

“The Lion in the Path”

(14th in our series, Jesus Everywhere)

I Kings 12:16-13:34; II Kings 23:15-20*

(See also Ezekiel 37:11-14; Matthew 27:51-54; Romans 11:25-36)

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**All scriptures are ESV unless otherwise noted.*

Sermon

In I Kings, chapter 12 the nation of Israel splits in two. A man named Jeroboam leads the 10 Northern Tribes of Israel in rebellion against Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, of the House of David, of the Tribe of Judah. It's through the House of David and Tribe of Judah that God promises the Messiah – *“The Lion of the Tribe of Judah.”*

So King Jeroboam established the northern kingdom called “Israel” or “Samaria” and worried about the southern kingdom, the Jews in Judah. The southern kingdom contained the temple in Jerusalem, also called Ariel – “Lioness of God.”

I Kings 12:26

[So] Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. ²⁷If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah. ²⁸So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” ²⁹And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

So King Jeroboam makes golden calves in order to compete with the worship of the Lord God in Jerusalem in Judah, at the temple. Golden calves just like the Israelites made in the wilderness. Of all the cool stuff you could make for an idol, why a calf? Well if we were agrarian Israelite peasants, we'd understand... to an Israelite peasant, nothing is more useful than a calf or cow.

Well, not that we enlightened modern Christians would ever do this... but if we were to make an idol, it might look something like this:

[Image of a large, shiny red truck]

400 horsepower – that's like 800 cow power or 3,500 calf power. If we made it an idol, we'd bow down to it. Sacrifice to it, for it. Pay \$30 to drive 100 miles in it.

Or maybe this would be our idol:

[Image of a pile of US dollars]

The calves were gold – gold is money.

Or maybe this would be our idol

[Image of a beautiful woman in a swimsuit]

Potency – fertility.

Or maybe this would be our idol

[Image of a huge crowd]

The opinion of the crowd. In America we sometimes call it democracy.

Or maybe this would be our idol

[Image of the American flag]

Our country.

Or this

[Image of a famous Norman Rockwell painting a family gathering at the dinner table]

The family dinner table. Community in Covenant – a sense of belonging, never alone.

Or maybe this would be our idol

[Image of a church building]

Gosh church can be all these other things combined.

None of these things are bad in and of themselves. Actually they're all very good and very useful; that's why they make great idols – they're useful.

What about this?

[Image of Jesus hanging on the cross]

Is this a good idol? How do you use a naked man hanging on a cross?

Well anyway, Jeroboam makes a golden calf; builds an altar in Bethel; ordains his own clergy and institutes a New National Religion. He makes a golden calf, not a lion (for instance) and that makes some sense. Lions are cool, but calves are useful and safe. Lions are cool – in a zoo – under control but not standing in the way on your path.

Remember the scene in the *Chronicles of Narnia* when the children find out that Aslan, the King of Narnia, is a lion? And they will meet him at the stone table? Susan asks

"Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."

"That you will, dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs. Beaver, "If there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

Aslan is not a tame lion.

Dorothy Sayers wrote

The people who hanged Christ never accused Him of being a bore; on the contrary, they thought Him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround Him with the atmosphere of tedium. We have very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified Him "Meek and mild," and recommended Him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies.

Well that's what we do; what Religion does; what Jerusalem attempted:

Tame the lion – make him useful – an idol.

Tame the lion so it looks like a lion, but acts like a donkey.

At the end of the *Chronicles of Narnia* and the end of the Old Narnia, an ape dresses a donkey in a lion suit and pretends it's Aslan in order to gain control of the whole country.

It's election year so you're gonna see some donkeys dress in lion suits and elephants dressed in lion suits as well. Around church you see that kind of stuff all the time. We all try to tame the Lion of Judah and use him for our own purposes:

Idolatry – We Control Idols.

But in the end idols control us for we are what we worship and idols are dead.

So Jeroboam makes a golden calf and institutes a new religion of Bethel.

I Kings 13:1

13 And behold, a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the Lord to Bethel, Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make offerings. ²And the man cried against the altar by the word of the Lord and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord: 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who make offerings on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'"

This man of God from Judah just comes and prophesies against King Jeroboam and his New Religion by the "Word of the Lord" speaking "the Word of the Lord." How many of you have heard the Word of the Lord? You don't have to raise your hands, but have you heard it?

