

Welcome What's Next...

“Our Core Resiliency...God's
Covenant...Our Rainbow!

Genesis 9: 8-17; 1 Peter 3: 18-22, Psalm
25: 1, 4-5, 9-10

August 5, 2018
Rerun of February 18, 2018
First Sunday of Lent

~The first step...in being on the Way
with Jesus this Lent...Jesus a most
resilient believer of life possibility and
trust in others,

~The first step to be able to welcome
what's next,
to be on your own resiliency route
is to...

honor the fact that Human beings have
an innate capacity for bouncing back,
making it through.
God given! You're born with it!

It's true! Think about it:

So far, everyone here is batting 100% for
making it through life's toughest
situations.

Acknowledging this builds up our self-
esteem...doesn't
puff up, but builds up our core
self-esteem, value.

We each have personal patterns we can
identify that already help us do this:

meet what is in front of us and move
through it. We each already have
resiliency responses!

We will name these responses which we
already have and ones we desire as part
of weekly worship this season.
(Please pull that page out of the bulletin
later and keep it as we reflect at Easter
on our truest value.)

And the key to becoming even more
resilient?
Is to work with your strengths!

The responses in which you feel most
able, most power filled, most apt.

“Each person's greatest possibility for
growth is in the areas of his or her
greatest strength.

The real tragedy of life is not that each
of us doesn't have enough strengths, it's
that we fail to use the ones we have.
(Buckingham and Clifton, 2001)

We obsess about and over-estimate
the power of weakness and fail to
recognize and
under-estimate the power of strengths.”
We are to go with what works!

And, people are more motivated to
change,
to grow their repertoire of responses to
daily life,
when their strengths are supported.”
(Dennis Saleeby 2001)

That's our intention as we gather: to support each other!

So, this season we will be all about becoming more self-aware...aware of our resiliency responses and supporting these strengths!

We can enhance this process for ourselves so that we can actually come to *welcome what's next...*

everything on the way to heaven is heaven.

This is not polly-ann-ish at all!

This is more than a technique.

It is an honoring of our innate and unique ability to bounce back and move forward... to be able to access more readily our personal resiliency responses when most needed.

To be on the way to the fullness of life with Jesus!

We have wisdom in our secret hearts...and the Spirit pours out upon us!

We are mostly willing as we are deeply invited to discover who we *really* are...

how awesomely made and able and resilient we are.

We already have everything we need to be most fully ourselves; most fully human which is most divine!

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And, we have a covenant with God to help us each day! One where God holds the covenant even when we falter.

Our story in Genesis today not only sets the tone about who God is and will be,

but challenges any superficial thinking about our relationship with God...in this way:

God's attempt to eradicate "sin/human brokenness"  
in the flood  
was a total failure!

The deluge did not wash away the pervasive brokenness of humanity...did it?

It was not a threshold event inviting us back into the Garden of Eden...was it?

This covenant is a memo from God to God!

Note to Self:

Wholesale destruction, ineffective;  
consider other options!

Hmm.....wonder what the other option was?

Hint: Jesus!

But before we go there, let's reflect a bit longer on the fact the rainbow is not a sign to us as much as

the rainbow is a string around the divine finger  
to remember (and so us!)  
to be courageous and not take the easy way out,  
that quick fixes don't work in the long run.

Don't throw the baby out with the bath water.

Don't go away mad when you don't get your way.

Don't bail, in an argument, don't leave too soon,

Don't relieve the tension in an awkward moment too soon,

Don't think you can swap churches, families, jobs...

and solve your problems in a new place or relationship

without having done your worshipful homework first, looking deeply at self in the mirror!!!

So, then, are we saying we...

come to church to worship a God  
who is a failure? No, that's not the take away!

