

I have loved you, with an everlasting love, I have called you and you are mine. . .

I said last week that is one way you can remember the nature of COVENANT. For Covenant answers the question: what is the Bible all about?

Well, the Bible is about Gods' love – and His call to us to be caught up in that love.

So, Covenant is simply the word the Bible uses to refer to God's relationship with us – and our relationship with God.

This relational word, covenant, is explained by the Prophet Jeremiah who writes: "The Lord says:

I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

God told Noah a sign of the covenant will be the rainbow in the sky.

Now I am not a science-type guy, so don't know all the details of a rainbow's appearance – but know enough that you need just the right amount of sun and water vapor to produce one.

So on cloudy days – no chance of rainbows – so no clear sign of God's love up on the sky.

I don't know about you – but in my life – there seems to be an awful lot of cloudy days – days when I would like to see a clear sign of God's love in my life – but they just aren't there. . .

For me – it is in those cloudy moments, those moments of testing – those moments when I am wondering where God is in my life – when I am way too tempted to look for comfort and relief and meaning in other ways – rather than relying on God. . . . . which is certainly the common story-line found in the Scriptures.

Adam and Eve sought meaning coming from the tree of knowledge – they listened to the temptations of the cunning serpent instead of listening to God.

When Moses was delayed in coming down from his encounter with God on Mount Sinai – the Israelites looked for comfort and relief in a golden calf rather than the living God.

In his later years David, once the hero of Israel for slaying the giant, Goliath ---- sought his strength in his army – not in God.

All too often "the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity – practicing all the abominations" of other nations – instead of remaining faithful to God.

Time and again through disobedience the people of God forgot their covenant relationship with God – but time and again God did not abandon them and through the prophets taught them to look forward to salvation.

Not all are as strong as Abraham, who is called our father in faith, who was willing to rise to the test of sacrificing his own son ----- rather than to turn from God.

Maybe it would help if we looked at things in this way: the clouds, the testing, the challenges, the problems, the doubts and despairs are going to come to all of us--- they're just part of life. But do we want to face these things -- with God--- or without God?

And perhaps it's not so much that God is testing us – but is just trying to get our attention – seeing if we are attending to what is really important in life – or are we simply buying into the values of the world?

Someone once said that faith is a lot like driving on a foggy day. We might not be able to see too far down the road – but we keep going – trusting that the road is still there.

So, too, just because we are not overwhelmed with the presence of God in our lives at a given moment – doesn't mean we should not trust that God is still there: and keep right on going. That would show a good understanding of covenant: that God never abandons us – even if we abandon God.

But of course, if we could have our way – wouldn't we always like the sunny days with the rainbows in the sky – the clear presence of God in our lives?

That's Peter's experience in the Gospel . . . Having completed their struggles of climbing the mountain – the mountain being symbolic for all those larger than life things we sometimes have to face – the 3 disciples saw Jesus in a new light – I mean there were rainbows on top of rainbows on top of rainbows on the top of the mountain – and Peter thought this was so great – he wanted to build some tents so they could stay there awhile!

But Jesus said, I don't think so. . . life can't be lived on the mountain-top alone – we have to go back down into the nitty-gritty valleys of life. . .

As we climb our mountains, and come through our struggles – we will see Jesus in a new light, too. We just need to remain faithful – to know Jesus is still there, even when we don't clearly see him. . . we need to continue listening to what we read and pray and sing – and truly believe it: such as – if God is for us, who can be against us? Or: that by the help of your mercy, may we always be free from sin, and safe from all distress. Or: You need not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day; though thousands fall about you, near you it shall not come.

God never abandons his people – never has – never will. How precious we are in God's eyes. That's covenant. . .