It appears that this fellow wasn't a professional prophet, priest, or preacher like me or the clergy Jeroboam had ordained. Actually he looks like Amos, who will prophesy against Bethel and King Jeroboam the 2nd, 200 years later. Amos was a shepherd and fig farmer from Judah. But the Word of the Lord came to him. In Amos 3:8 he writes *"The lion has roared, who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?"* The King and Amaziah (the priest of Bethel) try to shut Amos up but they can't stop the Word of the Lord.

- A. Scripture says *"The Word of God is living and active; sharper than any two-edged sword piercing to the division of soul and spirit discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* It is not dead, but alive.
- B. Through Isaiah God says *"My Word will not return empty [void] but will accomplish that which I purpose."*
- C. Genesis 1:1 and John 1:10 tells us that God creates all things with His Word.

So in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, Aslan the Lion sings the world of Narnia into existence. Uncle Andrew is a magician and idolator and he doesn't want to be sung into Aslan's existence. He won't hear the Music – the Word. He hears only his own words, making himself in his own

image. He's insane. He's his own idol, like most of the children of men; already dead in bondage to a lie. And yet, in the beginning, God did say *"Let us make man in our image and likeness."*

And His Word does not return void.

On Easter we saw that as David sang the Word, the Word was singing David; taking David's dischordant notes and singing them into a New Harmony of Grace by Faith and Faith by Grace.

"I heard there was a secret chord that David played and it pleased the Lord. But you don't really care for music do ya? It goes like this, the 4th, the 5th, the minor fall, the baffled king composing Hallelujah."

You see nothing is as powerful as the Word of God, not even your sin. God's choice is stronger than your choice. So God's Word isn't safe, but it's always good. Without it, we'll die of thirst, but with it, we might die as well.

In the 4th book in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, a girl named Jill finds herself in a new world, all alone and desperately thirsty. She spies a river of living water and then sees an immense lion on the path in the way. The Lion says *"If you are thirsty, come drink"* but she's terrified.

"Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion... *"I'm dying of thirst,"* said Jill... *"Then drink,"* said the Lion.

"May I – could I – would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl.

"Will you promise not to – do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill...

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer... *"Do you eat girls?"* she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill...

"Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.

"Oh dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. *"I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."*

"There is no other stream," said the Lion.

The Lion in the Way, is the Way. The Lion in your Path is your Path. The Word of the Lord, like a lion, isolates his prey. He will get you alone so you can hear Him alone. The Word of the Lord is the Truth and we hear the Truth in our hearts. So, no other person, group, or authority can hear it for you; it must happen in the sanctuary of your heart.

To hear the Truth is to have Faith.

To have faith in the Truth is to be captured by the Truth in your heart.

It's a decision in your heart which you must not abdicate to any crowd, country, religion or church.

Kierkegaard writes *"a crowd in it's very concept is untruth."* To make a decision is to individually wrestle the truth. *"A decision joins us to the eternal"* writes Kierkegaard. *"A decision is the awakening to the eternal... In the end, the arch enemy of decision is cowardice. Cowardice is constantly at work trying to break off the good agreement of decision with eternity."*

Your cowardice, which is your idolatry - your fear of false gods; that cowardice always battles the inbreaking of eternity within your heart. It battles the decision called Faith.

So have you heard the Word of the Lord? Have you?

If you believe, at least a little, that Jesus is Lord...

Then you have...

Then you are one of His sheep.

Our Shepherd is a lion. No wonder it can be stressful; He's not safe but always Good.

And He said *"My sheep know my voice and I call them by name."*

"Blah, blah, blah Fluffy." Or "Blah, blah, blah Peter."

We each hear differently and if you think you don't hear – think about how you come to say *"Jesus you are the Christ, Son of the Living God."* See? Flesh and Blood did not reveal that to you, but your Father in Heaven, speaking His Word into your heart.

How did you hear it? – a longing, a thought, a sunset, a story?

God speaks to each of us differently. His Word is recorded in Scripture, but we each must hear it. He speaks through Scripture and He speaks through all Creation, through events in your life; He speaks into your mind, heart, soul and strength as you listen with all your mind, heart, soul, and strength. He often speaks to my wife in visions and words of knowledge. Hardly ever does He speak that way to me, but He speaks Logic-Logos into my brain.

