

## Sermon – Signs, Signs, Everywhere Signs

And as Jo shared with us from Genesis:

*Then the LORD said to Noah, “The Rainbow shall be in the cloud.....this is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.”* **Friends, let us pray. Heavenly Father, we ask that you open our eyes and our minds to the wonderful signs which you have provided for us in our lives. Amen**

**Here’s the situation; the baseball pitcher steps on the rubber and looks at his catcher for the sign of what pitch to throw. The catcher looks into the dugout for the sign from the manager. The batter and the runner at first are looking at the third base coach for their sign. The infielders are looking at each other and giving signs on who will cover second base if the runner on first tries to steal. Then the pitch is thrown, and it’s a foul ball so they have to do it all over again! Signs, signs, everywhere signs.**

**Signs have a vital impact in our world, our society, and our lives. Let’s talk about some of these signs and the impact they have on our lives.**

**I grew up, went to high school and attended college during the tumultuous decade of the 60s. The signs of the times included increased hair length, rock ‘n roll music, increased drug use, the advent of the “Hippie,” and protests. It was a sign that the youth were trying to take more ownership of their lives through rebellious actions and songs. One of the rock ‘n roll songs was a one hit wonder in 1970 by a group calling themselves The Five Man Electrical Band, it was entitled “Signs.” The song was released during an era of social and political change, and its lyrics carry themes of intolerance and exclusion. It was a song about a long-haired, free spirited hippie teen objecting to all the signs in our society. In fact, the refrain of the song says, “*Sign, sign, everywhere a sign. Blockin’ out the scenery, breakin’ my mind. Do this, don’t do that, can’t you read the sign?*” The first verse goes like this; “*and the sign said “Long-haired freaky people need not apply.” So I tucked my hair up under my hat and I went in to ask him why. He said “you look like a fine upstanding young man, I think you’ll do.” So I took off my hat. I said “imagine that, me working for you!”*”**

The sign of the times in the early 60s were things like the Civil Rights Movement, protests, and assassinations. The second half of the 60s was marked with the Viet Nam war and more protests. And we can't leave the decade of the 60s without mentioning one of the most popular signs of all time; the peace sign! Signs, signs, everywhere signs.

Sign Language, also called Signing is used as a beautiful form of communication among the hearing and speech impaired. The beauty of this communication is how participants make wonderful eye contact with one another. I often think it would be great if people without any these limitations could make the same type of good eye contact when communicating. Would that be nice? Signing is a beautiful gift from God! Signs, signs, everywhere signs!

The sign of the cross, or blessing oneself or crossing oneself, is a ritual blessing made by members of many branches of Christianity. This blessing is made by the tracing of an upright cross and across the body with the right hand, often accompanied by spoken or mental saying of "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (which is called the Trinity or Trinitarian formula).

The last verse of our song goes like this; *"And the sign said anybody caught trespassin' would be shot on sight. So I jumped on the fence and I yelled at the house. "hey! What gives you the right? To put up a fence to keep me out or to keep mother nature in. If God was here he'd tell you to your face, Man, you're some kind of sinner"* Signs, signs, everywhere signs.

Recently in our local newspaper there was an article talking about signs of typical aging. Let's see if we can have a little fun with this and if we can relate to any of these?

- Getting confused about the day of the week.
- Misplacing things from time to time.
- Forgetting names.
- Repeating one's self. Couples have a great conversation because the other one can't remember whether or not that was said!

- Going into a room then forgetting why you went into that room.
- Needing assistance with new electrical gadgets, or recording a TV show or settings on a microwave. Just ask the grandkids!
- Looking for the car keys or your car in the parking lot. Of course the saying goes, “if you forget where you put your car keys, that’s normal, if you forget whether or not you even have a car, then you may need some more assistance! Friends, Signs of aging!

Churches use signs in front of the church to advertise times of the church service and special events. Some churches have been very creative when putting messages on their signs in order to increase attendance. Here are a few of the creative and somewhat humorous signs that have been used:

- Can’t sleep? Come hear a sermon
- Church. It’s cheaper than professional sport tickets
- Forbidden fruit creates many jams
- FREE bread and juice inside!!!
- Free Trip To Heaven...Details Inside
- God is like Allstate, you’re in good hands
- If you can read this sign you are close enough to come in
- If you think it’s hot now, just wait.

Signs, signs, everywhere signs.

