



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

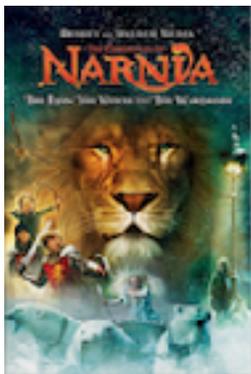
December 9, 2018

"Hope Comes in Winter" - Hope Restored Sermon Series

The Rev. Tim Shaw

The congregation viewed a clip from the movie where Lucy first discovers Narnia.

<https://youtu.be/gwuqA1Ys9Zo>



That's a clip from the film adaptation of C.S. Lewis' beloved story, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. What happens next for Lucy Pevensie, sets the stage for the adventures that are ahead.



In the *Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Lucy, and her three siblings are sent to the countryside to escape the bombing of London during World War 2. She stumbles into a magical world that she enters

through a wardrobe in the home of an old professor who is hosting Lucy, her sister Susan and two brothers Edmund and Peter.



Lucy's first encounter in Narnia is with Mr. Tumnus, a seemingly friendly Faun who invites Lucy to his house for tea and cakes. What Lucy is going to discover is that Mr. Tumnus has actually been conscripted into the service of the White Witch.

The White Witch is the self-proclaimed and fraudulent, evil queen of Narnia. She has ordered all her subjects to kidnap any human being they meet and deliver them to her.

The White Witch knows the prophecy that there will come a day when two daughters of Eve and two sons of Adam will sit on the four thrones of Narnia and her tyranny will come to an end. And the White Witch is going to do everything she can to prevent that from happening.

Lucy Pevensie is the first "Daughter of Eve" the Faun has ever seen. And he's captivated by her innocence, and her kind and trusting nature. So, instead of carrying out the evil wishes of the White Witch, Mr. Tumnus has a change of heart. He risks his life to ensure Lucy's safe return to her world. And the White Witch will make him pay for that act of kindness.

But before Lucy and Mr. Tumnus make their way back to the lamppost where they first met, Lucy learns more about the evil witch and what she has done to the once beautiful Narnia. For over a hundred years Narnia has been a place where it is "always winter but never Christmas." That's a terrible thing.

For those of us who live in the Tropics, it's difficult to really grasp the significance of that. If we lived in Minnesota that would be a terrifying thought. To live in a place where it is "always winter but never Christmas" would be a horror story.

(Showed a Ski/Snowboard video)

I have, primarily, very happy thoughts about winter. For me, winter means snow and snow means fun. I've spent a lot of winters skiing hills packed with snow so that alone makes it difficult for me to connect winter with hopelessness. My only connection to hopeless in winter is the fact that I have zero hope and zero memories of doing tricks like those in that video.

But when I think about having snow and ice and below freezing temperatures every day for 100 years, I think that would be a nightmare. And if Christmas didn't come every year, if there was no hope of spring, well that would be too much to bear. I have friends who live in the northern tier of states on the mainland and those winters can be long and brutal. Narnia was once a place of green trees and bright flowers but now, because of the icy heart of the White Witch, it is always winter and Christmas never comes.

I can't think of a better way to describe a world without hope. Grey, cold, overcast, long hours of darkness, no Christmas is a picture of a world without hope. Narnia was a place where it was always winter but never Christmas.

The parable that Jesus tells his disciples in Mark 12 is a parable that takes place in a vineyard where it was always winter but never Christmas. This vineyard is a terrible place where people abuse others in an attempt to seize things that don't belong to them. It is a place of greed and selfishness where people even

murder others in an attempt to get what they want.

This vineyard was a place where everything they needed was freely given to them as a gift and still that was not enough the people who lived there. It was a world where people failed to recognize who the rightful owner of everything is. The vineyard in this parable is a place that describes those selfish, abusive, power-hungry places and people in our world today.

The vineyard is a place that seems to be without hope but if we take a closer, deeper look at this passage, there is indeed a flicker of hope. As I read this passage to you in just a moment, watch for the promise of hope. Christmas will come in the depth of winter, just as it did in Narnia when Aslan, the great lion and Christ figure in Lewis' story, returned to Narnia and the daughters of Eve and the sons of Adam began to live into the destiny set before them.

