

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Marlin Rempfer

Pentecost 10
Saturday, July 27, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, July 28, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

“Never Again”

Genesis 9:8 – 17

When is the last time you said, “Never again”? When your mother corrected you and you promised never to do it again? When you were disappointed in a restaurant and said, you’d never go there again. When you confessed your sins and promised God you’d never do that again.

Three times in five verses God says, “Never Again”. “Never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” “Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood”. “And the water shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh”.

What is it that we can learn from the story of the flood and the words, “Never again.”?

First, sin and God’s judgment against sin is no joke. We have turned the story of the flood into a harmless children’s book.

The rainbow won’t mean anything unless we come to terms with why the flood came. The world was filled with cruelty, violence and wickedness. God could scarcely recognize the good creation He had created. Genesis 6:6 says. God was grieved that He had made man. 7 So the LORD said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.”

The words, "Never again" show our weakness. Our weakness is evident in our failure to keep our promises.

This incident happened in the life of the comedian Red Skelton.

Red and a number of his friends went to Europe for a vacation. As they flew over the Alps, three of the plane's four engines coughed, sputtered, and died. Some in the group began to pray while others showed the first signs of hysteria and panic.

Both prayers and panic intensified as the plane visibly dropped toward the jagged peaks. Then, just when a crash seemed inevitable, at the last moment the pilot spotted a field nestled among the mountain slopes. With no other choice possible, he risked setting the plane down on the unknown terrain. After the jostling and bouncing had stopped the silence among the passengers was profound. Skelton was the first to speak. Half-seriously, the Christian comedian commented, "Now, ladies and gentlemen, you may return to the evil habits you gave up 20 minutes ago."

Skelton knew that people, in times of intense pressure, will often turn to the Redeemer and make all kinds of sincere, heartfelt promises. But when the crisis is over . . . those promises . . . are placed high up on the back shelf. (Lutheran Hour July 29, 2012)

When we say, "Never again" we have good intentions. We hear it from children who promise to obey their parents. We hear it from the addict who pledges to be clean. We hear it from the spouse who has been unfaithful. We say it when we fail to witness, when we've fallen for a scam. We say it with any sin we struggle with.

After Jesus stilled the storm at sea and fed the 5,000 you would think the disciples would never be afraid, never doubt, never have so little faith. Yet in today's Gospel Jesus has to say, "Take courage it is I"

What we find out is that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. No number of amazing rescues and rainbow sightings can keep humankind from sinning. Just two verses after our text Noah is drunk. Just two chapters later is the Tower of Babel.

In the midst of all of this, what is it that we can learn from the rainbow? The rainbow is a promise. The rainbow is God's promise to never again flood the whole earth with a flood. Never again will He destroy all flesh in that way. God has kept that promise.

The rainbow declares God's concern for all of creation. The flood affected all of creation. Romans 8 says, "All of creation groans."

All of creation looks forward to being liberated from the effects of sin. And the gifts that God gives in Christ are for all people, all nations and all the earth.

The rainbow and the words never again are God's warning. God's judgment is real. He once destroyed the world through a flood. He will never do that again. The world will be destroyed by fire.

In 2 Peter we are warned about scoffers who deny that the world is hastening to its last days. 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Because God's judgment is real the church is an ark. The place where you are seated is called the nave. The church is meant to be viewed as an ark. The ark of the church is a place for people who are hurting. The ark of the church is a place for people who worry. The ark of the church is a place for people who are steeped in sin.

The church is an ark because it is the place our sins and our hurts are met with the healing balm of the Gospel. This is a place where we hear and receive Christ.

The rainbow is a reminder to God. The text says, "When the bow is in the clouds. I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature" When God's wrath is aroused by our sin The rainbow promise is a reminder to restrain His wrath.

The story of Noah is ultimately about God's provision. God provided the

command to build the ark. God provided the means to build the ark. God provided the means to be saved.

The lessons for today include the destructive waters of a flood and our God Who walks on water. The lessons include our failure to follow though on our promises and our God Who is able to do far more than we could ask or think.

The rainbow fades in comparison to the cross of Calvary. At the cross-God's wrath against sin was placed on Jesus Christ. When the Light of the World met the dark storms of judgment it was as though there was a beautiful rainbow.

This account moves from retribution to rescue, from condemnation to creation.

The death and resurrection of Christ make possible a time and place where, "There will never again be death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

All the promises of God are an invitation to trust God.

The collect for the day says it so well

"Almighty and most merciful God, the protector of all who trust in You, strengthen our faith and give us courage to believe that in Your love You will rescue us from all adversities; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever."

The next time you see a rainbow may it be a reminder to trust God, both His Word of warning and His abundant grace and mercy. The rainbow is about a God of love and compassion. The rainbow reminds us that even though we deserve only death, we have been granted life and salvation. The rainbow is a sign of God's love and compassion for sinners who need a Savior.

Never again is a promise from God and God is faithful to His promises. Amen.