**“LOOK FOR THE RAINBOW”**

**TEXT**: Gen. 9:11-17

**THESIS**: To show that even in judgment God’s grace shines through.

**INTRO**: A. A rainbow is one of the most beautiful phenomena occurring in the natural world. I looked up “rainbow” in the encyclopedia and the technical explanation is a real letdown! There is no “natural” rationale for a rainbow. It is of supernatural origin. And there is no adequate way to describe the beauty of a rainbow. “You have to see it!”

B. The origin of the rainbow is found in our text & is a statement on God’s grace. It reveals something of the long-suffering of God and is a reminder of God’s measureless grace. The rainbow displays the 7 colors of the visible spectrum: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet and black. Seven is the number of perfection and God’s grace is perfect. Noah was one of 3 men in the Bible who saw rainbows in the midst of trials or storms. There is a great lesson these 3 men can teach us, i.e., “LOOK FOR THE RAINBOW” somewhere close to life’s storms...

**I. AFTER THE STORM (NOAH): Gen.9:11-17**

 A. The Storm:

 1. In this case the storm resulted from man’s sin and was the greatest storm in earth’s history!

 2. Perhaps your storm is also related to sin (yours or someone else’s).

 a. If it is yours, then God may have sent the storm to chasten you.

 b. If it is someone else’s you may just be in the fallout of their storm.

**ILLUS**: The Bible declares that the rain falls on the just and the unjust. Much of life’s pain is brought about because of the sins of society. Innocent victims often result from sinful activity practiced by others. Ex.: The AIDS plague. Babies die because of parents’ sin; hemophiliacs die because of others sin.

 This week the bombing of the Federal building in Oklahoma injured, maimed, and killed people innocent of any crime against the perpetrators. Even little children paid with their lives because of someone’s sin. (Some ask: “If there is a God, why didn’t He stop this?” There are several obvious answers: Sin always exacts a high price; God is not obligated to personally intervene; God has already demonstrated His love and grace to mankind; God will ultimately punish all sin; Why don’t these same people praise God for all His goodness to sinners and the world?!)

 B. The Rainbow:

**ILLUS**: The world sings: “Somewhere Over The Rainbow” and “always look for the silver lining,” but believers have something better than that: God’s grace.

1. The Rainbow appeared when the storm was all over and God’s wrath against man’s sin had been spent.

2. The Rainbow was God’s Covenant (promise) with mankind and all the creatures on earth, i.e., that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood of water.

3. The Rainbow is the Lord showing that His wrath is tempered by His grace.

**ILLUS**: Maybe you are going thru a storm right now and you are wondering if the Lord even cares about you. Trust Him! One day you will see the Rainbow and know that He is faithful and that His grace is operating in your behalf.

**II. DURING THE STORM (EZEKIEL): Ez.1:28**

 A. Judgment:

 1. This is one of the darkest days in Israel’s history.

a. Israel is in captivity to the Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar; taken far from their homeland, the Temple, friends and loved ones.

b. Ezekiel is a priest w/out a Temple, without a sacrifice, without an altar.

c. The city of Jerusalem and the Temple were about to be destroyed and Ezekiel was appointed to preach that message of judgment.

 2. This storm is real but so is God’s grace...

 B. Grace:

1. Until God appeared to Ezekiel all he could see was the storm!

2. But when God appeared, Ezekiel received one of the most powerful and majestic visions of the glory of God ever given to any mere mortal man.

**ILLUS**: No doubt even this vision was scary and overwhelming and noisy! First came the “whirlwind” (v.4), then the fire and lightning (v.13,14), then the noise of the wings of the Seraphim “like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of a host (v.24)! Then suddenly everything became still and quiet and Ezekiel looked above the living creatures and got a glimpse of the “glory of the Lord” (v.27,28) amidst the beautiful rainbow.

**NOTE**: When you can’t see the Lord because of the storm and can’t hear from heaven because of the din of the thunder, look above the storm and you will find the Lord and His grace sufficient.

**TRANS**: Noah had to wait till after the storm to see the rainbow, Ezekiel saw the rainbow and His grace during the storm, but John saw the rainbow of God’s grace...

**III. BEFORE THE STORM (JOHN): Rev. 4:1-3**

 A. Coming Tribulation:

1. The revelation of the coming Tribulation is given to the Apostle John and it is so terrifying that God gave him a glimpse of the rainbow before the storm!

2. When your “storm” is going to be bad, God may let you catch a glimpse of His sustaining and sufficient grace before the storm!

**ILLUS**: When things are brightest, we need to prepare for the coming storms! We need to get into His Word, learn to walk with Him, witness as He gives the opportunity, serve Him daily and attempt to minister to others while the sun is shining; for the storm is surely on the way! It is only by appropriating God’s grace in the sunshine that we will be faithful when the big storms come.

 B. Completed Rainbow:

 1. John saw a complete circle, not just a bow.

 2. He saw that God was on His throne and everything was under control.

**ILLUS**: John would see the chaos and catastrophe of the Tribulation, but He would know that no matter how bad things looked, God was on His throne and was in control of the circumstances.

 3. The rainbow not only speaks of God’s grace, it also speaks of peace.

**ILLUS**: The same word for “bow” when speaking of the rainbow is used also when speaking of the weapon (“bow”) used for warfare. The rainbow of Noah’s day spoke of the fact that God was hanging up His bow of warfare against sinning mankind. Here we see the bow appear at the end of the storm and after a year of horrendous storms, there is a calm, peace and tranquility. In Rev. we see a completed rainbow, showing that there is always peace in heaven and that after this major storm (the Trib.), the Lord Himself will reign as the Prince of Peace.

 4. This rainbow is primarily of one color: green.

**ILLUS**: Someone has said that green is the most pleasing color in the spectrum and is the color of life. All life proceeds from God.

**CONCL**: Whether God reveals His grace to us AFTER THE STORM, DURING THE STORM or BEFORE THE STORM, we need to trust Him. God is always faithful. When the storms come “LOOK FOR THE RAINBOW!” Depend on the faithfulness of God. His timing is always perfect. Remember, He will never fail you.