Mark 12:1-12: *Then (Jesus) began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ² When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. ³ But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. ⁵ Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some*

they beat, and others they killed. ⁶ He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷ But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ⁸ So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

¹⁰ Have you not read this scripture: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; ¹¹ this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?' ¹² When they (the priests, the scribes and the elders) realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

This remarkable parable tells us a lot about three things: About the human heart, about our world, some amazing things about God our Heavenly Father, And the parable tells us something about Jesus the Son of God who was sent by His Father to earth at Christmas.

The parable is a stinging indictment of the history of Israel and the way that nation, again and again, did not listen to the teachings and the warnings of prophets and many others who were sent to them to point them back to God. That is what Jesus is talking about when he recites the story of the vineyard owner who sends servants to the people renting the vineyard.

This is the tragic history of the people of Israel that is recorded in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures.

The parable is also a prophetic word to the religious leaders of Jesus' own day. Jesus knows what they are planning to do to silence him and he calls them out on it.

The vineyard is a place where it is always winter but never Christmas. But the passage ends with the promise that the "stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Even though Jesus will be rejected, even though he will be put to death on a cross, that is not the end of the story. Just like Aslan the great lion in the Chronicles of Narnia, Jesus will come back to life. Jesus will become the foundation of God's in-breaking kingdom and the in-breaking kingdom of God will begin to change everything.

Even though the parable describes a world where it is "always winter and never Christmas" there remains great hope that Christmas will come, even in the darkest, most desperate moments and places. That is the hope we hold on to today, no matter what the circumstances of our lives. Hope can be restored at Christmas.

Near the beginning of the story of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, Lucy had tea and cakes in the home of Mr. Tumnus. Suddenly, Mr. Tumnus begins to cry uncontrollably. Sit back and listen to this audiobook version of this scene as CS Lewis weaves this remarkable story.

AUDIO TEXT: "Mr. Tumnus!" bawled Lucy in his ear, shaking him. "Do stop. Stop it at once! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a great big Faun like you. What on earth are you crying about?" "Oh—oh—oh!" sobbed Mr. Tumnus. "I'm crying because I'm such a bad Faun."

"I don't think you're a bad Faun at all," said Lucy. "I think you are a very good Faun. You are the nicest Faun I've ever met." "Oh—oh—you wouldn't say that if you knew," replied Mr. Tumnus between his sobs. "No, I'm a bad Faun. I don't suppose there ever was a worse Faun since the beginning of the world." "But what have you done?" asked Lucy. "My old father, now," said Mr. Tumnus; "that's his picture over the mantelpiece. He would never have done a thing like this."

"A thing like what?" said Lucy. "Like what I've done," said the Faun. "Taken service under the White Witch. That's what I am. I'm in the pay of the White Witch."

"The White Witch? Who is she?" "Why, it is she that has got all Narnia under her thumb. It's she that makes it always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!" "How awful!" said Lucy. "But what does she pay you for?" "That's the worst of it," said Mr. Tumnus with a deep groan. "I'm a kidnapper for her, that's what I am. Look at me, Daughter of Eve. Would you believe that I'm the sort of Faun to meet a poor innocent child in the wood, one that had never done me any harm, and pretend to be friendly

with it, and invite it home to my cave, all for the sake of lulling it asleep and then handing it over to the White Witch?"

"No," said Lucy. "I'm sure you wouldn't do anything of the sort." "But I have," said the Faun. "Well," said Lucy rather slowly (for she wanted to be truthful and yet not be too hard on him), "well, that was pretty bad. But you're so sorry for it that I'm sure you will never do it again."

"Daughter of Eve, don't you understand?" said the Faun. "It isn't something I have done. I'm doing it now, this very moment."

That's quite a confession. But with that confession, Mr. Tumnus' ultimate liberation from the clutches of the White Witch has begun. He admits the truth that he has sold out to the White Witch, for whatever reason, pressure from others, fear of negative consequences for himself, greed and selfishness. But with that confession, something amazing happens.

The Faun decides that he will not turn Lucy over to the White Witch. He will make sure she gets safely back to the path that leads to the wardrobe. That act of holy rebellion will cost Mr. Tumnus a lot, but in the end will lead to his freedom and the liberation of many others.

This remarkable parable in Mark chapter 12 tells us something about the human heart. This is a story about us. All of us, for a variety of reasons, are capable of selling out to the self-centered, greedy forces of our own world.

Whether it is out of fear or lack of awareness of how our self-absorption and greed is corroding our lives, we can sell out to the forces destroying our world. We fall into the delusion that we can do whatever we want, fearing no consequences.

