will it be with the coming with the revelation with the apocalypse of the Son of Man. My friend at the revelation of Jesus Christ at the apocalypse of Jesus Christ, there will be some of you who are caught up and some of you who are caught out. And you'll be caught out, my friend, not because you didn't hear the warning. You'll be caught out because you didn't heed the warning. And at the revelation, at the apocalypse of Jesus Christ, the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, with the trumpet of God. And as the Bible affirms to us, the dead in Christ shall rise first, they will rise out of their graves first. And those who are still alive at his coming will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And so will we ever be with the Lord.

My friend, it's because of God's everlasting covenant with Noah and the rainbow being this symbol of revelation. It's because of that that more than eight will be saved. Because you know, as the book of revelation, the book of the apocalypse, it affirms to us and it tells us that in heaven, there will be gathered there a multitude which no man can number. And they'll be gathered around the throne of the lamb. This lamb who stood behind the bow and arrow of God's judgment, who received that punishment for our sin. And above the throne of the lamb will be what, my friend?

A rainbow. That's what Revelation four tells us. Above the throne of the lamb will be a rainbow, will be a rainbow, symbolizing the restraint, the renewal and the revelation of the hope of God's promise of salvation to sinners such as you and me. My friend, it's all there for us in the Bible. It's all there. Therefore, whenever you see a rainbow, whether you see it in the sky or you see it in someone's window, whenever you see a rainbow, remember to pray for the NHS.

[31 : 45] Remember to pray for your care workers. Remember to pray for the key workers. But remember, there is hope. Whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Because this rainbow, the rainbow that God has given to us, it's a symbol of restraint.

It's a symbol of renewal. It's a symbol of revelation. So whenever you see a rainbow, remember there is hope. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray.

Gracious God and loving Heavenly Father, we give thanks to thee for thy word. Thy word, it gives to us great and precious promises. And that these promises, as we were reading there, they are from everlasting to everlasting. They are likened unto thee, the God who has no beginning and who has no end. Help us then, we pray, to stand upon these precious promises. Help us, Lord, to lean upon them and to look to them. Help us to have that hope.

A hope that is sure and steadfast. A hope that is the anchor of our soul. Founded upon Jesus, the rock of our salvation. Lord bless thy word to us, then we pray. Lead us and guide us into the week that lies ahead. A week that is unknown to us, but known only to thee. Keep us, then we pray, take away our inequity, receive us graciously. For Jesus' sake. Amen.