

Text: 2 Cor 5.21  
St Stephen's

Jan 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006  
Sun AM

## Aslan on the Move

We are in a **series on the Chronicles of Narnia**, the great fictional work of CS Lewis. During these weeks I am talking to you about the **importance of imagination** to the life of faith. In the life of faith, you have to be able to **see beyond your sight**, and come to believe in the reality of things you cannot see. You do that by **a partnership between revelation (God's Word), and your imagination.**

Lewis did this better than anyone I know. **You sense that as you go into the imaginary world of Narnia.** Your imagination comes alive, and you can **see beyond your sight** and understand how things are in the real world, by spending time in that imaginary world. That's what happens when there is a partnership between revelation and imagination. In the Narnia Chronicles Narnia in LWW, they find a strange world where it is **"always winter, but never Christmas."**

The **White Witch has cast a spell** on Narnia, lasting a hundred years. No flowers, no leaves, no running brooks, no birds singing. The **cycle of life** had been **crippled** in Narnia. The power of the White Witch is everywhere.

Into Narnia stumbles **Edmund**, one of the four Pevensie children... We are going to follow his story today, because it is like your story, our story, the real story.

- **Out of sorts** with his siblings, feeling as though he has been wronged.
- The **first to meet the White Witch**, who quickly sizes up her good fortune. Instead of turning him into stone, she welcomes him into her sled and asks him what he wants. *"Turkish Delight, if it please your Majesty."*

- Quickly he falls **under the spell** of her enchanted candy. All too ready to believe her promises to make him the Prince of Narnia, and lord over his siblings, he **betrays** them all to her.

Edmund finds out that...

### **Sin is Attractive:**

*So when the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes... she took of its fruit and ate...*

Gen 3:6 (ESV)

### **Sin is Addictive:**

*For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out... the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.*

Rom 7:18, 19 (NIV)

*"This was enchanted Turkish Delight and anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves" (chapter 4).*

Once Edmund had tasted it, he wanted Turkish Delight more than he wanted anything else. Even more than he wanted his siblings. So she sets her trap.

*"You will bring the others with you?" "Anything, your Majesty, if only I might have some more Turkish Delight."*

After she pulled away in her sleigh, Edmund hears Lucy's voice behind him... "Edmund, so you've got in too!" And he steadies himself against a tree, feeling sick to his stomach.

*"Stolen water is sweet;*

*food eaten in secret is delicious!"*

*But little do they know that the dead are there,  
that her guests are in the depths of the grave.*

Pro 9:17-18 (NIV)

**Have you been there with Edmund?** You get near it, you give into it, it gets in you, it rules over you. Feeling the attractiveness of sin? Caught in its power? Doing what you don't want. Can't do what you do want? Looking at a box of Turkish delight this week? Did you even place the order for it yourself?

**This would be the end of the story if it were not for Aslan.**

The Beaver reminds the children... *"Don't you know, he's the king... It is he, not you, that will save the faun... 'Wrong will be right when Aslan comes in sight...'"*

Then the rumor comes... *"Aslan is on the move."* Spring starts to break out. Finally Aslan arrives and the children meet him. **(LWW p 140, 41)** Or three of them do. Aslan asks... *"But where is the fourth?"*

But the fourth is **Edmund, and he has gone to the White Witch** and betrayed them all. By now, his foolishness is clear, even to him, and he finds himself locked in the Witch's ice dungeon, awaiting his fate.

*"Can anything be done?"* Asks Lucy. *"All will be done that can be done"* says Aslan. *"But it may be harder than you think."* And Aslan will see that **the hardest part falls upon himself.**

Shortly **a raid** on the Witch's castle brings Edmund home to great rejoicing. Aslan takes him out of earshot of the other children for **a conversation** that Edmund would never forget.

**Ever had one of those?** The Bible is full of moments like that. The woman caught in adultery had one. So did Zaccheus. So did Peter. So did the sick man at the pool in Bethesda. So did

the man born blind, and Mary and Martha. And Pilate. It's a moment when it is just you and Jesus. And your whole life is wide open to him. And it is terrible and good all at the same time. And then you yield to him. And it is all right. And you start everything over. And he is everything to you. A moment like that changes the world. And **moments like that still happen today. "Aslan is on the move"**

Upon his return, Aslan simply says to the others, *"Here is your brother. There is no need to talk to him about what is past."* Edmund walks to each of them and asks for forgiveness. Edmund is a changed boy.

But he is **not yet free**. It turns out **the witch still has a claim on him**. Into the camp she comes...

*"For every treachery, I have a right to a kill."*

This is the law of the **Deep Magic**, upon which Narnia is founded... The children don't understand it, but Aslan does. The price must be paid, he agrees.

Aslan takes her off for a **long private conversation**. When they come back, much to everyone's astonishment, the Witch **renounces her claim**. Everyone rejoices, but there is a sense of foreboding over the camp. Late that night Aslan slips away, and makes **a lonely journey towards the Stone Table**.

