

**Lent 1**  
**Baptism and Rainbows –**

**2012 Breach Series**

**Genesis 9**

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel used to tell the story that when God, the Holy One, gets up in the morning, God gathers the angels of heaven around and asks this simple question: “Where does my creation need mending today?” And then Rabbi Heschel would continue: “Being faithful people consists of worrying about what God worries about when God gets up in the morning”.

Isn't that a lovely image? Mending the world. The Hebrew words for that are “Tikkun Olam”. Mending the world.

Ruth is here, I asked her to be here during worship, sitting and mending things. (If you have some mending you've been meaning to do, you might want to speak to her because my plan is that she'll be here as a visual during Lent, and we've got 5 more weeks to go!)

I like that. *Tikkun Olam*. Mending the world. That's the business of God. That's the work of God. Mending. I like that image, mending, because it's not ...dramatic. When you mend something, you don't say “*Scrap this let's start over brand new*” That's not what mending is at all, is it? Mending is keeping what's good of the thing you've got. Believing it's worth the time and energy to keep and to repair.

Now, scrapping it and starting brand new, that's more like what the Genesis reading seems to say when it tells about the flood....God says: “*this world is just too broken I have to start over.*”

..but then the rainbow – the rainbow promise at the end ....beautiful things, rainbows...the stuff of legend. You could hang your doubts on the end of a rainbow, couldn't you? The rainbow in scripture – beautiful arc joining heaven and earth....making connection, repairing, if you will, repairing, mending a gap....the rainbow promise has God saying *I won't do that again. This world is my home and I will always love it, always be there, always....always. Even when they forget me I'll be there. When they break something I will mend it....*

Isn't that lovely? People who mend have to believe that what they are mending is worth the effort. They have to be patient, gentle, you mend one thing at a time, one stitch at a time. You just do it, knowing that when you're done there will be another place that needs it...and you just keep on keeping on. I love that. God, mending the world. Tikkun olam. Mending the world.

Katia, I pray that when you're old enough to hear stories, your parents will tell you that on the day of your baptism, we read the story of Noah and the rainbow. I hope you'll read it for yourself when you can. That your big brother's name is Noah will help you remember. I hope that they'll tell you that it means that this whole world is God's home. That you are part of it – with all the other people, with the animals, with the trees and flowers and the bugs and the water...all of it, God's family, all of it precious. All of it in covenant with God.

But we know that this world is not perfect...and there places of pain. We know that. We don't always care for each other the way we should. We don't always remember to treat the earth as God's home. The world needs mending.

In Isaiah, we hear God talking to the people. They were now back in their homeland after years of being in captivity. During that captivity, they had longed to return, it was like there was a huge hole in their souls...a crack, a rending in the way they thought the world worked. Finally, they went home....only to find their land had been ruined; the buildings, the temple – in ruins. What once had been huge, beautiful buildings, walls...now neglected, trashed, the conquering soldiers had wanted to leave a sign of their power.... those once lovely

buildings and walls that had been built to protect.....now with jagged holes in them. A breach, they called it. A breach.

God says to them as they stand there, looking in disbelief....yes there is a breach. AND you will repair it. You will be known as repairers of the breach. Not only the walls and the buildings but the land, but all the places where mending is required. People's hearts, their minds, their relationship with God....it all needs mending – what I need, God says, is repair people. And that's you.

And as for me, God says, what I'll do is make a covenant. I'll make a covenant with you. And this is it: same as all the covenants I've made with you and that you've broken, but we won't talk about that just now. I'll make a covenant with you. Make a promise. This is it: I'll be your God and you'll be my people. And together, we'll mend the world. You'll be known as repairers of the breach. And I've given you a rainbow to help you remember. You'll be known as repairers of the breach.

That's what the word religion means, you know. To mend, to re-ligio to reconnect. Repairers of the breach. That's what I need you to be, says God. And how you do that?

Katia will grow up and figure out how she'll work with God to mend this world. We all need to learn: Ruth, how did you learn to do that? Watching your mom or grandmother? It'll be the same for Katia. She'll have good models, in her dad as he works with the RCMP. In her mom, as she helps us see the world differently through her photography. And she'll learn from you, her church family, as she watches and copies and grows into the person God made her to be.

But mostly, if she gets the chance, she'll learn what it is to mend the world by coming to know God and watch how God does it. Today's reading, and the season we're entering, give us the biggest clue of all. How does God mend the world? By entering it. By becoming one of us. He was baptized and he was tempted. He had a mom and a dad and brothers and sisters and he was human like us in every way. In him God is making covenant with us again. The sign this time will not be a rainbow; we have that already. It will be Jesus; own life and death and his continuing life that tells us that death is never ever the end. As the rainbow joins the heavens and the earth, so Jesus joins divinity and humanity in his very being. In Jesus God becomes one of us, goes through the same temptations, the same emptiness, the same pain. Jesus enters the breach...and repairs it with his very being; his own flesh and blood.

I pray that you will always stay close to Jesus, Katia. Learn about him; the stories he told, the things he taught and the way he treated people. Because as much as we would love to protect you from it, there will come a time in your life when you know the breach very personally. You will feel empty and alone; there will be a brokenness in you that hurts and makes you wonder who you are.

When you know the pain; when you feel the emptiness and step into the void, I pray that you will remember who you are; that you live in a world of God's making – a good world. Gift of a good God. And you too are made in the image of that God. And you can know pain without having it destroy you. You can bear temptation and not yield; you can know brokenness because you are part of a community of people; repairers of the breach. Let us be that for you when you need us. When the meaning of your life is in question, I pray that you feel the water on your forehead once again and know it to be water of life.

May God bless you always Katia, and may God bless us all, so we can be for one another the family God calls us to be.

Amen.