

Rise and Shine! (Transcript)

February 21, 2021 – *1st Sunday in Lent, Year B*

Genesis 9:8-17 | Psalm 25:1-10 | 1 Peter 3:18-22 | Mark 1:9-15

The Rev. Ari Wolfe - St. Columba's, Zoom

In our reading from the Book of Genesis this morning we heard what is perhaps one of the best-known children's Bible stories ever. When I was a little girl, even though I didn't go to church or synagogue, I knew the story.

In the 70s, gas stations would offer promotional toys with the purchase of a fill-up... kind of like a gas station Happy Meal deal, where they would have a series of pieces that you could collect; I looked it up yesterday for fun: ESSO had plastic dinosaurs, Texaco had fire helmets, and Mobile had their signature logo on various things... and I actually *still* have a tiny little red flying horse pendant that my Godfather gave me over 40 years ago! But the Big One in my book was the ARCO Ark. There was a station not far from where we lived; you bought the ark, every month or two there would be different animals in little plastic packets that you could get. As a marketing ploy, it worked brilliantly - I can vouch for that, since I made a bid for that particular station whenever we needed gas, so I could get the latest pair of animals.

The story of Noah's ark - the full story - is not a pretty one; it's actually pretty grim. But kids don't generally get that... for most of us it was all about how many animals you can stuff into a boat, how big the boat has to be, where the toilets are, whether the lions would eat the bunnies if they got the chance, why unicorns and dragons got left behind, and whether the flood was what *really* killed the dinosaurs.

I can remember watching a TV special too, a documentary about the discovery of a piece of what might be *The Real Ark* lodged on the side of Mt. Ararat... with all my little plastic animals next to me, of course.

What drew me so emphatically to the story of Noah's Ark? I loved animals, so that was part of it - I'm pretty sure I added some extra horses, just to be sure -

but I had also learned a song at camp the summer before, called “Rise and Shine.” Does anyone remember that?

It’s all about God telling Noah to build an ark and the animals that “come on by twosies” - yeah, OK - it rhymes with “kangaroosies at some point.” But this wasn’t just a song... there were motions that went with the chorus every time it came around.

So here’s what we’re going to do: wherever you are, please join me... you can stand or you can sit, whatever works best for you, as long as you can stretch your arms all the way up above you and out to either side.

The chorus is, “Rise and shine and give God your glory...” that repeats 3 times, then, “children of the Lord.” So, put your arms up over your head as if they’re the sun above you... this is “rise,” right? In that motion, the sun rises.

Next, bring them down, extended on both sides... this is shine - so we are rising and shining like the sun. So *rise*, and then *shine*. Excellent.

So, the glory part - “Give God your glory” - is... Jazz hands! “Give God your glory, glory.”

Alright, so walk through it with me...

Rise

And Shine

And give God your glory, glory!

We’ll do that 3 times...

Rise and shine and give God your glory, glory

Rise and shine - give God your glory, glory

Rise and shine and give God your glory, glory,

children of the Lord.

Thank you for humoring me! So, why are we learning the hand motions of a children’s song?

As with so many things in life, I learned more from that song than I knew. Last week as we began the *Unity Tai Ji practice*, Mathew explained about *embodied prayer*... and as I meditated on the readings for this week, I remembered “Rise and Shine” - it was the first embodied prayer that I ever learned. The other thing I realized this past week is that ***the season of Lent is about living life as an embodied prayer.***

You may have heard me say that Ash Wednesday is one of my favorite liturgical days of the year; it is. I love the call to drop whatever else you’ve been focusing on and remember a simple truth: that we come from dust and to dust we shall return.

It is a call to be intentional through Lent; to *re-evaluate* your priorities, *re-consider* who and how you want to be, and *re-turn* to God. To re-assess how we choose to *be* in the world.

Our readings on Ash Wednesday were about how we embody and express our spiritual life. We were told to “rend our hearts, not our clothing” and to pray to *God-our-Parent* in secret; in contrast with people who fast or pray not as a practice for spiritual growth or to deepen communication with the Divine, but in a performative way, so that others will *see* them doing it, and will judge them favorably.

The call from our Gospel passage **today** (from Mark) was about embodied prayer and practice as well... Jesus is baptized by his cousin John in the Jordan River; the baptism (an act & a symbol) is for Repentance - the *intentionality* of turning back from wherever you are, towards God.

In *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus’s Final Days in Jerusalem*, the authors cite that defining repentance as a *returning* comes from the Hebrew Bible, and implies especially “to return from exile...” They wrote: “The roots for the Greek word for ‘repent’ mean ‘to go beyond the

mind that you have. To repent is to embark upon a way that goes beyond the mind that you have.”¹

We had some conversation about that in the book study on Wednesday. It’s a striking idea: to *repent* is to *go beyond the mind that you have*.

Re-reading today’s passage from Genesis, 3 primary themes stood out to me as being frequent: *Intentionality*, *covenants* and *signs*. I printed out the passage, wrote those words in the margin and grabbed a few colorful highlighter pens, to take a look at how often each was mentioned. I started with *intentionality*, then looked for covenants or agreements, and then the signs or symbols used to represent them or to serve as reminders.

These are what I think of as the 3 “primary components” of the passage. Secondary and connected to those themes were *who* *the agreement or covenant was with* or between, and *under* *what conditions*.

When I had underlined those in highlighters, I found something remarkable: there weren’t many words left. All of this story could be sorted into Intention, Covenants and Signs, with supporting statements about *who* and *how*. So, I’m gonna take a moment and show you if I can what it looked like when it was done... because I found it really fascinating. [held up printout to the screen] Let’s see if you can all see that...

(from the congregation: *I see rainbows!*) So, right, it was really colorful - it made a rainbow. Another sign, another symbol, another way of reminding ourselves.

My dear friends and siblings in Christ: we have entered into the Holy season of Lent. Mardi Gras, our “Shrovid Tuesday” has been celebrated, Ash Wednesday observed, and we have hopefully chosen what we will add or remove that will help us come closer to the Divine. As with our story of Noah this morning, we can look at Lent through a lens of Intentions, covenants and signs:

¹ Borg, M. J., & Crossan, J. D. (2008). *The last week: What the gospels really teach about Jesus's final days in Jerusalem* (p. 25). London, NY: SPCK.

1. The INTENTIONS are: what do we want to live into? How can we be our most authentic selves? Who do we *intend*, who do we *plan* to be?
2. Then the COVENANTS: what agreements are we making? And who are we seeking to impress with them? Who are we making them with? Who are we making them to?
3. And finally, there are SIGNS & SYMBOLS: What will we use to remind ourselves? What could we set around us that we could see each day, that will help remind us of where it is that we intend to be and what covenants we're making and intending to keep?

I invite you in this Lenten season to “embark upon a way that goes beyond the mind that you have,” beyond the limitations that the world or even just we ourselves impose on ourselves; to hear the call to *live life as an embodied prayer* and engage with that in whatever way you feel drawn. I invite you to the celebration of a Holy Lent; to “rise and shine and give God your glory.”