So when we pray together for people, He'll give her a picture and then I'll explain it, but He's speaking to both of us. He is the Truth and if you trust Truth in you, You hear Him. Jesus is the Truth and your testimony to Jesus; your testimony is prophetic. Revelation 19:10 *"The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy."*

Well anyway, this man of God heard the Word of God; journeyed to Bethel and spoke it to the king, in front of everyone and King Jeroboam wasn't pleased. He did not want the Word of the Lord messing up his religion. So he stretches out his hand toward the man of God and yells *"Seize him,"* but as he does, his hand like turns to stone and the altar crumbles and Jeroboam calls out to the man of God for help. The man of God prays and heals him.

But Jeroboam doesn't repent. If he can't control the Word of God by force, he'll try seduction. He says to the man of God *"Eat with me, drink with me, commune with me at table."* But the man of God replies that he cannot for the Word of the Lord has strictly forbidden him and he leaves.

Verse 11

¹¹*Now an old prophet lived in Bethel. [Now this man must be a prophet by trade and he's fixin/ to work for king and country. He knows how to dress in a lion's suit and so he's all over this new Civil Religion. And some fellow from Judah spouting the "Word of the Lord" could really wreck the show.] And his sons came and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. They also told to their father the words that he had spoken to the king. ¹²And their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons showed him the way that the man of God who came from Judah had gone. ¹³And he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him and he mounted it. ¹⁴And he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak. And he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said,*

"I am." ¹⁵Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." ¹⁶And he said, "I may not return with you, or go in with you, neither will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place, ¹⁷for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, 'You shall neither eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by the way that you came.'" ¹⁸And he said to him, "I also am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water.'" But he lied to him. ¹⁹So he went back with him and ate bread in his house and drank water.

To eat and drink at someone's table was to commune with them, form a covenant with them. So the man of God resists the threats of the king and he resists the seductions of the king, but he surrenders to this false prophet. He sacrifices the Word of God in his own heart, to religion. Does that make sense? It sure makes sense to me... Think how lonely this guy must've been... His choice was to be alone with the Word of God OR to be approved by the Prophets, Priests and Kings. His choice was the authority of truth in his own heart or the authority and honor of the synagogue – the assembly, that thing we often call church.

So does his bad choice make sense to you? It does to me. Wrestling the Word of God, alone, in the dark, can be terrifying. And remember, that's what the name Israel means - "wrestle with God." It makes sense that his heart wanted to let someone else do the wrestling.

And yet, if we deny our own personal relationship with the Word, we deny our own relationship with reality. We deny our own person. We choose insanity, chaos, darkness, and the void. It's the Word that creates all things. It's the Word that creates all things and creates us in the image of God – uniquely in the image of God.

You see religion can turn you into one more corporate disciple, one more member of the crowd, one more giving unit, one more white-washed tomb, one more plastic saint. But only the Word of God can turn you into you; only the Word of God knows who you are.

So unless you surrender to the Word of God in your heart, the Word will say to you come Judgement Day *"Depart from me. I never knew you"* ... I suspect that means *"I never knew you ... You are not you ... The true you that I foreknew."*

In the world to come I shall not be asked *"Why were you not Moses or St. Paul or Mother Teresa?"* but *"Why were you not Peter Hiatt?"* The true Peter is the one that's faithful to the Word of God in his heart and the false Peter must be destroyed and will be destroyed. You see it's critical that you have an individual relationship with God; that means that you wrestle the Word; that you cry out to God; that you seek God; that you seek Truth.

So, the point of this sermon is *"Don't trust sermons in church. Trust Truth in your heart – the Word of God in your heart."* The Word will come through sermons, churches, and institutions, but one day Jesus will say *"Who do you say I am?"* not *"Who does Peter Hiatt, Billy Graham or the Pope say I am."* Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans – you won't be able to hide behind that.

So, you get a Bible, read it, wrestle with it.

You get a mouth – pray with it.

You got a brain – wrestle the Word with it.

You got a life – live it with Jesus.

You got a heart – surrender it.

“Seek and you will find because you’ve already been found.”

You can’t seek truth unless you’re truthful. But never, ever, ever abdicate the Truth to Religion; never, ever sacrifice the Word of God to the Religion of Man.

