

# Leaders Rise to the Challenge of COVID-19

*The Wired Word for the Week of April 5, 2020*

## In the News

"One odd side effect of COVID-19 has been what it does to taste," reports *The Washington Post*. "Even those who have avoided the illness enjoy things they once disliked: government spending. Facetiming with family. Andrew M. Cuomo."

Although Cuomo had a reputation for being a micromanager and a bully, the Democratic governor of New York has been earning praise in the news media for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic. Cuomo offers morning news conferences that begin with facts: reports on the growth of cases from zero to 30,000 to 45,000 in New York state alone. "That's a problem," he says, along with the fact that they are running out of beds and ventilators. Then he tells moving stories about New York, his family, and the wider population. He acknowledges that the density of urban New York -- its "closeness," in his words -- is what makes it vulnerable, but is also what will help it to survive. The Cuomo news conferences have been described as "part briefing, part sermon, part inspirational talk."

On the Republican side of the aisle, Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland has been applauded in the media for his leadership during this crisis. Early on, he delegated day-to-day governing authority to his lieutenant governor so that he could focus full time on the pandemic. "I think this has been a time where governors really have led," said Hogan to *CBS News*, "We've been on the front lines, and we've stepped up to make those tough decisions, governors on both sides of the aisle, but also to push for more action from the federal level." Hogan is a popular Republican in a predominantly Democratic state, and he also chairs the National Governors Association.

On *Fox News* last Sunday, Hogan said "We don't want people to be scared, but we do want them to take it seriously and want, you know, the facts to be out there. So we're going to follow the doctors and the scientists." Hogan's comments were made as Maryland experienced a sharp rise in the number of people infected by the coronavirus, including 66 residents in one nursing home. On Monday, he put Maryland under a stay-at-home directive as coronavirus cases surpassed 1,400.

Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, whose latest book is *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, tells *CBS News* that there is precedent for governors taking the lead in a time of crisis. "When I think about FDR and the situation in the Depression before he became president -- he's the governor of New York, and New York state was overwhelmed by the Depression -- so he started taking action on his own. [Roosevelt was] the first person in the nation, as a governor, to mobilize a comprehensive relief program." Throughout the country, many governors and local officials have led during this time. Responses have differed from place to place, often tailored to local conditions, but each has now been placed in a position where their leadership has immediate meaning.

In an article on "Leadership in the Time of the Coronavirus," Steve Denning reports on efforts to "bend the curve" through social distancing. He quotes Michael Osterholm, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, who warns that this approach will not defeat the disease. "The virus is likely to be here until we have a vaccine," Osterholm said. "When we are 'bending the curve,' all we are doing is postponing those cases; we are not eliminating them. The

challenge is how many cases we can suppress or prevent until we get a vaccine. I hear talk of being in this until April or August, but I think we are going to be in this for many, many months."

On March 29, President Trump announced that federal social-distancing guidelines would be extended to April 30 in an effort to curb the coronavirus outbreak. The initial 15-day period of social distancing urged by the federal government was set to expire on Monday, March 30. But "nothing would be worse than declaring victory before the victory is won," Trump said outside the White House, in a briefing reported by the *New York Post*. As of March 29, the United States has more than 130,000 cases of COVID-19 and at least 2,300 deaths -- and the death toll is expected to peak around Easter, April 12. Trump had previously aimed to reopen the country on Easter, but said Sunday that was "just an aspiration."

With regard to mitigation methods designed to decrease the number of infections and deaths, Trump said, "I want the American people to know that your selfless, inspiring and valiant efforts are saving countless lives. You are making the difference."

Although many people have criticized President Trump's leadership in the face of this pandemic, on March 25, the director-general of the World Health Organization praised Trump's "political commitment" to preventing the spread of coronavirus as the global community works to "suppress and control" the pandemic. According to the *New York Post*, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the crisis needed "leadership."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Andrew Cuomo During the COVID-19 Crisis Is the Same as Ever, With One Big Difference: People Like Him. \*The Washington Post\*](#)

[Trump Extends Coronavirus Social-Distancing Guidelines to April 30. \*New York Post\*](#)

[Leadership in Times of Crisis. \*CBS News\*](#)

[Maryland Gov. Hogan Says He's Listening to Scientists, Not Trump, When it Comes to Coronavirus. \*Fox News\*](#)

[Leadership in the Time of the Coronavirus. \*Forbes\*](#)

[WHO Chief Praises Trump's Coronavirus 'Leadership.' \*New York Post\*](#)

### **Applying the News Story**

Palm Sunday, when Jesus entered Jerusalem as the Son of David, is an appropriate day to focus on the qualities of effective leadership, especially during the coronavirus pandemic.