*"Aslan is on the move."*

**Lucy and Susan** see him leave and slip away to walk with him, not understanding his sorrow. They walk together in silence for a while, then he hides them in the bushes and goes on alone.

To the girl's horror, Aslan walks into the middle of the **army of the Witch**. Hags and Ogres and Wraiths – demonic figures of ancient myth - tie him up, muzzle him, shave his mane, taunt him, drag him around and finally hoist him onto the great stone table, lashing him to it. There, **the Witch stands in triumph**.

She knows that **Aslan is giving himself in Edmund's place** to fulfill the demands of the Deep Magic. As she raises her terrible stone knife over him she cries out her victory, *"Fool, now I will kill you instead of the human traitor and so the Deep Magic will be appeased. But who will protect them now that you are dead!"* She brings her knife down into Aslan's great heart. The girls cannot bear to watch it. Aslan is dead.

The **Witch shrieks in** triumph and like a dread storm sweeps off the hill to find the forces of Aslan. The two girls, hidden from their sight, hurry to Aslan's body, horrified at what they cannot deny. They bury their faces in his side and weep till the tears will come no more. Hours later, as the dawn breaks, they wander down the hill. Broken. Frightened. Desolate.

The **Deep Magic** in Narnia is Lewis' imaginary picture of the **Moral Law**. In Narnia it is not the kind of magic that can be manipulated by incantations or spells or ceremony. It is so deep that it is written into the foundations of the universe itself, an essential part of the way things are. That is true of the Moral Law. It is not some optional add-on to the way things are. It is the **essential nature** of a universe that is fundamentally relational. That is why Jesus declares the law will outlast even the visible cosmos.

*I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Mt 5:18 (NIV)*

That is why when Lewis imagined the land of Narnia, betrayal meant death. It is the same law that is written into the real world.

*"When you eat of it you will surely die."*

Gen 2:17 (NIV)

*The soul who sins is the one who will die.*

## Eze 18:4 (NIV)

It is a **statement of fact**. It is always true. Sin destroys our lifeline to the sinless God. Like the flower pulled from the earth, like the vine cut off from the branch, we wither and die. **That is the way it is in a universe that is entirely dependent upon the living and holy God.** Betrayal means someone must die. And to save Edmund, Aslan offers himself. The Deep Magic must be appeased.

**As they come down the hill,** the girls suddenly hear **a loud crack**. They jump in fear. The Stone Table is broken and has collapsed. Aslan's body is gone. And the girls have no idea what has happened.

Then, beyond their hopes, stands Aslan, very much alive, laughing in the sunrise, roaring with life. *"Aslan is on the move."*

In one of the most moving passages of the Chronicles **he romps** with the girls, chasing them, switching his tail, diving between them, tossing them, catching them, *'until all three of them rolled over together in a happy laughing heap of fur and arms and legs... whether it was more like playing with a thunderstorm or playing with a kitten, Lucy could never make up her mind.'* (p.179).

And then **Aslan roared**, bending the trees before him. He put the girls on his back and raced off faster than the wind to the rescue of all of Narnia.

What does it mean? **(LWW p. 178-79)**

The same is true of our world. Except it is not imaginary. It is **true**. Deeper even than the **moral law** is the **law of grace**.

*God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.*

2 Cor 5:21 (The Message)

The righteous one stands in for the unrighteous, bearing the cost, paying the penalty, that we might know his mercy and forgiveness and live for Him. That is why 'mercy triumphs over judgment'. It is the deeper law. That is why it is so important to stay near the Stone Table, to spend time again and again at the foot of the cross...

You can always tell who spends a lot of time there. Jesus tells us how to tell. Our gospel passage today recounts the story of the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears. They were together in the home of a Pharisee, a religious leader of Israel. The woman had been to the Stone Table, so to speak. But the Pharisee hadn't. The woman knew the attractiveness of sin and the addictiveness of sin, but the Pharisee didn't. Jesus tells us how you can tell...

*I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love."*

Lk 7:47 (NLT)

The one who needs forgiveness and knows it – and finds forgiveness and knows it – is the one who is filled with love for Jesus and love for broken people. You can see it in them. That's what happened to Edmund. He became known in Narnia as "Edmund the Just". He was the first into battle for the name of Aslan and the first in compassion for those who failed. Those who are forgiven much, love much.

If you are like Edmund... and you know the **attractiveness** of sin and the **addictiveness** of sin but you don't yet know the

**forgiveness** of sin. (Abortion... Betrayal... Failure...) Come today for a conversation with the Lord Jesus. He is willing to bear the penalty, carry the burden, forgive you and give you a fresh start. His mercy still triumphs over judgment. His love is the foundation of the universe. Stronger than the mountains. Deeper than the sea. More everlasting than the stars. And if you have been forgiven much, stay in sight of the fearsome Stone Table, the Cross of Jesus, where the great sacrifice has been made. It will help you to love much.