You know sometimes people will come to me just so stressed over this question: *“Do I have a personal relationship with Jesus?”* (usually stressed ‘cause they haven’t heard the Word like someone else heard the Word). I’ve stopped worrying about those people; those people seeking the Truth, wrestling the Truth, longing for Truth ‘cause Jesus is the Truth and Jesus is the Person and they’re obviously relating – personal relationship. It’s the people that think they have all the answers; comfortable with their knowledge, degrees, and public approval. It’s the Pharisees who no longer wrestle; that have surrendered to darkness and crucify the Word. Why? ‘Cause it messes up their religion.

Never, ever abdicate the Word of God to the Religion of Men. And yet I so thoroughly understand the temptation ...

Well the Man of God sacrificed the Word of God to the Religion of Men. It’s what that old prophet had undoubtedly done long ago. But the Word of God is *“living and active”* and will *“not return void.”* So even if we stop wrestling the Word, the Word may still come and wrestle us ...

²⁰*And as they sat at the table [The man of God and the old lying prophet.] the word of the Lord came to the prophet [The formerly false prophet.] who had brought him back. ²¹And he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord and have not kept the command that the Lord your God commanded you, ²²but have come back and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which he said to you, “Eat no bread and drink no water,” your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.”’ ²³And after he had eaten bread, and drunk, he saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back. ²⁴And as he went away a lion met him on the road and killed him. [Holy crap. Did Aslan kill the guy? This is the Narnia for grown-ups. Or maybe it’s not Aslan; maybe it’s not the “Lion of Judah.” I Peter 5:8 “The devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour – katapino – it means “swallow” – eat.”] And his body was thrown in the way (the road) and the donkey stood beside it; the lion also stood beside the body. ²⁵And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown in the road and the lion standing by the body. And they came and told it in the city where the old prophet lived. ²⁶And when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard of it, he said, “It is the man of God who disobeyed the word of the Lord; therefore the Lord has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word that the Lord spoke to him.” ²⁷And he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” And they saddled it. ²⁸And he went and found his body thrown in the road, and the donkey and the lion standing beside the body. The lion had not eaten the body or torn the donkey.*

I Kings 13:24-28

Well this is obviously a very unusual lion.

Seven years ago in Africa, on Safari in an open convertible Jeep, our Masai driver drove us right up next to this lion

[Image of a lion]

He knew it wouldn't kill us 'cause it had just gorged itself on a water buffalo ... and lions kill to eat "*katapino*."

This lion kills the Man of Judah and doesn't devour him nor the donkey but stands guard in the middle of the way to Jerusalem in Judah.

This lion must be the Lion of Judah. Jesus is called the "*Lion of Judah*" and "*Word of God*."

In the words of Paul in II Timothy 2:12 its like: The Man of God denied the Word and the Word denied the Man of God. Yet even if the Man of God was faithless, the Word (the Lion) remained faithful for He cannot deny himself and didn't He say "*Let us make man in our own image*." So He guards Him in the Way, not safe but good.

In Lamentation 3, Jeremiah writes

*He is ... a lion in hiding; he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces ...
But this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

We're faithless and He is faith full.

We're saved by the faithfulness of Jesus.

Vincent Donavon was a missionary to the Masai tribe in Africa...

(near the spot where we saw the Lion). Like we all struggle to define Faith, He struggled to define Faith for the Masai, until one day when an elder told him this:

"Faith [is not like] a white hunter shooting an animal with his gun from a great distance...for a man really to believe is like a lion going after its prey. His nose and eyes and ears pick up the prey. His legs give him the speed to catch it. All the power of his body is involved in the terrible death leap and single blow to the neck with the front paws, the blow that actually kills. And as the animal goes down, the lion envelops it in his arms, pulls it to himself, and makes it part of himself. This is the way a lion kills. This is the way a man believes. This is what faith is."

Then he said, "*We did not search you out, Father Vincent ... We did not even want you to come to us. You searched us out. You followed us away from your house into the bush, into the plains, into the steppes where our cattle are, into the hills where we take our cattle for water, into our villages, into our homes. You told us of the High God, how we must search for Him, even leave our land and our people to find Him. But we have not done this. We have not left our land. We have not searched for Him. He has searched for us. He has searched us out and found us. All the time we think we are the lion. In the end, the lion is God.*"

True Faith is a death and resurrection in you – Faith is the Lion of God rising in you.

And do you realize – we all die and it's the Lion (the Word of the Lord) that numbers our days.