### **The Big Questions**

1. What is the advantage of being a front-line leader in politics and in the church? What qualities should such a leader have?
2. Gov. Cuomo offers news conferences that are "part briefing, part sermon, part inspirational talk." How are people helped by talks that are a combination of facts and personal stories?

3. How can people be given encouragement and strength to face a long-term crisis such as the coronavirus pandemic? What spiritual resources can be used?
4. What lay and clergy leadership is being offered in your church during this crisis? What else could be done?
5. On the state and national level, where have you seen recent leadership that inspired you? Leadership that discouraged or disappointed you?

### **Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

#### **1 Samuel 17:32**

*David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." (For context, read 17:1-51.)*

David was still a young shepherd when he faced a champion of the Philistines, a giant named Goliath. Although the Israelites "fled from him and were very much afraid" (v. 24), David had the courage to step forward and fight the giant. He also understood the facts of the situation, and used the best tools he had to win a victory: He "chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine" (v. 40). With great skill, he slung a stone, hit Goliath in the forehead, and knocked him down. Then he cut off his head with the giant's own sword.

**Questions:** What sort of courage do our leaders of church and state need to show at this time? What facts do we need to understand and accept? Where are the special skills needed to defeat the coronavirus?

#### **Proverbs 27:23-24**

*Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds; for riches do not last forever, nor a crown for all generations. (No context needed.)*

The book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings about what makes for a good life. This set of verses calls for leaders to pay attention to the condition of the flocks under their care, and to be protective and compassionate toward them. Proverbs also reminds them that virtuous action should be seen as a thing of value, since riches and authority do not last forever.

**Questions:** How should leaders be showing protection and compassion toward their "flocks" in this time of crisis? Where do you see a focus on the common good, and where do you see attention being given to riches and authority?

#### **Matthew 21:5**

*Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (For context, read 21:1-11.)*

Before entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus sent two disciples ahead of him to find him a donkey. He trusted his disciples to do this advance work for him, and to prepare the people for his arrival. Jesus then entered the city in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah, "humble, and mounted on a donkey." His humility stood in stark contrast to the arrogance of the religious leaders and civic leaders of Jerusalem. The people responded by shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" (v. 9). They saw him as a leader with power that was both political ("Son of David") and spiritual ("in the name of the Lord").

**Questions:** What role did humility play in the effectiveness of Jesus as a leader? How can such a quality help leaders today? Why was it important for Jesus to focus on spiritual authority instead of political authority?

### **Philippians 2:3-4**

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.* (For context, read 2:1-11.)

The apostle Paul encourages the Philippians to imitate Christ's humility and to look first to the interests of others. He reminds them that Christ Jesus was "in the form of God," but he "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (vv. 6-7). In the end, this self-emptying did not diminish Christ, but God "highly exalted him" (v. 9).

**Questions:** What would it mean for leaders today to imitate Christ's humility and look first to the interests of others? How can they practice servant leadership in the face of the coronavirus threat? What exaltation might result from such self-emptying?

### **For Further Discussion**

1. According to [The New York Times](#), Guillermo Maldonado, pastor of a Miami megachurch, urged his congregants on March 15 to show up for worship services in person. "Do you believe God would bring his people to his house to be contagious with the virus? Of course not," he said. Rodney Howard-Browne of The River at Tampa Bay Church in Florida insisted he would only shutter the doors to his packed church "when the rapture is taking place" (Howard-Browne was arrested on Monday for endangering lives). What is the danger of such statements to church members and the broader public?
2. New Testament professor [N.T. Wright says](#), "the coronavirus-induced limitations on life have arrived at the same time as Lent, the traditional season of doing without. But the sharp new regulations -- no theater, schools shutting, virtual house arrest for us over-70s -- make a mockery of our little Lenten disciplines. Doing without whiskey, or chocolate, is child's play compared with not seeing friends or grandchildren, or going to the pub, the library or church. There is a reason we normally try to meet in the flesh. There is a reason solitary confinement is such a severe punishment. And this Lent has no fixed Easter to look forward to. We can't tick off the days. This is a stillness, not of rest, but of poised, anxious sorrow." How are you coping with this time of "anxious sorrow"?
3. "Our civil rights laws protect the equal dignity of every human life from ruthless utilitarianism," Roger Severino, director of the U.S. Civil Rights Office, [said in a news release](#). "Persons with disabilities, with limited English skills and older persons should not be put at the end of the line for

