

Why We Should be Displaying the Rainbow

“I have set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. When I bring a cloud over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the cloud; then I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters will never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow will appear in the cloud, and I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” (Genesis 9:13-16, Modern English Version)

This month you will undoubtedly see the rainbow flag flying in many places – sadly, even on the property of some congregations that bear the name “Lutheran.” This multi-colored flag is a symbol used by folks rebelling against God’s created order as it pertains to marriage, sexuality, and identity. For any number of reasons, I don’t expect to see any such flags waving on the property of a LCMS congregation - perhaps chiefly because God’s Word neither supports nor tolerates sexually deviant behavior. We are to unconditionally love our neighbor, regardless of orientation, but we cannot in any way condone sin as being morally acceptable.

This being said, should the church abandon the symbol of the rainbow? It has been displayed by God’s people over the years on everything from pictures to stained glass windows to cover art for VBS programs. But throughout the centuries, Christians have not seen this as a symbol of diversity or plurality or homosexual pride, but instead as *“a sign of a covenant between [God] and the earth” - “between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”* For believers have seen the rainbow as God’s promise that *“the waters will never again become a flood to destroy all flesh”* - a visible *“sign”* in the sky of God’s merciful promise to never again deluge the entire planet. And this is a promise that God obviously has kept, and of course intends to keep. See, the rainbow serves as a wonderful *“sign”* reminding us of the Lord’s gracious nature, and also of the truthfulness of the words of Jeremiah: *“Great is Your faithfulness”* (Lamentations 3:23a, Modern English Version).

My friends, we ought not be afraid to display the rainbow. Yet, we ought not do so, though, to confuse people or to covertly support the sodomite agenda. Churches ought to ask themselves the purpose for which they desire to display a rainbow – for God’s people should always have a purpose for using any symbol in the church. For see, when it comes to the rainbow, perhaps extra caution and catechesis is necessary in the current climate in which we live.

Yet, let us not conclude that the usurpation and perversion of *“a sign”* that our Lord Himself originally created now means that we are deprived of using it. Just because others are using a Christian symbol to represent and promote something that the Bible tells us is sinful does not mean that we are now prohibited from using this symbol. Twisting and “rebranding” Christian symbols, even warping God’s Word itself, has been happening throughout the history of Christendom, and undoubtedly will continue to occur until the day Jesus returns. *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed”* (1 Peter 4:12-13, ESV).

My fellow saints, as Solomon said: *“There is nothing new under the sun”* (Ecclesiastes 1:9, Modern English Version). Therefore, the Apostle Paul exhorts pastors: *“Preach the word. Be*

ready whether it is convenient or not. Correct, rebuke, and encourage, with all patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2, Evangelical Heritage Version). Such words are important for pastor and people alike to bear in mind. For we need not fear. Why? *“Because He who is in [us] is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4b, Modern English Version).* So, let us not allow those who wish to pervert and misuse either our cherished symbols or God’s precious Word to ever steal them from us. Instead, may we the church, those who have been entrusted with the truth of God, be faithful and vigilant – even though around us *“people will not endure sound doctrine, but... gather to themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires” (2 Timothy 4:3, Modern English Version).*

My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us not be afraid to use the symbols (especially the Biblical symbols) of our Christian religion – be they the rainbow, the cross, the dove, or whatever. But may we always display them as a visible means of communicating the true teaching of God’s Word, and never as an excuse to give in to sin or falsehood of any kind. For the fear and love of God should motivate us to speak of Christ, and the Word of God should guide us in our confession and teaching of Him. And what a confession and teaching we have inherited. It is the message of the true and living God who made us, saved us, and sanctified us. It is the message of our loving Creator who sacrificed His own Son into death to reconcile us to Himself and give us life with Him that never ends. *“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:20a, NIV).* For God always keeps His promises – including His promise to raise His baptized unto eternal life with Him in the holiness and glory of heaven.

In Christ,
Pastor