We all die and frankly it comforts me to know that if I lose my Way, the Way will not lose me.

Even if He has to kill me and drag me back and keep me in the Way.

See? The Lion in the Path is the Path – Jesus is the Way.

- We all die, but the "*steadfast love of the Lord never ceases*."
- We all die, but that doesn't mean the Story is over.
- We all die, in fact the day most people die they have not yet, even begun to live.

Life is knowing the Lion – Life is Faith in and through Jesus. And we all must die with Him in order to live.

He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

That means the Man of God died the moment he sacrificed the Word of God to the Religion of Man. The Lion just killed his body – he had already forfeited his soul. And now the lion stands over the Body in the Way, in the road – waiting – waiting – waiting for what?

Waiting for the old sinner – the old lying Prophet – now filled with the Word, who will take the Body of the man of God from Judah and place it in His own tomb.

And, now the story really gets wild

²⁹And the prophet took up the body of the man of God and laid it on the donkey and brought it back to the city to mourn and to bury him. ³⁰And he laid the body in his own grave. And they mourned over him, saying, "Alas, my brother!" ³¹And after he had buried him, he said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the grave to which the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. ³²For the saying that he called out by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel and against all the houses of the high places that are in the cities of Samaria [the Northern Kingdom] shall surely come to pass.

I Kings 13:29-31

The Word of God will not fail. So 300 years later in 2 Kings 23:15, after the Northern Kingdom had fallen to the Assyrian Empire, Josiah, King of Judah (King of the Jews) marches to Bethel and takes the bones of Jeroboam's false priests and prophets and burns them on Jeroboam's Altar.

In 2 Kings 23:17-18

¹⁷Then he [King Josiah] said, "What is that monument that I see?" And the men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and predicted these things that you have done against the altar at Bethel." ¹⁸And he said, "Let him be; let no man move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came out of Samaria. [The old lying prophet.]

The Word of God will not fail. It's like living and active – definitely not safe, but entirely Good. It cannot be stopped – the story will be told. Even if people fail, the Word will not fail. Even if they write themselves out of the story, the Word will write them back in and use them to tell the story. So, check this out:

1. The bones of the old Samaritan Prophet are saved for when he denied the Word; the Word overpowered the lying prophet of Samaria. So when he left the Way – the Way found him – killed him and guarded him in the Way until the Samaritan came, called this Jew "Brother" and placed his body in his own tomb.
2. And the bones of the old Samaritan prophet are saved because the bones of the man of God from Judah have been placed in his own tomb. The man of God who spoke the Word, but communed within this sinner, forming a covenant and bearing his sin. The man of God who died for his sin and was "numbered with the transgressors" and this should all sound familiar.

One hundred years later (after Israel and Judah have both fallen) – in Babylon, the Word of the Lord came to the prophet Ezekiel and showed him a valley of dry bones saying "*Son of Man, these bones are the whole house of Israel* [that's Judah and Samaria] ... *Prophecy to them* ...

saying *'Behold I will open your graves and raise you from your graves and bring you into the Land of Israel.'*" How's He gonna do that?

Well 600 years later, an old religious Jew (a friend of Nicodemus the Pharisee) acquired some bones from Pontius Pilate. They were the bones of the Lion of Judah and he placed them in his own tomb. And behold *"He makes all things new."* Even before the bones hit the tomb, even as He hung on the Tree – Matthew 27: *"Tombs were opened and saints came out and walked through Jerusalem"* "Ariel" – the Lioness of God.

So, although the old prophet from Bethel and the man of God from Judah both denied the Word and wrote themselves out of the story and into outer darkness, God spoke His Word wrote them back in and used them to speak. He wrote Israel and Judah back in – such that they'd have no doubt He is the author. He writes us back in – we speak sin and He sings Grace. We sing discordant and sinful notes and He turns it into new and beautiful harmonies with His Word. Though all men be faithless, He remains faithful.

Romans 3:4 *"Let God be true, though every man a liar."*

Revelation 5:5 *"Weep no more; behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered..."*

He's not a safe lion but He's good and this is how He conquers.

Clip from *The Passion of the Christ* and Clip of Aslan from *The Chronicles of Narnia* Movie
(Hallelujah song being sung in the background by Sanctuary Worship Team.)