health care during emergencies." He was speaking in response to concern that states would allow medical providers to discriminate on the basis of disabilities, race, age or certain other factors when deciding who would receive lifesaving medical care during the coronavirus pandemic. The Department of Homeland Security made this very clear, declaring this past Saturday that "persons with disabilities should not be denied medical care on the basis of stereotypes, assessments of quality of life, or judgments about a person's relative 'worth' based on the presence or absence of disabilities." What is the role of Christian leaders in addressing such issues?

4. [Religion News Service](#) reports that many churches have rushed to embrace "virtual" Communion: "Some celebrate via livestream; others encourage parishioners to bring their own bread to Zoom videoconference meetings; and at least one United Church of Christ minister is upping the frequency of his online Communion because 'our people need normalcy.'" Will leaders of your congregation offer online Communion on Maundy Thursday this week? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such an offering?

5. How can you be a leader in your family, neighborhood, church or community during this coronavirus pandemic? What kind of leadership will you offer today?

### **Responding to the News**

Find a way to take a leadership role in this time of pandemic, one that is grounded in courage, compassion, humility, facts and faith.

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, give us strength to be effective leaders in this time of health crisis, and send your Spirit on those in church and government who have the power to heal us and help us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Other News This Week**

## **Unusual Rainbow: A Sign of Hope?**

*The Wired Word for the Week of April 5, 2020*

### **In the News**

Last Thursday, meteorologist Scott Sistek published a remarkable photograph of a rainbow rising above Lake Sammanish in Washington state taken by Cessna Kutz about 2 p.m. on March 23. This wasn't the kind of rainbow we usually see as an arc, but filled the entire sky with a palette of seven brilliant hues for just a few minutes. Kutz said that if she had taken a time lapse video, it would have shown the rainbow gently rise from the water, gradually bending into the more familiar shape of a bow.

Normally, we can see rainbows just after sunrise or as sunset draws near, because rainbows appear when the sun is below a 42-degree angle to the horizon. If the sun goes any higher, any rainbow flattens on the ground.

Actually, rainbows are not semicircles at all, but completely round. The problem is that when we view them from the ground, the Earth's horizon blocks the lower part of the "rain-circles" from sight.

In order to see the full circle of the rainbow, you would have to look down on it from a high altitude such as a mountaintop, canyon or cliff, or out the window of an airplane. From the bird's-eye view of a plane, you might see the plane's shadow in the center of the rain-circle.

Rainbows are born from millions of tiny raindrops through which the sun shines its brilliant rays. When sunlight passes through raindrops, the light bends, and then reflects off the inside of the raindrop. As the light passes from air to water and back out to air, each wavelength bends or refracts at a different angle. We perceive these wavelengths as different colors which create a spectrum of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet in the sky. Many people say that the brightest rainbows are produced after the biggest storms.

Whether we see a rainbow depends on where we are in relation to the sun, since rainbows have no set physical location. No matter where you are, you can see a rainbow, but other people will see rainbows in different places in the sky, as long as each faces the storm, opposite the sun. It is the sun that enables us to view the storms differently.

Single rainbows are splendid enough, but if you pay attention, you may see a double rainbow now and then. Double rainbows occur when sunlight is reflected twice off the back of a raindrop, which creates a faded second rainbow above that has the colors of the lower rainbow inverted.

Only about six triple or quadruple rainbows have been documented in the past 250 years. Here's the image of [a quadruple rainbow](#) seen over Long Island, New York, in April 2015.

In September 2018, photographer John Entwistle captured [a quintuple rainbow](#) while watching the sunset with his daughter in Farmingdale, New Jersey. He dubbed the experience "Rainbow Insanity," adding the hashtags

- #ipulledoverforthis
- #jaw\_dropping\_shotz
- #itsamazingoutthere
- #whatdoesitmean

to further express his sense of wonder.

