Now, O Lord, take my lips and speak through them; take our minds and think through them; take our hearts and set them on fire with love for yourself. Amen.

*“When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” (Gen 9:16)*

I will see it and remember. Hmmm. You know, I’m not so sure about this reminder rainbow. I imagine the sky as God’s huge refrigerator door…and right on the front is the bow in the clouds: THE COVENANT, it says, in big, capital letters, right next to the sticky note “Milk, eggs, bananas.” It’s as if God doesn’t see that bow in the clouds, the covenant is gone from God’s mind—forgotten-- just as milk, eggs, and bananas are from mine if I don’t walk by that fridge before heading out of the house.

This is how I most often hear the word “remember,” forever implied in it “forgetting”…and forgetting is then what I tend to focus on. Remembering, for me in our fast-paced lives, is most often a tool to avoid forgetting. Oh-- I should remember that, so I don’t forget it.

There is a sense of heaviness, of duty with it…even more often, a sense of guilt, if not for actually forgetting, than for almost forgetting, as if, if I were just a more put together person, I wouldn’t need the sticky note in the first place.

Yet, remembering, in the Jewish tradition as God uses it here, is not just a tool for not forgetting…nor is it a nostalgic, focus-on-the-good-old-times remedy for feeling blue. Remembering, as God uses it here, is an *action* word. Here, God calls Godself not just to recall the covenant, to bring it to mind, to not forget it, but rather, to act on its behalf. When the bow is in the clouds—the clouds perhaps symbolic of troubled times, either for the people of God or for the relationship between the people and God—God will act on behalf of the covenant. God will not act out of duty, out of guilt, out of a sense of wanting to be “better”…God will act out of the inspiring deep commitment of the covenant, not only with us, but with every living Creature over all the earth. At this point in Genesis, God has already remembered and acted, just a few verses earlier, as the flood waters consumed all but the ark—mountains and trees, every living thing--“God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.”

And God will remember, and will act again… as the Israelites cry out in despair, suffering the pain, humiliation, and injustice of slavery to the Egyptians, God remembers the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God remembers, and calls Moses to lead the Israelites to freedom.

And Moses, the incarnate action of God’s remembrance, will ask God to remember—to ACT…as God threatens to consume the Israelites with his wrath of fire for their worshiping of the Golden Calf, Moses implores God:

13Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, “I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever.” ’

And God does remember, and therefore, God acts…God changes God’s mind, and the people of Israel are enabled to continue on their journey to the promised land.

Just as our coming to the table in just a few moments will not be about us forgetting Jesus, but about re-membering him—putting back together the body of Christ anew, so is the bow in the clouds…

The bow is not at all about God forgetting, it is all about God *remembering*, literally re-membering the covenant, putting it back together, every time those clouds appear, and the bow in it. The religious definition of the word covenant is “an agreement that brings about a relationship of commitment between God and God’s people.” When God re-members the covenant, God is putting back together the relationship of commitment between God and all of us that has, for whatever reason, become “cloudy”--come apart.

As I have meditated with these scriptures this first week of Lent, it has struck me that Lent invites us to participate in this re-membering with God. Lent invites us to put a practice in place by which *we, too,* can re-member our covenant with God—our covenant, given to us by Jesus as the great commandment, to love the Lord our God, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Just as God has set the bow in the clouds, we, in Lent, are invited to take on a practice by which we might re-member our covenant to Love—re-member our relationship with God--a practice which will help us discern in what way God is calling us to act on behalf of that covenant.

Just as for God, the action that this practice of remembering will result in is not to be an action out of guilt, a “should” or a “must,” but an action that wells up in each of us as our own authentic imperative of love for God and our neighbor. We are invited to take on a practice of remembrance that probes those places in us that are restless…those places in us that cry out in longing, for those are the places that will reveal what parts of the committed relationship are struggling. Where do you long to be? What do you long to do? Who do you long to spend time with? What in your life makes you restless, bothered? What in the world around you really troubles you…day in and day out?

This action, driven by love, may be a small action. It may be a big, lots of preparation, action. Our invitation in Lent is to look at the sticky note on our fridge that says “covenant,” and to stop. To Stop and stare at it…really consider it, and listen deeply for God’s call to action.

What will be your sticky note this Lent? How will you engage those restless, longing parts in you? Perhaps you will give something up—you will cause a longing that will invite you, each time you feel it, to look past it to your deepest longings.

Perhaps you will take something on—time to sit and consider the sticky note—Meditation? Journaling? More of the kind of prayer that is authentically yours—dancing prayer? Singing prayer? Snowshoeing prayer? Perhaps, you will read about something you have wanted to know more about—a circumstance, an event, a process? Perhaps you will spend time with a spouse, a good friend, in whom you experience God’s covenanted love?

This Lent, may we remember, not out of guilt, not so that we don’t forget. May we remember into our deepest longings, may we remember into deeper love with our neighbor, may we remember into deeper communion with our God. AMEN.