*And The Last Verse of our song goes like this; “And the Sign said, ‘Everybody welcome. Come in, kneel down and pray. But when they passed around the plate at the end of it all, I didn’t have a penny to pay. So I got me a pen and paper and I made up my own little sign. I said ‘Thank you Lord, for thinkin’ about me. I’m alive and doin’ fine.’”*

So how does our conversation about signs relate to you and me? And better yet, how can we use this knowledge about signs to be better Christians in our everyday life? First, we must look around and appreciate what the good Lord has blessed us with. In Genesis, God's sign of his covenant with us is the rainbow which appears in the clouds. His promise is for us to always have a beautiful world in which to live and never again will it be destroyed by floods. This brings to mind another song, from 1967, the very popular "What a Wonderful World," by Louis Armstrong, as he sings about our beautiful world; 'trees of green....red roses too, skies of blue....clouds of white, the colors of a rainbow....so pretty...in the sky, I hear babies cry....I watch them grow, I see friends shaking hands.....sayin'...how do you do, and I think to myself....What a Wonderful World!' And I think to myself these beautiful signs of this world; the sunrise, the beautiful moon, the rainbow, they must be from God. That's what I believe!

And how does our faith tell us how God wants us to use the signs in our lives to live every day in a righteous manner? Well, speaking of signs, remember the sign WWJD? What would Jesus do? Jesus gives us a hint about that in his parable about the Prodigal Son. When the father sees his son coming home and back to the family, this was a sign that the wild son was maturing, growing up, and accepting responsibility. The father didn't scold or shun his son. He was a loving and forgiving father!

There have been times in our own lives where we needed to be loving and forgiving. There have been events or happenings that have impacted our lives. I would like everyone to join me by getting deep in thought. Please think about a sign in your life that impacted you. It could be something happy like meeting your significant other, or the birth of a loved one, or a calling; or it could be something tragic such as the loss of a job, or an accident, or the death of a loved one. We all have experienced a sign or signs like that! I too am thinking about tragic losses in my life and how it changed my life forever. Now please join me in deep thought, and you may want to close your eyes, and dwell on that time or those times for a moment. When you are ready, you may open your eyes. Did we handle that sign the way God would want us to handle it? Did

we get angry, frustrated, depressed, or rebellious? Only you can answer that. However, we can all answer how we move forward, the signs that will come to us in the future from God, how does our Christian faith tell us to handle these issues in our lives? Well let's look around at the signs in our church at what we believe in.

Justice. We pray for Justice in our world, our community, and our court systems. Peace. We pray for peace every Sunday, among our fellow man and for world peace. Every Sunday we join hands and sing "let there be peace on earth and let it began with me!" Friends, we need to practice peace, tolerance, patience, and acceptance on a daily basis! The United Church of Christ believes that God is still speaking and to never put a period where God has placed a comma. And we are an open and affirming church. That is why 'no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey you are welcome to worship here!' And Alleluia, which means praise or joy. Alleluia for what the good Lord has provided for us!

And as the song says about the young man in church, 'So he got a pen and paper and he made up his own little sign, "Thank you Lord for thinking about us! We are alive and blessed and doing fine! Let's celebrate our lives together!"'

Amen

## Genesis 9: 8 -17

New King James Version (NKJV)

### God's Promise to Noah

*After God makes it rain for forty days and forty nights, Noah leaves the Arc and God blesses Noah and his sons and telling them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The he makes a promise to Noah.*

<sup>8</sup> Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: <sup>9</sup> “And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants<sup>[b]</sup> after you, <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that *is* with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. <sup>11</sup> Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

<sup>12</sup> And God said: “This *is* the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations: <sup>13</sup> I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; <sup>15</sup> and I will remember My covenant which *is* between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup> The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth.” <sup>17</sup> And God said to Noah, “This *is* the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* on the earth.”

## Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32

*In these chapters of Luke we read about Jesus' teachings among the people and he illustrates God's messages in Luke 15 with numerous parables, which is a way of teaching the people what God's message is. One of those parables Jesus teaches the people is the famous parable of the Prodigal Son, which calls for the occasion to celebrate.*

Common English Bible (CEB)

<sup>1</sup> All the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around Jesus to listen to him. <sup>2</sup> The Pharisees and legal experts were grumbling, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

<sup>3</sup> Jesus told them this parable:

<sup>11</sup> Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the inheritance.' Then the father divided his estate between them. <sup>13</sup> Soon afterward, the younger son gathered everything together and took a trip to a land far away. There, he wasted his wealth through extravagant living.

<sup>14</sup> "When he had used up his resources, a severe food shortage arose in that country and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> He hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to eat his fill from what the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food, but I'm starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands.' " <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

"While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> Then his son said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, 'Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! <sup>23</sup> Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting <sup>24</sup> because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> "Now his older son was in the field. Coming in from the field, he approached the house and heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the servants and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup> The servant replied, 'Your brother has arrived, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he received his son back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> Then the older son was furious and didn't want to enter in, but his father came out and begged him. <sup>29</sup> He answered his father, 'Look, I've served you all these years, and I never disobeyed your instruction. Yet you've never given me as much as a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours returned, after gobbling up your estate on prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.' <sup>31</sup> Then his father said, 'Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.'"