Throughout human history, people have attached mystical significance to rainbows. In Irish folklore, leprechauns store a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow that actually has no end, which is a way of saying that in the search for material wealth, one can miss the beauty staring you in the face.

In some cultures, rainbows are seen as bridges between heaven and earth, or colored arcs connecting one side of the Earth to the other. The song "Touch the Rainbow," by German heavy metal band Axxis, speaks of the rainbow as a "stairway to heaven."

In the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, Judy Garland sang of yearning for a land somewhere [over the rainbow](#) where skies are blue and dreams really do come true, where clouds only appear in the rearview mirror and troubles melt away.

In Fred Wise and Ben Weisman's pop song, "Pocketful of Rainbows," popularized by Elvis Presley, worrisome storm clouds, heartache and tears are chased away by "a pocketful of rainbows ... a heart full of love ... a star up my sleeve ... a love so true."

Seeing a rainbow for some people is a sign of good luck, a new beginning, coming blessings, a change for the better.

The Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament offered its own interpretation of the meaning of a rainbow: "Springing as it does from the effect of the sun upon the dark mass of clouds, it typifies the readiness of the heavenly to pervade the earthly; spread out as it is between heaven and earth, it proclaims peace between God and man; and whilst spanning the whole horizon, it teaches the all-embracing universality of the covenant of grace."

As author and educator Anthony T. Hincks wrote, "When I see a rainbow, I know that someone, somewhere loves me." Perhaps when you see a rainbow, it reminds you of God's love and mercy.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[What Timing: Photographer Captures Moment Rainbow Rises From Lake Sammamish. KOMO News](#)  
[Photographer Captures Rare, Supernumerary Rainbow Over Jersey Shore. Philly Voice](#)  
[Rainbows in Culture. Wikipedia](#)

### **Applying the News Story**

Some people attach metaphorical or mystical meanings to rainbows beyond those that are supported by the biblical account of the great flood. We address the significance God assigns to the rainbow in the first scripture selection (Genesis 9:12-16) below.

### **The Big Questions**

1. What comes to mind when you first see a rainbow?
2. What meanings, if any, do you attach to rainbows? Is it a sign of hope in our present circumstances? If so, why?
3. In addition to rainbows, what other aspects of nature remind you of the presence and promises of God?
4. What scriptures give you the greatest hope during this pandemic?
5. Why do cultural stories and myths about rainbows abound, do you suppose? Do such stories and myths suggest a universal hunger for hope? Or are they simply flights of fancy?

## Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

### Genesis 9:12-16

*God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 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." (For context, read 9:8-17.)*

Genesis 6-8 presents an account of a great flood that destroyed nearly all life on the known Earth, as judgment for the violence of humans against one another. But God preserved Noah, his family and representatives of all the species of the animal kingdom, in order that there might be a new beginning for life on the planet. After the flood subsided, a rainbow appeared in the sky, which God declared was a sign of his covenant with Noah, his descendants and every animal on the Earth, never again to destroy the Earth by a flood (vv. 8-11).

God's promise to remember his covenant should not be understood to mean that there is any danger of God forgetting humanity or the rest of his creation, the way people often forget God. The rainbow is a sign to us that God does not forget us.

It should be noted that the believer's faith is not in the rainbow or in any aspect of creation, but in the God who made the rainbow to be a sign that points to himself and to the everlasting covenant he made with humanity and all creation.

"The rainbow appears when we have most reason to fear the rain prevailing; God then shows this seal of the promise, that it shall not prevail," wrote biblical commentator Matthew Henry. "The thicker the cloud, the brighter the bow in the cloud. Thus, as threatening afflictions abound, encouraging consolations much more abound. The rainbow is the reflection of the beams of the sun shining upon or through the drops of rain: all the glory of the seals of the covenant are derived from Christ, the Sun of righteousness. And he will shed a glory on the tears of his saints.

"A bow speaks terror, but this has neither string nor arrow; and a bow alone will do little hurt," Henry continued. "It is a bow, but it is directed upward, not toward the earth; for the seals of the covenant were intended to comfort, not to terrify. As God looks upon the bow, that he may remember the covenant, so should we, that we may be mindful of the covenant with faith and thankfulness."

**Questions:** When you see a rainbow, do you think only of hope and God's promises, or do you also remember the devastating flood and the unimaginable loss of life that the biblical narrative describes? How does the focus of your thoughts affect how you experience a rainbow?

