

Adult Sunday School

The First Sunday in Lent 2021

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' 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 clouds, 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. 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 have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

Genesis 9:8-17, NRSV

1. Background: In ancient Mesopotamia/Near East, legal agreements called “covenants” were a common reality between people/parties. It’s thought that the Hebrew people adopted this concept and language to describe their relationship with God. God would agree to a certain set of behaviors, as would the people as a whole. God is described as always being faithful to the covenants, no matter how many times the people failed to hold up their end of the agreement.

1. What formal or informal agreements have you entered into with others?

2. What happens when one party breaks the agreement?

2. Today's text from Genesis is the final part of the flood story with Noah and his family. In it, we hear of a covenant God makes with Noah, his family, and all living things. The term "bow" here describes an instrument of violence or war, like a bow and arrow. God "hangs it up" or "retires it" from service.

1. What does God promise?

2. What is the sign that accompanies the promise?

3. Some scholars suggest that God's promise not to flood the earth again extends to a moratorium on all forms of divine violence. What violent realities have you heard attributed to God in our contemporary world?

4. The lectionary texts for this first Sunday in Lent make a connection between God's new beginning for the world post-flood, and the new beginning we experience in our baptism (which is modeled after Christ's baptism). Luther talks about us beginning each day by remembering our baptism, so that we can again turn to God who loves us and who seeks to repair our wounds and heal the whole world. In what way can you be part of that healing in the world today?