The stories of our faith, then and now, affirm this breathtaking, beyond-miraculous reality:

**It's not about being infallible! God or us!**

**It's about being willing to learn...to bring new insights into each moment...to be**

**resilient!**

**It's about a loving dynamic relationship!**

We have a God who is, indeed, willing to change,  
to negotiate and re-negotiate,

even to become incarnate,

**to fail by human standards  
to be able to succeed by divine standards,**

who would "fail" rather than wipe out creation  
or what's bothering you....

no more "away with a sweep of power".  
It just doesn't work!

The God we worship voluntarily walks right past  
the wall of our resistance and brokenness,

our stubborn and self-chosen separation  
from the divine image in which we are created.

And with no escape clause, says,

"Here is what I promise about my love.  
I am always with you.  
And, I am resilient to find a way to reach you!"

God is willing to make Godself totally vulnerable to our free will. To be totally  
resilient with you, in you in the moment.

But in doing so, God tells us in no uncertain terms that we are not in control of God's  
being;

we will never be able to manipulate God into becoming  
like us.

God is not human, not humanoid,  
but a presence,  
a grounding, a universal life-giving energy, love incarnate...

and we can be too!

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And the story continues. The covenant becomes incarnate in a living Jesus...to show us the way, invite new wisdom forward, calling us to honor our strengths

and sort through, and boldly use, our repertoires of resilient responses to daily life...like He did!

In the church, this narrative is basic:

Jesus shows the way...we see his resilient responses
to one tough situation after another. And...
Jesus loves you...and God gives you
everything you need for the journey
even as you are born.

Everything is perfect for you...to be who you are and for God to help you right now...
to welcome what comes next!

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And, in our reading in Peter, we hear the flood prefigures our own baptisms, seeing baptism as an extension of God's covenant with Noah long ago.

The God who saved Noah through the waters,  
offers the same saving grace/salvation...  
to us through the waters.

And hear this: Peter reveals Jesus goes back throughout all time to bring salvation to all those who did not know to obey, who did not walk in Jesus' ways....

and so have been imprisoned in their own hearts and miseries.  
He goes back for them...descended into hell/to the dead as the creed says...

Everyone has the opportunity to be saved for all time.  
Even those who did not know, or would not then can come...Friends, those we don't  
like or trust and so judge...  
can be/will be saved!

The early church began to understand the coming of Jesus was to further the covenant established by God long ago.

He is a new sign, His ways even more resilient.

**Jesus is a personified rainbow.**

**God made a commitment long ago  
and now God is getting personal.**

A covenant is...a promise made between two hearts...God to God and now God and us...your heart and God's heart, one heart.

Peter says the way to live the covenant, is to make  
**"an appeal to God for a good conscience."**

Today we usually use that word, conscience, as a way to challenge our morals, ethics, and behavior.

But Jesus wasn't about teaching good morals.

**Jesus was about showing us that if we live each day  
in conscious relationship with God,**

then we stand in a powerful stream of forgiveness  
and grace and renewal...a do-over

that will help us through the day to use  
our strengths and insights,  
to be resilient!

We appeal then to God for a **holy consciousness** that frees us from...."sin"/our frailties and brokenness and doubt, turns us around and yes...

**frees us from guilt which often stops us in our tracks.**

**So we are able to welcome what comes next.**

**To repent is to have a new consciousness,  
a new conscience.**

God teaches us a new way, a way of truth and self-awareness and self-empowerment, one that invites us to humility. And God's paths are steadfast love and faithfulness...a covenant with us.

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I like Lent because it calls me into a holy consciousness,
to remember how resilient I already am
and realize deeply the invitation toward new life begins with...me! My responses!

And I am capable....

I can welcome what's next. The good and bad, beautiful and ugly
seeming...yes, I can.

~And just like Jesus, I travel this life learning as I go....grow.

~And just like Jesus, I am made able to stand up against what is not right/just in life.

~And just like Jesus, I can choose an alternative way to think and feel and act....not
alone but in relationship with God and other disciples....

This is the part where I find out who I am!

How resilient I am!

And, I affirm: I can welcome what's next!