

“LET’S GO TO THE MOVIES!
IV – THE LION KING”
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Romans 8:31-39

Luke 22:14-20

As you all well know, this has been a hot, hot summer. So it has not been surprising for me to see all over Facebook, images of parents taking their kids to the movies. What a great way to escape the heat, and have a few hours of entertainment together! Well, the big winner at the box office of late has been the newest version of Disney’s movie “The Lion King.” I confess that I haven’t seen it – I saw the original a long time ago and I loved it.

In case you haven’t seen “The Lion King” – this new one or the original – let me tell you a little about it. It is a beautiful animated movie starring the animals of the jungle in Africa. The star of the show is a lion named Simba. The movie starts with Simba’s birth, Simba’s father is Mufasa, the king of the jungle – so when Simba is born, he becomes the heir apparent – the next king of the jungle. All of the other animals in the kingdom are filled with joy, save one – Mufasa’s brother and Simba’s uncle “Scar” – who now, with Simba’s birth is no longer heir to the throne, and is livid about that.

As the movie goes on, Simba continues to grow and explore his world, all the while Uncle Scar is trying to figure out a way to get back on the throne. Turns out he is an evil uncle, because through a series of events, he cooks up a scheme where Simba is put into an extremely dangerous situation, his father Mufasa comes to rescue him, and in the process, Simba is saved, but Mufasa dies saving his son.

While that's sad enough, sadder still is the fact that Uncle Scar convinces Simba that it is his own fault that his father died, and told him to get lost, to go out into the jungle and never return. So stricken with grief and unbearable guilt is he, that Simba leaves and goes off on his own.

Uncle Scar takes the throne and over the course of the days ahead leads the kingdom into chaos. Meanwhile, Simba has started somewhat of a new life, made some new friends, but still, deep inside, he is lost because his father is gone, and he thinks it was his fault. He lives with a mantle of guilt around his soul.

One day, a wonderful character named Rafiki comes on the scene. He comes upon Simba who is struggling, and tells Simba that he knows him, that he is Mufasa's son. Simba says, "You knew my father?" And Rafiki replies instead, "I

know your father.” Clearly, Rafiki hadn’t heard, so Simba has to tell Rafiki that Mufasa is dead. “No,” Rafiki replies, “Mufasa is not dead, he is alive.” And he tells Simba to follow him.

Turn to the screen now and you’ll see what happens.

Film clip from “The Lion King”

Looking into the water, seeing his own reflection, and then seeing his father, Simba is called to “remember who you are.” His father says, “You are more than what you’ve become. Remember who you are. You are my son.”

Oh dear friends, if that is not a reflection of humanity and God, I’m not sure what is. So often we, like Simba, forget who we are. In the ordinary busyness of life, we forget who we are. When struggles come, and we feel like we’re on our own, we forget who we are. When victories come, and we’re riding a wave of success we attribute to ourselves, we forget who we are.

Like Simba led by Rafiki, we would do well to stop and look into the water, if you will, and remember.

How do we do that? Well, we can look into the water, through the Word. It's pretty hard to read scripture, and not think about your own life, think about what that scripture is saying to you or about you. I mean, who can read a story like The Prodigal Son and not think of ways you sinned and needed forgiveness like that younger son, or were so self-righteous and angry, like the older one?

Or who can read the story of Adam and Eve and not think about the many times you yielded to temptation, doing exactly what you knew you shouldn't have done?

Or who can read the story of Martha and Mary at that dinner for Jesus, and not remember times when you got irritated like Martha, when no one was helping you in the kitchen?

Well, you get the idea. It's pretty hard to read the Bible, and not "remember who you are," and more importantly, be reminded of you who really are – a sinner saved by grace, a beloved child of God.

We can also "look into the water" through prayer. When we quiet ourselves before God, speak to him and listen to him, he will help us remember who we are, and whose we are. He will speak to us like the loving parent he is, and remind us of his love, grace and mercy. He will lead us, if we are willing to follow, to a centered life of balance and peace.

Another way we can "look into the water" and remember who we are is by taking the time to notice the world around us. That takes intention. All of us know what it's like to speed through life. All of us know how sometimes we go from one place to another and when we've arrived there, we hardly remember things along the way. We're so distracted these days.

Oh, but if we slow down, and intentionally take time to really see things around us, we'll begin to discover signs God puts in our paths to remind us of his love and presence in our lives, to remind us of who we are. I know you know what

I'm talking about – because some of you have told me about those experiences in your lives.

That time you saw a cardinal by your window, reminding you of someone you'd lost.

Or a friend that showed up at just the right moment, when you needed someone the most.

Or a rainbow that lit up the sky after a storm that brought joy to your heart which had been wrecked by storms.

Or a child who reached up and touched your face, when no one had touched your face or your heart for a long time.

Or a piece of music that made you dance or sing along, that immediately brought joy to your heart.

Or a pet that came and put their head in your lap and looked at you like you were the most important person in the world.

I could go on and on, but suffice it to say that God speaks to us all the time in a myriad of ways to help us remember his love for us, and to help us remember who we are, to keep us centered, and to keep us from letting the world define us. But we have to slow down, look around and notice.

This morning we have intentionally slowed our busy lives down. We've come to worship here in this place, and we see before us some very real signs from God – the bread and cup of holy communion. Looking at that piece of bread and that chalice of juice is like unto Simba looking into the water.

When we see that bread, we remember. We remember Jesus, son of the living God. We remember God's love for us that was so strong he sent Jesus into the world for us and for our salvation.

We remember Jesus saying, “I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me shall never hunger.”

And when we look at the cup, we remember the price Jesus paid for us – he paid with his very life. We remember the cup of the new covenant poured out for us. We remember that he died that we might live life – fully, abundantly, and eternally. When we look at the cup, we remember who we are – blessed, beloved children of God.

No matter what life has done to us, or how the world has tried to define us, when we look at the bread and cup of holy communion, we remember who we are, and after receiving those gifts, we go forth refreshed and renewed.

I read a story recently about a pastor who had gone to visit a little girl from his church who was very, very sick in the hospital. Her mother had sat by her bedside for days. While the pastor was there, the doctor came in to see the child, and as he was leaving, asked the pastor if he could talk to him in the hallway. So they went out there, and the doctor said, “Please see if you can get that young

mother to go home for a while. She hasn't slept, she hasn't eaten, and she's got to be exhausted. See if you can get her to go home."

So the pastor went back into the room and spoke softly to the mother, trying to get her to take care of herself. "Why don't you let me take you home for a while?" She looked up at him and said, "Jim, you don't really want me to leave when she is this sick, do you?" Jim, who was a parent himself, immediately understood, and instead said, "Let me go downstairs and get you something to eat."

Through that conversation, Jim says, he was reminded that God is like that mother – a loving parent who wants to be especially close to his children when they are suffering. (James W. Moore, *If God Has a Refrigerator, Your Picture is On It*, "Celebrating God's Greatest Promise," p. 79)

In much the same way, my friends, the bread and cup of holy communion remind us how much God wants to be, and is, with us – always and forever. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

So today, as you come forward and receive the bread and juice, really look at them, and remember who you are. You are loved beyond your understanding. You are a child of God, and God walks with you every moment of your life. He loves you so much he paid the ultimate price that you might have life.

So come and receive the bread of life and the cup of salvation and leave here today remembering who you are, and living like the child of God he created you to be. Do not let the world define you, or circumstances in life overwhelm you or convince you that you're not worthy. Through this sacrament of holy communion, remember who you are – a beloved and blessed child of God, who through the gift of Jesus the Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit is with you every moment of every day of your life. Thanks be to God!

Amen.