

Title: 04 – Betrayal and Consequences (Narnia)

Text: Romans 3:21-26

(Thanks to Greg Hanson Pastor/Minister Sunrise Wesleyan Church, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada, for many of the ideas in this sermon.)

We know Clive Staples Lewis better today as C.S. Lewis. He was a quiet-living professor at Oxford, a writer, and a good friend of J.R.R. Tolkien, of Lord of the Rings fame. In fact, Tolkien played a crucial role in C.S. Lewis examining the claims of Christ, concluding that they were true, and becoming a Christian.



But before that time, Lewis was an adamant atheist. He had rejected Christianity early on, and later said that he had been “very angry with God for not existing.” He was a man committed to reason and logic, and he thought faith couldn’t mix with those. But it was precisely because of his skills at logic and debate that he eventually became a Christian. After re-examining the claims of Christ and subjecting them to all sorts of scrutiny,

he said, “I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed.” He didn’t necessarily want to become a Christian... in fact, He resisted the very possibility because it would mean that he would have to give up control of his life to God. He even described himself as “the most reluctant convert of all time.” But when confronted with the facts, he couldn’t hold out any longer.

The Chronicles of Narnia is a seven-volume set of books, still popular today, decades after they were first written. The first book that he wrote, which is usually regarded to be the second book in the series, is ... The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.

The story begins with four young children discovering a wardrobe which is actually an entrance into another world... the world of Narnia. Peter is the eldest, Susan is next, then Edmund, and little Lucy. And shortly after they enter Narnia, they learn that the land is under a curse. For 100 years, the White Witch, Jadis, has ruled the land, and during that entire time it has been a cold, bleak place. It has been a land where it is always winter, never Christmas. The land is populated by talking animals and all sorts of mystical and mythical creatures... some on the side of the evil Jadis, and some on the side of Aslan. Aslan was the true king of the land, but had been absent for a long time. But word has spread that “Aslan is on the move.” He is returning, and when he arrives, all will be set right again.



But something terrible happens. Edmund betrays his brother and his sisters. Edmund chooses to side with the White Witch, he betrays their position and that of Aslan’s camp for some Turkish Delight – I can understand that. And he is trapped by the White Witch. Aslan sends his forces after the White Witch and frees Edmund and brings him back to their camp. But there’s more to it than that. Shortly after this happens, the White Witch comes to Aslan’s camp in the scene we have just watched:

“Have you forgotten the Deep Magic?” asked the Witch.

“Let us say I have forgotten it,” answered Aslan gravely. “Tell us of this Deep Magic.”

“Tell you?” said the Witch, her voice growing suddenly shriller. “Tell you what is written on that very Table of Stone which stands beside us? Tell you what is written in letters deep as a spear is long on the fire-stones on the Secret Hill? Tell you what is engraved on the sceptre of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea? You at least know the Magic which the Emperor put into Narnia at the very beginning. You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to kill... And so that human creature is mine. His life is forfeit to me. His blood is my property... unless I have blood as the Law says all Narnia will be overturned and perish in fire and water.”



“It is very true,” said Aslan, “I do not deny it.”

And she was right. Not even Aslan could ignore the Deep Magic. In Narnia, the Deep Magic referred to spiritual laws or spiritual realities, and nothing could be

done to change them. They had to be honoured. Edmund, a son of Adam, had betrayed his brother and sisters as well as Aslan. He was a traitor, and because of a decree from the dawn of time, the White Witch had rightful claim on any traitor. Edmund was her property.

And the Deep Magic that C.S. Lewis describes is an allegory for spiritual laws or spiritual realities of this world. God has placed some spiritual laws alongside the laws of gravity and quantum physics when he handcrafted the world. And the universe operates according to those laws. And they have certain implications for our lives. And the Deep Magic that Lewis describes in Narnia point to the Spiritual laws at work in our world and helps us to better understand them.

The first spiritual reality the story points to is that like Edmund we are all traitors against God.

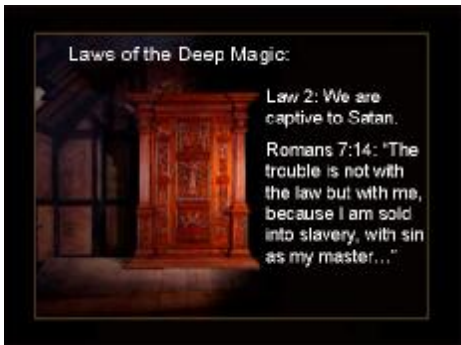


Edmund turned his back on his sisters and his brother and even Aslan, in order to selfishly seek after his own pleasure and power and prestige. And they're the same reasons we turn away from God today. Adam and Eve first rebelled against God because they believed the deception that they could become gods themselves. And we've all inherited their rebellion. It's what's called "original sin"... the sin of Adam and Eve passed down through every generation. And even today, we continue to rebel against God seeking our own power and pleasure and prestige. And none of us is without fault. That's why the Bible says...Romans 3:23 (NLT) For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard.

We've all failed to meet up to God's standards. Oh, I may be a nice guy and you may be a good neighbour, but that doesn't cut it. A sin is still a sin. A stain is still a stain, no matter what way you look at it. That one time you lashed out in anger... it tainted you. That one time you disobeyed your parents... it tainted you. That one time you lusted for someone you're not married to... it tainted you. That one time you were jealous of what someone else had... it tainted you.

And you might say, "Well, nobody's perfect." Exactly! Now you're beginning to understand. We all fall short of God's expectations for our lives. We've all failed Him... we've all betrayed Him.