When you see a rainbow, does it stir "faith and thankfulness" in you? How does a covenantal relationship with God manifest itself in your life? When, if ever, have you experienced God transforming storms into something as luminous as a rainbow?

### **Lamentations 3:22-24, 32-33**

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,*

*his mercies never come to an end;*

*they are new every morning;*

*great is your faithfulness.*

*"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,*

*"therefore I will hope in him."*

*... Although he causes grief, he will have compassion*

*according to the abundance of his steadfast love;*

*for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone. (For context, read 3:17-33.)*

In this chapter, Jeremiah writes about his affliction (vv. 1, 19), having been imprisoned in the dungeon of Malchiah (Jeremiah 38:6), which compares with the affliction of his people, who have been under siege by the ruler of Babylon. His soul, he says, "is bereft of peace" and he has "forgotten what happiness is"; everything he hoped for from God was gone (Lamentations 3:17-18).

Yet the prophet finds hope in God's steadfast, unceasing love and endless mercies which are renewed every morning (vv. 21-23). He finds in God an eternal, all-sufficient inheritance, not ephemeral, as earthly material goods are. The conclusion he hopes his people will draw is that they also can hope in God's faithful love and mercy.

Poet Maya Angelou wrote, "God puts rainbows in the clouds so that each of us -- in the dreariest and most dreaded moments -- can see a possibility of hope."

Some African-Americans report that they begin their prayers with thanks to God just for waking them up in the morning when he didn't have to. They tell us that in the past, African slaves in America who prayed this way viewed life as a gift in spite of the cruel circumstances in which they lived.

In a time of pandemic, when death is visiting more communities throughout our country as well as the world, we may become increasingly aware of the simple gift of another day of life and come to cherish every moment of life God sees fit to grant to us.

**Questions:** How do you make sense of the idea that the same God who "causes grief" also has compassion (vv. 32-33)?

What does it mean to have a person (God) rather than "stuff" as your "portion"? Why would people choose one instead of the other?

What afflictions (new or long-standing) are you bearing these days? How do you shift your focus from those afflictions to God, his promises and his nature?

### **Ephesians 4:1-6**

*I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as*

*you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.* (No context needed.)

We include this passage in our lesson on rainbows because that natural phenomenon is a symbol of hope. In this letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote extensively about the way God brought Jew and Gentile together into one family and made former enemies one in Christ (chapter 2). Here Paul emphasizes that followers of Jesus are called to a life worth living (v. 1).

**Questions:** According to this passage, what is the nature of "the one hope of our calling"? Who has called you to that hope? What makes a life "worthy of the calling to which we have been called"?

### **Revelation 4:3**

*And the one seated there looks like jasper and carnelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald.* (For context, read 4:1-11.)

### **Revelation 10:1-3**

*And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He held a little scroll open in his hand. Setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, he gave a great shout, like a lion roaring. And when he shouted, the seven thunders sounded.* (For context, read 10:1-7.)

The author describes this book as the revelation of or from Jesus Christ as well as the events to come (Revelation 1:1). In chapter 4, we find the author peering through an open door in heaven, through which he sees someone sitting on a throne (vv. 1-2), from which come flashes of lightning and impressive rumblings and claps of thunder (v. 5). This royal personage is surrounded by a rainbow unlike any we have ever seen, that looks like an emerald (v. 3).

Twenty-four elders in royal garments sit on twenty-four thrones around this figure (v. 4); four astonishing six-winged creatures with many eyes encircle the throne, day and night ceaselessly singing,

"Holy, holy, holy,  
the Lord God the Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come" (vv. 6-8).

The four creatures and twenty-four elders worship the person on the throne, who must be God, for he "lives forever and ever" and created all things (vv. 9-11).

In chapter 10, the author presents another figure, who seems to possess qualities similar to those found in chapter 1, verses 12-16, which there refer to the Son of Man, a term Jesus used many times of himself during his earthly ministry.

This "mighty angel" came down from heaven, "wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head" (v. 1). We might imagine the rainbow as an arc above his head, but since we know that rainbows are actually circular, the picture we have here may well be of Jesus with a multicolored halo of light surrounding or perhaps emanating from his head. With a face like the sun, legs like pillars of fire, a voice like the roar of a lion combined with the rumble of seven thunders, he must have been an awesome sight to behold and sound to hear!

