

***Jesus is on the move... the past is history, the future mystery, what matters is what we choose right now***



In C. S. Lewis' *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Jesus is represented as a Lion named Aslan, fierce, and loving, strong and tender.

The land of Narnia has been locked into a long winter by the power of a witch. Always winter, and never Christmas ... a time of cold, of waiting, and of fear. All who disagree with this witch are turned to stone. And into this comes a Rumour of Joy – a Rumour that Aslan is *on the move*, and that where he goes, Christmas comes – a thaw of the cold; restoration and hope. Some are afraid that this will make the witch angry, and she will turn Aslan himself into stone, but faithful Mr Beaver gives a response to this suggestion:

“Lord love you...” answered Mr Beaver with a great laugh. “Turn *him* into stone? If she can stand on her two feet and look him in the face it’ll be the most she can do, and more than I expect of her. No, no. He’ll put all to rights...”

Aslan is on the move – and nothing can stand against him. All things are brought together, and we can rest our fear in his power to heal and restore, trusting that the things we place into God’s hands are safely held there.

I was talking with a young woman last week in our parish; she is in a time of much loss and grief, and she is facing an uncertain future where huge change and challenge could lie ahead. And yet, like Mr Beaver, her face was radiant. *I was so angry*, she said, *but I have realised I need to move forward, and I want a future. Whatever comes, I have Jesus*, she said, *and I really do trust in that. I know he will get me through, and I know we will be alright.*

Our reading today takes us back to Easter, reminding us in this journey of Ordinary Time of the Easter God who makes it with us. It opens by telling us that Jesus *set his face to go to Jerusalem*. To *set one's face* is not an observation about direction, it's a sign of commitment – the decision is made, and the course will be followed through no matter what. There is a sense that, just as the witch couldn't stop Aslan, so nothing is going to stop Jesus now in his mission of love and restoration. No powers of darkness or evil, no human fears or worries, no hesitations or anxieties. Jesus is saying there comes a point when it is just Time. Time, now, in this moment, to embrace that journey of love.

And he invites us to journey with him. Now. In this moment and every moment, because what has been, as they say, is history, and what will be is mystery, but what matters is what we choose right now.

It might feel that the world is complicated and broken, and our path ahead may seem divided and torn, overshadowed by worry, or by things beyond our control. But Jesus invites us to place all those things into his hands in trust, and to follow him. *Whatever comes*, said that remarkable young woman, *I have Jesus, and I really do trust in that. I know he will get me through, and I know we will be alright*.

Unlike C. S. Lewis' witch, neither Aslan nor Jesus, whom he represents, will turn us to stone, or punish us if we do not accept. Jesus simply invites. Of course we may choose to stay with the witch, locked in everlasting Winter, but we are invited to go with Jesus into the warmth of light and love.

If you were at worship over Easter, you might remember me sharing another piece of writing by C. S. Lewis

*The spring comes slowly down this way; but the great thing is that the corner has been turned. There is, of course, this difference, that in the natural spring the crocus cannot choose whether it will respond or not. We can. It remains with us to follow or not, to die in this winter, or to go on into that spring and that summer.*

But what does this mean, this journey to the Cross with Jesus, what does it mean to choose Spring over Winter? To choose to be places of healing, hope and grace into the world, and to give our hearts to be the dwelling place of Love Itself?

It means daily choices – choices every moment to put Love first, to put Jesus first. To trust in him to hold all things in his hand. To be willing to lay things down - lay aside our frustrations, our angers, our fears – to let such things bounce off his certainty within us. So that cycles of fear, of anxiety, of brokenness themselves may be broken.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Pastor at the time of the rise of Nazism in Germany. He stood against Nazism, and founded the Confessing Church – which proclaimed Christ, not the Fuhrer, as King. Bonhoeffer was eventually arrested and executed in Flossenbürg concentration camp. He wrote a lot about the Cost

of Discipleship, and the perils of Cheap Grace. Cheap grace, he says, is grace without the cross, grace without Jesus. Grace where we rely on Jesus' endless mercy and forgiveness, without embracing the need to change, to repent, to obey, to actually follow him.

The gospel continues with some examples of human fragility – the disciples are generous of spirit but easily angered, and haven't made Jesus' mercy their own. When the Samaritans reject Jesus and the disciples, the disciples forget Jesus' instruction to shake the dust from their feet and move on - James and John want to incinerate the village. Retributive anger stops at the cross, Jesus tells us, it has no place in the Coming Spring. The gospel calls us to be ready to let go - .... Jesus rebukes them and moves on – let's simply spread the message in a new location, he says.

The reading continues with a list of people, all wanting to follow Jesus, but held back by their worries and concerns, and the things they cling to. *The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head, says Jesus, let the dead bury the dead, and don't look back to say farewell to those at home.*

It's tempting sometimes to think this means God – Jesus – doesn't care about the things of the world, and the needs of the human heart. But we have a fully loving and living God who loves to feast and share together. A God who weeps at the death of his friend, and takes time out of an important mission to sit a woman broken by a haemorrhage.

Today's gospel is really a call to have open hands, to sitting lightly with the world and trusting deeply in Jesus. Because Jesus is on the Move, and he calls us to walk with him. To trust in God to love every single human heart and to not have forgotten the things that worry us; that he will break the spirals of pain and violence, and be greater than our fears, pride and anxiety. And this is the time – says Jesus - right now – not the shadow of what is past, not the mystery of what might come, but what matters is what we choose right now.

To make those daily choices, listening to the Rumour of Joy, and making it our own to share, in the knowledge that nothing truly has the power to withstand it. To join with that young woman and say *I know he will get me through, and I know we will all be alright.*

Because Jesus is *on the move*.