

## **Words Forming Witnesses**

### **The Promise of the Rainbow**

**Psalm 29 and Genesis 9:14-15  
(308, 339, 476, 512 [sung to 521])**

**January 13, 2013**

### **The Promise of the Rainbow**

There is something about a rainbow that thrills me.

It's a strange appeal.

I'll always point one out to anyone I'm with.

I'll run and get Jill or other friends to come and see one.

I'll even pull over to the side of the road to enjoy one.

The sight of a rainbow leaves me feeling delighted and secure.

I hadn't really given much thought  
to the impact of rainbows on me  
until I started working on this sermon.

I think the power of this phenomenon to thrill me  
involves the various levels of consciousness that it activates.

As I have come to understand it so far,  
God created us with three clusters of neurons in the body,  
those remarkable cells that process the stimuli  
we are constantly receiving and making sense of.

The major cluster is in the head, the brain.

That's our intellect.

But there is also a cluster around the heart.

That our emotions.

And the third cluster is around our intestines, our gut.

That's our instincts.

We become wise,

"sage" as some refer to the process,  
we align all three of these sources awareness  
into a coherent way of seeing things.

In the Christian tradition, I think this is what Paul means  
when he refers to having "the mind of Christ"  
in his first letter to the Corinthians.

The wisdom of Christ comes from the aligned integration  
of head, heart, and gut,  
of intellect, emotion, and instinct,  
through the guiding work of the Holy Spirit.

It's another way of talking about "having soul."

For me, soul is more of a dynamic process rather than a place in the body.

It's the best integration of our intellect, emotions, and instincts.

It happens frequently for me through music,  
especially the music we enjoy as we sing together on Sunday morning.

It's in the voices of this Christian community,  
each unique and soulful,  
blending in song,  
with the support of the unique gifts of Daniel and Rick,  
all raised in praise of the God who gave us a good life in creation  
and who continually offers the security of flourishing  
in his fulfillment of the promise of the rainbow.

You see, the core of that promise  
is that God will not let his disappointment  
with human folly and faithlessness  
become a destroying anger ever again.  
He promises, in essence,  
to patiently and persistently care for this creation  
and its human stewards  
no matter how arrogant and blind those stewards became.

That is the promise of the rainbow.

The ark has come to rest.  
The dove has come back with the olive branch.  
The ground has dried out.  
Noah and his family have taken the animals out of ark  
and God has told them to be fruitful and multiply,  
reminding them yet again that they are created in God's image.  
Then comes God's promise,  
sealed by the rainbow.

*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.*

God says to human beings, in essence,  
"I will not let your actions determine my actions.  
Things will work the other way around.  
I will love you until you see the folly and faithlessness of your ways.

I will love you until you see things differently.  
I will love you into seeing things differently.  
You may have great difficulty in understanding my ways,  
for they are too often not the way you act,  
but I will remain true to my original intent  
and work through my Holy Spirit to make this earth very good.  
My way of love and caring will be the final word.”

To love and to care, I believe, is the core instinct  
that God sows deep within the being of every human being.  
He has sown it into Melina, our new great granddaughter.  
He has sown it into Clare and Martin’s new daughter.  
He had sown it into Agnes, Alex, and Sandra McGillivary,  
who served this church for so many years.  
It’s there in each and every one of us,  
working, often in mysterious ways, to lead us  
into an ever more flourishing relationship with God  
in Jesus Christ through the constant work of the Holy Spirit.  
When that instinct aligns with our emotions and intellect  
to form witnesses that flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ,  
then we are living into wisdom and faithfulness.

Rainbows in the sky become visible  
when light is refracted through little drops of water.  
Variations can also be seen when light is refracted through glass.  
I remember seeing little patches of rainbow  
on the walls and carpets in the house I grew up in  
when the sun came through the white part  
of the stained glass panels in the windows we had in the dining room.

Here’s one way of being aware of the phenomenon.  
The light is the light of God’s love in Jesus Christ.  
It’s the light represented by our Christ Candle every Sunday.  
It’s the light that John talks about in the prologue to his Gospel:

*What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of the world.  
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

Again, that promise comes through.  
No matter how much darkness there is,  
God’s light will never be extinguished.  
Love and care will flourish and be the last word.

Let’s think of ourselves, then, as the drops of water or the prisms  
through which God’s light shines into the world.  
Each of us is different, so the refraction will be unique –

same source of light, different ways of having an impact.  
Just as our voices are different in blending into our singing,  
so our ways of loving and caring are different  
as they blend into our witness to the power and purpose of Jesus Christ.

That is good and as it was intended.  
What is important is that we pay gracious attention  
to the ways we are aligning and coordinating  
our unique refractions of the light of God's love  
as it shines into our world.

What is worth pondering  
is how clearly we are refracting the light of God's love,  
seen for us most clearly in the witness of Jesus Christ.

What is worth practicing  
is how faithfully we are flourishing  
in focusing that light where it is most needed  
within our circles of influence.

I sincerely hope and pray that rainbows thrill you as well  
and that the meaning of that thrill will have been deepened  
by our consideration of these verses this week.

*Be confident that the Holy Spirit will use these words  
to form us to flourish in our witness to the grace of Jesus Christ.*

Preached by the Rev. Dr. Brian Fraser  
Minister with Brentwood Presbyterian Church