And because of our betrayal, we are captive to Satan, the prince of this world. That is a second truth of the



Deep Magic. In Narnia, what happened to Edmund because he betrayed the others? He became captive to the White Witch who was ruling the land of Narnia at the time. And because of our betrayal, we are captive to Satan, the prince of this world.

Because of this underlying current of sinfulness that flows throughout humanity, every person born into this world belongs to Satan. We are all slaves to our sin nature, and we're powerless to do anything about it. As Paul wrote...

Romans 7:14,19,25 (NLT)

The trouble is not with the law but with me, because I am sold into slavery,

with sin as my master...

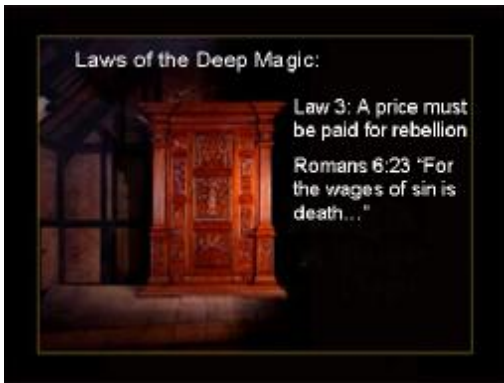
When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway...

In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

Does that sound familiar? I'm sure that every one of us, if we were honest, would have to say that describes us. At least, it describes us without God. We really are powerless to overcome the forces of evil on our own. We are slaves to them. We are captive to our evil desires.

The third law of the Deep Magic is this: A price must be paid for rebellion.

The White Witch was fast to point out that, because of Edmund's betrayal, there was a price to be paid. And that price, according to the Deep Magic, was Edmund's life. His very blood now belonged to her. That was the penalty for his betrayal. And it was a death sentence. And not even Aslan, the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea, could veto it. The price had to be paid, no exceptions.



The Bible also tells us that a price must be paid for our rebellion against God. And that price is death. Because of our rebellion, we all have earned the sentence of death.

Romans 6:23 (NLT)  
For the wages of sin is death...

Hebrews 9:22 (NLT)  
Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

Now, here's where we run into a bit of a dilemma. I mean, God's a God of love, right? Don't we talk about how God is love? And if God is love, wouldn't He want to just wipe our slate clean and forget about it? But there's a problem with that logic. You see, God may be a God of love, but He's also a God of justice. So while God's love calls for forgiveness, God's justice screams for a price to be paid.

The White Witch came to Aslan demanding that Edmund's life be handed over to her. Edmund was a traitor, and so his life legitimately belonged to her. That was justice, and Aslan could not and would not refute that. So what did he do? He offered himself in Edmund's place. A price had to be paid for Edmund's betrayal, and he offered to pay that price. That's how his love and justice met.

So as Aslan had arranged with the White Witch, he met her and her minions at the Stone Table. And there he submitted himself to being beaten, shaved, abused, insulted, and even killed. And he never resisted, never put up a fight. And he did it all so Edmund could be set free.

Jesus did the same for you and for me on the Cross. He paid the ransom that was due. He served the penalty that we deserved. And He did it willingly.



1 Peter 2:22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Jesus, even though He was completely sinless, took all our sinfulness upon himself so that we could be set free. The only One in all of history who could be exempt from that sentence of death chose

instead to willingly lay His life down so that by the shedding of His own perfect, sinless blood He might pay the debt in full for all of us.

But there's more to the story than that. Both stories. In Narnia, Aslan was dead. Susan and Lucy had watched from a hiding place while Aslan was tortured and killed on the Stone Table. After the White Witch and all her minions had gone, they had rushed over to him to see if there was any hope. But there was none. He was indeed dead, and there was nothing else to do. They stayed there that night, beside the body of Aslan, weeping.



And then, the next morning, they reluctantly decided it was time to leave. They had to go and tell the others what had happened. But as they began to walk away, listen to what happened...

At that moment they heard from behind them a loud noise — a great cracking, deafening noise as if a giant had broken a giant's plate.... The Stone Table was broken into two pieces by a great crack that ran down it from end to end; and there was no Aslan.

"Who's done it?" cried Susan. "What does it mean? Is it more magic?"

"Yes!" said a great voice from behind their backs. "It is more magic." They looked round. There, shining in the



sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane (for it had apparently grown again) stood Aslan himself.

“Oh, Aslan!” cried both the children, staring up at him, almost as much frightened as they were glad....

“But what does it all mean?” asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer.

“It means,” said Aslan, “that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge

goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backward.”

Aslan had conquered Death, and Death itself began to work backwards.

And then on the morning of the third day, just at Sunrise, Jesus rose again. And in so doing, He conquered death and death started working backwards.

Less than one month before he died in 1963, C. S. Lewis wrote a letter to a young girl who wanted to know if any other Narnia books were going to be produced. And this letter that Lewis wrote became a fitting farewell to all of his devoted readers. He wrote...

Dear Ruth,

Many thanks for your kind letter, and it was very good of you to write and tell me that you like my books; and what a very good letter you write for your age!

If you continue to love Jesus, nothing much can go wrong with you, and I hope that you may always do so.

I’m so thankful that you realized the "hidden story" in the Narnia books. It is odd, children nearly always do, grown-ups...hardly ever.

I’m afraid the Narnia series has come to an end, and am sorry to tell you that you can expect no more.

God bless you.

Your sincerely,

C.S. Lewis

There were no other Narnia books to be written because it was the end of the story. Just like Jesus has conquered death and Satan for all time, end of story.