

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Why are there so many songs about Rainbows?]

The wise and reflective poet, Kermit the Frog, once sang:

Why are there so many songs about rainbows?
What’s on the other side?

There are a lot of songs about rainbows! You’ve got oldies like:

Sunshine, Lollipops and Rainbows by Lesley Gore,
Pocketful of Rainbows by Elvis Presley,
and *She’s a Rainbow* by The Rolling Stones.

More recently, artists like Mariah Carey, Kacey Musgraves, Ke\$ha, and Sia have all recorded songs titled *Rainbow*.

Oh, and who could forget the timeless track that started it all?
Somewhere Over the Rainbow from *The Wizard of Oz*.

Judy Garland’s original has been covered by everyone
from Eva Cassidy to Israel Kamakawiwo’ole.

Ol’ Kermit asks a fair question: Why *are* there so many songs about rainbows?

Well, even before rainbows were coopted by various earthly political movements,
beautiful rainbows have long been a symbol of steadfast love.

Two rainbows adorn the stained glass here at Our Redeemer!

[Creation ponders its Creator: What’s on the other side?]

We Christians know the rainbow is a symbol of God’s steadfast love to Creation:

That He would redeem His Creation from sin and death.

And that steadfast love is for *all* Creation.

Perhaps that’s why nearly every culture on this planet

—from Asia to the Americas— has a story about a **terrible flood** that:

- destroyed the whole world
- due to humanity’s wickedness
- was survived by one family
- with animals
- in a boat
- that came to rest on a mountain.
- Many even specifically mention birds being sent out and— oh, yes, a rainbow.

Yes, even to a non-believer, the rainbow is a reminder that there is *Something* more;

Something heavenly ready to pervade the earthly,

Something ready to proclaim peace between *Something More* and humanity,

Something that arcs over all things.

Anyone can see the beauty of this world in a rainbow,
Anyone can see the order of this world in the intricate fractals of a snowflake,
Anyone can see the majesty of Creation's Creator reflected in great mountains or terrible oceans;
Anyone can take in the data and conclude that there must be *Something* "over the rainbow."

Many pagan philosophers even determined that *Something* must be God!

Yet even the wisest can only wonder along with Kermit:

"What's on the other side?"

Is God good?

If God is good, what does that make me?

What is God like?

The rainbow is a promise of *Something*; but it can't tell Kermit the full story.

It can't tell him about steadfast love.

[Creator comes to Creation]

Well, today is Kermit's lucky day.

In today's Gospel reading, the disciples were about to be given
a glimpse of a glimpse of the *Something* from "over the rainbow."

Mark tells us they were in their boat,

on the way back from where Jesus had fed more than 5,000 people
with just five loaves and two fish. (That's on a window here too!)

The wind made their journey torturous because it was against them.

They had to tack back and forth across the Sea of Galilee to make headway.

Then Jesus comes walking on the water—miraculous, sure.

But that's not the strange part.

Mark says Jesus "*meant to pass by them.*"

(Mark 6:48)

Now, the use of that phrase "pass by" *could be* simple coincidence.

It *could be* that the question: "*Why did the Jesus cross the Sea of Galilee?*"

Has a simple answer: "*To get to the other side!*"

After all, Jesus does compare Himself to a chicken elsewhere in the Gospels:

In His lament over Jerusalem He says:

"*How often had I longed to gather your children
like a hen gathers her brood under her wings!*"

(Matthew 23:37-39)

But that phrase "pass by" has deep meaning in the Old Testament.

When God appeared to Moses, Elijah, Job, Ezekiel,

The Scriptures say the Lord "passed by."

(Exodus 33, 1 Kings 19, Job 9, Ezekiel 16)

(Can you imagine such glory and terror, being in God's presence?)

As Jesus stepped into the boat, the **torturous winds** ceased.

It was as though Creation had recognized its Creator.

What's more, the words Jesus uses plainly reveal Who He Is.

He says: "*Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.*"

When Jesus says "it is I," the words Mark records are *εγω ειμι (ego eimi)*.

That's more words than Greek needs.

A literal translation might be closer to "I, I AM."

You've heard these words several times over this past year.

They can also be translated: "(Here) I am."

Or even simply: "I AM."

Jesus identifies Himself as one-and-the-same with the great "I AM"

who introduced himself to Moses in the burning bush, and would later "pass by" him.

Mark says the disciples "*did not understand about the loaves*" when Jesus fed the 5,000. (Mark 6:52)

To them, it was another miracle, like walking on water or feeding 5,000.

But they were starting to get it now:

they were in the presence of the Almighty Himself!

[Creator loves Creation]

Yet they were only *starting* to get it.

Just as the rainbow can't tell the full story, neither can walking on water.

It wouldn't be until chapter 8 that Peter first confessed "*You are the Christ!*"

(Mark 8:29)

It wouldn't be until after their Redeemer had risen from the dead

that they would fully understand just who God *is*.

He is full of *steadfast love* for His Creation.

His *steadfast love* was revealed in a way that all the wonders of Creation never could.

Not in the **terror of floods**

Not in the **torture of winds**

Not even in the **beauty of a rainbow**.

Instead, of "passing by," His terrified disciples in the boat, Jesus said:

"Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

God has given us the advantage of looking back and seeing the full rainbow,

from beginning promise to ending fulfillment.

We don't have to dream of "somewhere over the rainbow,"

or wonder "what's on the other side?"

We can hear Jesus' own words!

We *know* what God is like!

He says: "Take heart! Do not be afraid; here I am!"

[One last song about rainbows]

Today is my last day preaching to you saints here at Our Redeemer.

This week, I will return to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis for one final year of study.

Then, if God has use for me, I will be sent out to pastor one of His congregations.
I do not know what tomorrow holds for me and my family.
But I know I can take heart and not be afraid.
God's *steadfast love* is with me.

I'd like to share another song about rainbows, written nearly 3000 years ago.
Technically, it doesn't mention rainbows at all.
But it shares the same message.
It is Psalm 136, the appointed Psalm for the day.
I'm not going to sing it, but we are going to say it together.
(Don't worry, your part is simple.)

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.
Give thanks to the God of gods,
for his steadfast love endures forever.
Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
to him who alone does great wonders,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

to him who by understanding made the heavens,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
to him who spread out the earth above the waters,
for his steadfast love endures forever...
It is he who remembered us in our low estate,
for his steadfast love endures forever...
Give thanks to the God of heaven,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

His steadfast love endures forever. Amen.

**Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among the people. Amen! (Psalm 96:3)**
