

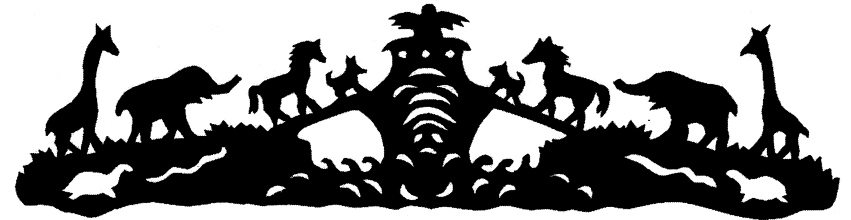
Be Unto Your Name

Gary Sadler / Lynn DeShazo

See words on print copy.

Old Orchard Church

June 27, 2010 — 10:15 to 11:45 a.m.



But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark....And God said,

"This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth...."

—Genesis 8:1a & 9:12-13

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

Credits

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Celebrating Jesus Christ, Fulfiller of Noah's Covenant: Fallen Creation Affirmed

After the fall of the human race into sin in Eden,
God soon meted out his fierce judgment
by sending a catastrophic flood
on the world degenerated in disobedience.

But praise be to his Name,
to his heart of love and his glorious grace,
that he chose no longer to rule to the End
with only justice, but with justice tempered by Mercy!

For the sake of a fragile world he created and loved,
God sealed a covenant with righteous Noah
on behalf of all flesh:
he declared the time between the Flood
and the Second Coming of his Son
an open window
for the pouring in of his grace upon the world,
postponing till that Coming
his indignation against all unrepentant rebels,
but pouring it out with fury
on the head of his Son in his First Coming
for the rescue of his chosen children.

Blessed be the Just Lord for his Mercy!

I have set my rainbow in the clouds & it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 9:1-16

Gospel Reading: Matthew 24:36-44

Today's Sermon

"Unearthly Powers for Concrete Hearts"
Romans 8:1-25

Ron Lutjens, senior pastor, preaching

God Accommodates Himself

In the late 1950's, a thoughtful preacher-theologian during the Hitler years, Helmut Thielicke, explained the importance of the covenant God made with the world through Noah this way:

What is expressed [in the Noahic covenant that now must incorporate "fear and dread" (Genesis 9:2) and guilt and atonement (Genesis 9:6) into the world] is the will of God as it is altered by sin, or better, the will of God which adapts itself, which does not withdraw from fallen man in rigid self-assertion but instead pursues him and makes itself known to him in a form which takes into account the disrupted possibilities of the fallen world. If it did not do this, the will of God could only mean death for the fallen world.

After the Fall into sin in Eden, God doesn't withdraw from the human race "in rigid self-assertion"—though if he had, we would still have to call that Justice. But God accommodates himself to the fallen world and refuses to govern it any more on the principle of pure justice. He promises us, through what he bound himself to when he spoke to Noah, that he would govern the world of men and trees and creatures by justice **and** mercy. If he hadn't done this, his holiness would have demanded the destruction of the world long ago.

Christians should "take back the rainbow," as some have been saying for awhile, from the psychological and political secular agendas that symbol has been co-opted by. We should restore it to its biblical place as the sign par excellence that God mercifully accommodates himself to a sinful world where so much is not as it should be. He doesn't smash what is imperfect, but works with it and holds out hope to it in Christ.

How much we ought to be able to learn from this divine condescension! With God as our example, we ought to be able to stay in a marriage that has deep and serious flaws; ought to be able to endure a house, a project, a job, a congregation, a pastor, or a political system that has deep and serious flaws; ought to be able to endure a parent, child, boss, or neighbor, or even a culture that has deep and serious flaws.

How easy to take the high moral ground of rigid self-assertion and destroy with the sword of our condemnation everything and everyone around us—including ourselves—that's shot through with sin. But even God doesn't do that. That's why the final test of maturity in Scripture—a la 1 Corinthians 13—is never knowledge or insight or even faith, but **love**. And love, ever since the Fall, has always meant showing mercy to those who are less than they should be.

—Ron Lutjens