Christ carrying His cross through the crowds of people.
Aslan is walking through the crowd holding lights and taunting him.
Christ carrying His cross and falling and being pushed.
Aslan being pushed down.
Christ being tied to the cross.
Aslan being tied and then being drug to the table/altar.
Christ being nailed to the cross.
Witch putting knife in Aslan.
Christ on the cross and eyes close.
Aslan's eyes close. Tomb is being opened and Aslan stands at the entryway with light shining behind him.

He's not safe, but He's good and that is how He conquers; we die with Him and rise with Him. But you see, unlike Judah and Israel, unlike the Man of God from Judah and the Old Prophet from Samaria:

You and I don't have to wait to have the Bones of the Lion placed in our tomb.

You and I don't have to descend into outer darkness where men *"weep and gnash their teeth"* waiting for Judgment.

You and I can place the Body of the Lion in our tomb today.

Communion

For on the night He was denied and betrayed by Israel and Judah and all humanity, He took bread and broke it saying, *"This is my Body given to you. Take, eat, and do this in remembrance of me."* And He took the cup saying, *"This is the New Covenant in my blood, poured out in the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you and do it in remembrance of me."*

When you come to the Table, you bring your tomb, called your flesh and you place the Lion's body in your tomb.

You surrender your faithlessness to His faithfulness.

You surrender the idol that is your self to the Word of God.

You surrender your control to His control.

You surrender your faithlessness to His faithfulness.

And He transforms your sin into Grace, telling you who you are. It happens here and yet it happens every moment we surrender ourselves and our idols to the Word of God. So trust the Word and when you don't ... look He comes and He trusts in you. Inside of you, faithfulness in you, rising in you, but don't be mistaken, He's not safe but He's always, always good. He will not leave you, He will not forsake you, and He will remain faithful to you.

Lord God we thank you for your goodness. It's unsafe Lord God because we are not good but we thank you that your goodness transformed into Grace at the Cross. There always was Grace God, we just didn't see it. Amen

Pray this prayer with me, *"Right now, Lord God, I surrender my faithlessness and I receive your faithfulness."* In Jesus' name, believe. Amen.

Let's worship.

Benediction and Prayer

And so Lord God, we thank you that there is nothing more powerful than your Word. And Lord God, we thank you for that fact; we don't bemoan that fact; we don't run from that fact because now we are beginning to see that your Word is good. There is nothing better than your Word – not safe, but good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Now before you go I just need to read you one more thing. Remain standing. If you didn't get the Benediction, at least get this:

Jesus is the Word, the Word is Grace, and He constantly makes us in His image through Faith. God speaks His word as Grace till we speak His Word as Faith.

One of my favorite pieces of literature is in the *Chronicles of Narnia, The Horse and His Boy*. Toward the end of the book, the boy Shasta has come to call himself the most "unfortunate boy that ever lived" and finds himself in one more disaster. He's walking down a narrow path, in the dark, lost, confused and weeping. He thinks he's alone ... until he senses something else on the path.

He realizes that whatever it is, it is huge and he cannot escape. He whispers, *"Who are you?"* And he hears, *"One who has waited long for you to speak."* Shasta is terrorized and says, *"Oh, I am the most unlucky person in the whole world."* And the Voice says, *"Tell me your sorrows."* And Shasta does. He unloads all of his sorrows, his shame, his litany of woes.

"I do not call you unfortunate," said the Large Voice.

"Don't you think it was bad luck to meet so many lions?" said Shasta.

"There was only one lion," said the Voice ... *"I was the lion."*

And as Shasta gaped with open mouth and said nothing, the voice continued. *"I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis. I was the cat who comforted you among the houses of the*

dead. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I was the lion who gave the Horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you should reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you."

"Then it was you who wounded Aravis?" ... "It was I."

"But what for?" ... "Child," said the Voice, "I am telling you your story, not hers. I tell no one any story but his own."

"Who are you?" asked Shasta.

"Myself," said the Voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again "Myself," loud and clear and gay: and then the third time "Myself," whispered so softly you could hardly hear it, and yet it seemed to come from all around you as if the leaves rustled with it.

Shasta was no longer afraid that the voice belonged to something that would eat him ... But a new and different sort of trembling came over him. Yet he felt glad too.

The Lion isn't safe but He's Good.

The Lion is the Word of the Lord

trust the Word of the Lord and don't fear

even when you don't trust – He still trusts in you.

Disclaimer: The author has not edited this document. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.