

Lent 1B – February 21, 2021 – Genesis 9:8-17

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our creator who saves us through water. Amen.

A few weeks ago, Bekah, Annabelle, and I watched a recording of Sight & Sound Theater's "Noah" musical. And like most shows produced by Sight & Sound, it was impressive, even on the modestly-sized television in our living room.

It's not the first time I've seen a film adaptation of the story of Noah's Ark. Back in 2014, when the Noah movie starring Russell Crowe came out, I went to see it in Gettysburg with a group of my seminary classmates, along with one of our favorite professors. It, too, was impressive.

As I was reflecting on Noah's Ark preparing for today's sermon, I was reminded of a movie that came out in 2007 called Evan Almighty which was supposed to be sort of a modern-day adaptation of the story. And then of course the Veggie Tales cartoon series took a stab at it at some point or another. And I'm sure there are countless other films, plays, TV shows, and more that have endeavored to tell the story of Noah and his Ark.

I'd be willing to wager that Noah's story is probably one of the single most frequently told stories in the entire bible.

But frankly, I think most of the time, we tell the story wrong.

The idea of this huge boat that holds two pairs of all the animals in the whole wide world is fascinating. People wonder how that could ever be possible, and so everyone who tells the story of Noah's Ark tends to take their own attempt to explain it.

And with most tellings of the story, you hear so much about what led up to the flood, and how the ark was built and the animals were collected. And the climax is often the flood itself, when Noah's crazy plans to build this magnificent boat are finally vindicated.

The flood waters receding and the rainbow appearing are often tacked on almost as an afterthought at the end of the story.

But what if the rainbow isn't the end? What if the rainbow is the beginning?

That rainbow is a sign of a covenant, a promise, that God made not just with Noah and his family, but with all the flesh of all the earth. Every last human being, every last animal and creature of every single type.

A promise that water would never again be used to destroy all flesh. A promise that the next time that water was used to purge the world of sin, it would do so in a much kinder, gentler way.

The same water that saved Noah by removing all of the broken and sinful people in the world, saves each one of us, by removing our brokenness and sinfulness, by linking us with Christ who was baptized in that same water.

If I were to tell the Noah story, if I were to make a movie or a play about his life, THAT is how I would tell it. I would focus on the promise that was made after the flood. It doesn't make nearly as entertaining of television as imagining a pair of tigers co-existing on a massive boat with a pair of lambs, BUT, that promise is something that changes lives. That promise is something worth talking about.

But let's think about things a little differently for a moment...

Water cannot be created.

Water can be moved, it can be re-distributed, it can be polluted and cleaned. It can even change forms between liquid, and gas, and solid.

But water cannot be created.

It's estimated that there are 333 million cubic *miles* of water on earth. That's a lot! There's no way to even imagine that amount of water, other than to simply say it is every last drop that you could ever possibly imagine.

And for as long as we humans exist here on earth, we will not have any more, or any less of it. It will always be here in some way or another.

The water that runs through your bathroom sink, your dishwasher, your laundry machine, your shower. It's all the same.

And on the day of a baptism, when I take an empty pitcher downstairs to the kitchen, fill it up with warm water, dump it in that baptismal font, and then pour it over the head of a new brother or sister in Christ. It's the same water.

Water cannot be created.

The water that we have here today is the same water that Adam & Eve first swam in. The same water that lifted Noah's Ark off the ground and kept it afloat for forty days. The same water that Jesus was baptized in by John. The same water that we were all baptized in.

The same water that somehow or another causes that beautiful sight of a rainbow to appear in the sky every once and a while when we're lucky.

And THAT is why the important part of the story of Noah's Ark is NOT the boat or the animals, but the water that links it to us today, and the sign of the rainbow as a sign of the promise that we still benefit from today.

The water that saved Noah, that cleansed the world, is the same water that saved and cleansed Jesus, and it is the same water that saves and cleanses each one of us. We are linked with God and one another through every tiny little drop of water that exists and has always existed on earth. Amen.