**Questions:** When you read these descriptions of the person on the throne, how do you react to this person, whether it is Jesus or the triune God? Why do you think God doesn't usually appear to the world in such a dazzling array now? What do you think would happen if God did? Where is God revealing himself on Earth today? Why do we so often seem to miss seeing God in our daily lives?

### **For Further Discussion**

1. "It's when you follow the rain clouds that you find out where the rainbows are hiding," wrote author Anthony T. Hincks.

Are there times when it seems all the rainbows are hiding, when you find it hard to see beauty in a world that seems perpetually stormy?

What do you think Hincks means by "following the rain clouds"? When have you followed rain clouds and discovered hidden rainbows?

2. Cindee Snider Re, author of *Finding Purpose: Rediscovering Meaning in a Life with Chronic Illness*, wrote: "Sustained loss can sometimes seem never-ending, like a bleak, eternal winter of the soul. Yet spring always returns. Even on the heels of the longest, coldest winter, tender new growth emerges from once frozen soil."

Along those lines, Meeta Ahluwalia, Indian philosopher and poet, wrote: "In a world lost in delusion, a single daffodil quietly announces the arrival of spring."

In Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, he recalled the time when he was stabbed in Harlem and would have died if he had sneezed. He mentioned that there was a lot of talk about threats to his life, and concluded, "Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop.

"And I don't mind.

"Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And he's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!"

Dr. King was referencing the experience of Moses, when God took him up the mountain to see the land he had promised to Abraham and his descendants (Numbers 27:12-14; Deuteronomy 32:48-52). Moses would not enter the land with the people, but he trusted that God would keep his promise to bring the people into the land.

Centuries later, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses did get to the Promised Land, where he talked with Jesus and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-3).

The day after Dr. King delivered that speech, he was assassinated.

What is it that deludes the world? What power does a single daffodil have "in a world lost in delusion"?

How is the human experience of loss and hope, death and renewal, reflected in the natural cycles of the seasons?

What can sustain our hope in times of great upheaval, danger and tragedy?

3. Russian-born American author, Paullina Simons, wrote in *The Bronze Horseman*: "Ask yourself these three questions, Tatiana Metanova, and you will know who you are. Ask: What do you believe in? What

do you hope for? What do you love?"

How would you answer those three questions? How do your answers define who you are?

4. Matshona Dhliwayo, Zimbabwean-born, Canadian-based philosopher and author, wrote: "Rainbows are birthed in storms, not in sunshine. If the sky had no tears, the world would have no rainbows." He also wrote: "If the storm forgets to bring a rainbow, paint your own."

In your experience, are rainbows worth the price of storms? If the sky has tears, who or what is weeping?

Can the storm ever really "forget" to bring a rainbow? How could you "paint your own" rainbow? Have you ever done so? What did it look like?

5. "If you can't be a hope for yourself, to whom can you be a hope for?" wrote Turkish playwright Mehmet Murat Ildan.

Is it possible to be a hope for someone else if you can't be a hope for yourself? How would you answer the playwright's question?

6. "Each of us has the power and responsibility to become a rainbow in the clouds," wrote American poet Maya Angelou.

Who has been a rainbow in the clouds for you, and what did it mean to you? How can you become a rainbow in the clouds for others?

### **Responding to the News**

The next time you see a rainbow, think of Jesus, with a rainbow crown on his head. In the meantime, you may wish to watch ["Almighty God" \(Video 3:37\)](#) or [The Majesty and Glory of Your Name \(Video 6:44\)](#), ponder his majesty, and worship!

**Prayer** Suggested by Psalm 65:5, 1 Timothy 4:10, Titus 1:1-2 and 3:6-7, Ephesians 1:12-23, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Hebrews 10:23, 1 Timothy 1:1, Colossians 1:27

O living God, hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas, the Savior of all people,

You have called us to hope, and so we have set our hope of eternal life on you who never lie, on your promises, your Christ, your Spirit, and your grace.

We thank you that you have given us the breastplate of faith and love to guard against fear and hatred, and the hope of salvation as a helmet to protect our minds from lies.

O God, help us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for you who promised are faithful.

May we live to the praise of the glory of Christ Jesus our hope, Christ in us, the hope of glory, in whose name we pray. Amen.