

“Promise”  
by The Rev. Damaris D. Whittaker

Scripture: Gen. 6:16-22;9:8-15  
Matthew  
September 7, 2014  
Communion Sunday

There is something urgent and memorable about storms. Nowadays, they are named, so we all have a recollection of Storm Sandy and Irene, and certainly Katrina.

For the most part, we have warnings before storms arrive. One may argue that we have ample warning. But storms put us in a frame of mind of assessment and preparation.

During both of the tropical storms we had here in Connecticut in the past few years, most of us lost power for days. But we had ample warning and we prepared with enough water, food, gas, and supplies.

But, other than a sense of awareness of our basic needs, storms legitimize doing nothing. If you have no power, you have no wifi - and that alone is enough to slow most of us down.

What storms also provide us with are clouds. Clouds that block the sun and give us a gray and dark day.

Now, clouds have had a bad reputation. In the English language we describe depression as being *under a cloud*.

In an effort to restore the cloud's reputation, there was a man by the name of Gavin....who founded the *Cloud Appreciation Society*.

The mission of the society is to change the negative narrative of about the cloud. They have a manifesto which declares among other things:

- We believe that the clouds are unjustly maligned and that life would be immeasurably poorer without them.

- We think that they are nature's poetry, and the most egalitarian of her displays, since everyone has a fantastic view of them.
- We pledge to fight "blue-sky thinking" whenever we find it. Life would be dull if we had to look up at a cloudless monotony day after day.<sup>1</sup>

In the Old Testament reading this morning, we have a familiar story ~ the story of Noah's Ark.

And so here, too, the flood began with a cloud. Not only cloud in the sky, but a cloud of violence.

So the times of Noah and our times have some similarities worth noting:

The scripture tells us that human violence has filled the earth. Not unlike our times. Creation was at stake—just like it is today. Not only is our violence directed at each other, but our violence has been directed at creation, and we are destroying that as well.

So, God decides to destroy the earth. And in many respects, this is a story of a flood that required strategy and planning at a level personally unknown to us.

But it is also a story that reveals the condition of humankind and God's actions in relation to that condition—destruction and conviction.

Some commentaries have said "the punishment fit the crime." But in the midst of all of this there is destruction, but there is also a promise. The promise is - with new creation, God has started over.

Genesis 8:1 ~ "God remembers Noah." God remembers people, even in the face of difficult storms.

So this morning, we are globally facing a similar crisis. The violence continues on all fronts. Here in the United States, we deal with the militarization of the police, the excessive access to firearms, and increasing violent crimes.

In other countries, the humanitarian crisis, as a result of corrupt governments, terrorism and economic crisis, among many other factors.

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<sup>1</sup> [cloudappreciationsociety.org](http://cloudappreciationsociety.org)

But we may also be facing, floods, and storms of in our own hearts. We may be also facing our crises.

But there is a promise that God would not destroy the earth again. There is a promise in that God remembered Noah.

And so, I say that God remembers our world. And God remembers us. Sometimes the clouds come and we fail to see the beauty they contain, because we know that after the clouds, the storm will follow.

The storm is necessary so that new creation will take place. Instead of dreading it, let us look up. Let us think of the possibilities of that new creation.

So in the words of the Cloud Appreciation Society:

*Look up, marvel at the ephemeral beauty, and live life with your head in the clouds.*

May the God of Promises remember us. And may we appreciate the clouds that bring the storm, for after the storm has passed: God will be doing a NEW THING!  
Amen.