

**PARK HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
“RAINBOWS AND ROSES”
REV. JOHN L. THOMPSON
March 1, 2009
Genesis 9:8-15
8:45 Service**

Even little children know the story of Noah and the ark. And we know the beautiful ending to the story. God made a promise to Noah, and to all humankind. Never again would God send a flood to destroy the earth. And this would be a sign of God's promise. God placed a rainbow in the clouds. Whenever we see the rainbow we can remember God's promise.

There's something special and hopeful about a rainbow. Rainbows appear at the end of rainstorms. There are two prerequisites required for rainbows: water droplets and sunlight.

One can explain all the technical truths about rainbows, but that will not explain the emotional lift we get from these wonders of nature. There is something about rainbows that lift our spirits regardless of our age.

Rainbows follow storms. Maybe that's one reason we love rainbows. No matter how fierce a storm may be, if we see a rainbow afterward, it gives us hope. It gives us hope because behind the darkest clouds, the sun still shines. My grandfather always said, **“The rough side of the mountain is the best side to climb because you can always catch a hold to something.”** I have never seen a beautiful rose without thorns. It is through our tears sometimes that we see more clearly. I am glad that rainbows follow storms. Have you ever had any storms in your life?

Rainbows also remind us of the beauty of God's world. This beautiful world did not just happen by chance. Rainbows and roses are reminders of God's love; reminders that the beauty we see is His creation.

But most important of all: **rainbows remind us of our covenant relationship with God.**

God made a promise to Noah and he sealed it with a rainbow. God also made a promise to Abraham; to Isaac and to Jacob. God made lots of promises throughout the scriptures. But let us not forget that God made promises to you and me. And we have made promises too.

A little over a month ago a man stood before the nation and made a promise by saying: **“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”**

Earlier this month at the Blue and Gold Banquet downstairs the Boy Scouts made a promise when they said: **“On my honor, I will do my best, to do my duty, to God and my country.”**

When couples get married in the church they make promises saying: **“To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, to love and to cherish ’till death us do part.”**

Promises are important. Of course, a promise is only as good as the character of the one making the promise. We can bank on the promises God has made to us. God has promised to be with us through the storm. He has promised to accept us just as we are with all our faults and shortcomings. He has promised to prepare a place for us that where He is there we may be also. He has promised that nothing in all creation can separate us from His love for us. Remember that the next time you see a rainbow.

These words were penned by Charles A. Tindley:

When the storms of life are raging, Stand by me. When the world is tossing me; like a ship upon the sea; Thou Who rulest wind and water, Stand by me.

In the midst of tribulation, Stand by me; when the hosts of hell assail, And my strength begins to fail, Thou Who never lost a battle, Stand by me.

In the midst of faults and failures, Stand by me; When I do the best I can, And my friends misunderstand, Thou Who knowest all about me, Stand by me.

In the midst of persecution, Stand by me; When my foes in battle array Undertake to stop my way, Thou Who savèd Paul and Silas, Stand by me.

When I'm growing old and feeble, Stand by me; When my life becomes a burden, And I'm nearing chilly Jordan, O Thou "*Lily of the Valley*," Stand by me.

God gave the rainbow as a sign that we face the turmoil and trouble of life in a context of grace. God does not withhold love from us until we have proven ourselves worthy. God's unfailing love helps us meet life's trials. After the storm, a rainbow!

When the storms of life are raging in your life, I pray that God will stand by you. I would love to be your pastor. I would love for this to be your church.