The parable tells us some amazing things about God our Heavenly Father, Look at how generous He is. The owner of the vineyard is a picture of the God we worship. He is willing to entrust to humanity what is valuable to Him. All that we have ultimately belongs to God, And look at how incredibly patient He is with us. Over and over again He gives us the opportunity to turn to Him and discover what life is truly all about.

The parable tells us something about Jesus, the Son of God, who was sent by His Father to earth at Christmas. Jesus is the son the vineyard owner loves. Jesus is the one the owner sends to the people who have already abused or killed every other servant the owner has sent. Our God is a God of mercy and grace and patience and love. Jesus comes to our broken planet and gives his life that we might have the hope of everlasting life. The parable also shows us that Jesus was fully aware of what awaited him. He came to earth at Christmas, as a helpless child, to die, for all, even for those this parable exposes.

There are a number of responses the priests, the scribes and the elders could have made after hearing this parable. They could have done what Mr.

Tumnus did when he was convicted that what he was doing was wrong. Mr. Tumnus made a heroic choice, even when it meant difficulty for him. But that is not what the scribes, priests, and elders did. Instead, they set out to silence Jesus because they were unwilling to hear the truth.

And finally, this passage shows us that Jesus knew that in the end, death would not be the final word. Instead, life would triumph over death and evil and His life would be the foundation of a new kingdom, God's kingdom. That's the glimmer of hope in this otherwise bleak and wintry passage.

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe is a story about hope that comes in the depths of winter. But it is not a story about hope that comes solely because of the courage of the daughters of Eve and the sons of Adam. It is a hope that comes from another place, from One who enters our world to put things right.

This is a very challenging passage of Scripture. The parable Jesus tells is a sobering picture of the human story gone horribly wrong. But it is into the middle of that broken story that the Son of God comes at Christmas.

Listen to pastor and author Tim Keller, "The message of Christianity is, "Things really are this bad, and we can't heal or save ourselves. Things really are this dark—nevertheless, there is hope." The Christmas message is that "on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." Notice that it doesn't

say from the world a light has sprung, but upon the world, a light has dawned. It has come from outside. There is light outside of this world, and Jesus has brought that light to save us; indeed, he is the Light (John 8:12)." 1 That is the hope of Christmas.

I've got one more clip to show you before we're done today. It's the scene in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, where the holy rebellion, that has been underway in Narnia, reaches its crescendo.

(Congregation watched video)

Aslan, the Christ-figure in the story, gives his life for the most bad-tempered, argumentative, self-centered and greedy member of the Pevensie family; the youngest boy whose name is Edmund.

While he was still under the spell of the White Witch, Edmund has a small revelation when he sees a group of animals enjoying a feast that Father Christmas gave them. That Christmas celebration angered the White Witch so much that she turned the animals to stone.

C.S.Lewis writes about Edmund's reaction to what happens to the animals celebrating Christmas. He writes, "And Edmund for the first time in this story felt sorry for someone besides himself." Edmund's stony heart is softening. Eventually, the Witch decides to murder Edmund, but he's rescued just in time by Aslan's followers.

Edmond then has a long, private conversation with Aslan. And it is after that conversation that Aslan gives his life for selfish, greedy Edmund. And Edmund's life changes dramatically.

He asks his brother and sisters to forgive him, and they do. He becomes a valuable part of Aslan's army, attacking the White Witch when everyone else is too frightened to do so. Here is part of the final battle with the White Witch. At the beginning of the clip, she is confident that endless winter will return. She has killed Aslan and destroyed the hopes of the people of Narnia. Let's watch this scene that is about what will happen when Jesus comes again.

(Showed a clip from The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe <https://youtu.be/nrUHFS6ipaw?t=23>, includes full battle scene not show on Sunday morning.)

You're going to have to rent it yourself to find out what happens.

Hope does come in winter. That is the message of Christmas. When Jesus entered our world at Christmas, hope was born in our world. And when Jesus comes again to our world, hope will finally be fully restored. Hope comes from outside our world right in the middle of our the pain, the difficulties, the conflicts, the brokenness in our lives.

That hope that comes from beyond our world is the sure hope on which every other

reason for hope can be built. Because Jesus has come to be that hope and to bring His hope, we are invited into his holy rebellion and called to courageously show that hope to the world around us.

¹Keller, Timothy. *Hidden Christmas* (p. 10). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

+ + + + + + + + +

Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting: fpchkoolau@gmail.com