

Sunday, Oct. 19
Series: The Gospel in Disney
Sermon: *Frozen*
Title: "Let It Go"
Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-8

PP#1: *Image for Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale "The Snow Queen"*

One of Hans Christian Anderson's most beloved fairy tales is "The Snow Queen." It's about a little boy, Kai, and a little girl, Gerda, who used to be fast friends. Their homes had facing window boxes, full of roses. But then Kai falls victim to the evil power of the trolls' mirror, and their friendship is broken. He is lured away by the Snow Queen, who imprisons him in her palace. Yet Gerda steadfastly searches for him, and finally finds him trapped. Her tears of true love free Kai, and they return back to their play room. But now, they have changed. They are now all grown up. And the story ends with these lines:

PP#2: *Image from the fairy tale, of Kai and Gerda sitting in the room with grandmother, as adults.*

The roses out on the roof were in full bloom, and peeped in at the window; and there stood the little chairs, on which they had sat when children; and Kai and Gerda seated themselves each on their own chair, and held each other by the hand, while the cold empty grandeur of the Snow Queen's palace vanished from their memories like a painful dream. The grandmother sat in God's bright sunshine, and she read aloud from the Bible, "Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God." And Kai and Gerda looked into each other's eyes, and all at once understood the words of the old song,

"Roses bloom and cease to be,
But we shall the Christ-child see."

And they both sat there, grown up, yet children at heart; and it was summer,—warm, beautiful summer. ~ Hans Christian Andersen from "The Snow Queen"

The point of the fairy tale? That even as people grow older, they must still be like children in their heart, loving, as children do, giving their all in love.

Jesus said, we must be like children in loving like this.

PP#3: *Image for Disney's movie Frozen*

Disney loosely—and by loosely, I mean *very* loosely!—based their most recent animated blockbuster on this Danish fairy tale. And somehow, Disney got it *very* right. Wow! \$1.4 billion in sales! That makes it easily the number one animated film of all time. And it is also the fifth largest grossing film ever. By the way, can anyone here guess what is still the number one grossing film of all time, when converting to today's dollars? Anyone? I'll give you a hint, it came out long before my time! Anyone? [*Gone with the Wind*]. Still #1, and probably will be for a while.

Well, only a third of *Frozen's* income came from the U.S. Two-thirds came from the rest of the world. That means that something about *Frozen* resonates with people around the world.

So, *Frozen* somehow makes an important connection with what people are experiencing and feeling everywhere. It somehow captures, in some way, the common human condition. It resonates.

PP#4: The Gospel in Disney: Frozen

“Let It Go!”

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.”- John 3:16a

The Gospel is God’s answer to the human condition. *Frozen* resonates with people around the world, but so does Jesus bring life to people around the world. The Gospel in Disney: Frozen. “Let it go!” John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.”

PP#5: *Image of Else and Anna as kids playing in the snow in the palace, with Olaf, the snow man.*

In Disney’s version, it’s about two sister princesses, Else and Anna, of Arendelle. Elsa was born with a special power to make winter, snow, and ice and cold. The kids play around, and Else accidentally shoots Anna in the head with her “ice blast.” Her parents take her to the trolls—in Disney’s version, good guys—who heal Anna’s brain, but in so doing, erase her memory.

Video Clip: With Trolls, save Anna

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feKaxwG5Hwo>

1:19 minutes

PP#6: *Image of Else alone in her room, with Anna on the other side of the door.*

There is great beauty in her special power, but also great danger. She must learn to control it. And so fear will be her enemy. Therefore, out of fear, her parents decide to protect her. They give her gloves and shut her up in her room, where she is supposed to learn to control her powers.

She struggles. The powers seem to come out no matter what she does. She tries to train herself to focus, to suppress the powers, to suppress her emotions. But it is so unwieldy. And so, for years, she is kept locked away from Anna, who is heartbroken that she, in a real sense, no longer has a sister. Fear keeps Else isolated. She cannot control it. It controls her.

PP#7: Let It Go! [*Reese, there will be four of these.*]

1. You are born with special powers

This is the human condition what resonates with us. We don’t have frozen powers, but we are each born with something special, something unique, a power that can change things, make a difference. God put in you something amazing. We can sense that we’re not just random blobs here. Our lives have meaning and purpose. We have a special calling. We may not really understand it, and it can scare us. We each have the potential for beauty, but also for great danger.

This resonates with kids, and teens, especially. They are trying to grow into what their lives can be. They have to learn to control, but at the same time, there is their inner person trying to break out. How do you do that? How do you control, but yet be who you really are?

This is not just a teen issue. We all know about that. We all live that in our lives, whether

we be 8, or 18, or 80. How do we control who we are and what we can do, but also be who we are created to be? How do you do that?

There's fear here, fear of the danger. When we don't manage us well, we hurt others. So, we struggle, struggle not to push others away by what we do, but also perhaps pulling back so we won't.

PP#8: Let It Go!

1. You are born with special powers
2. We fear being alone

And there is the great human fear. We fear being alone. We all have a need to be in meaningful relationships. Somehow, being human means being connected with others.

Else takes on that fear, lets it take over, and she keeps herself from everyone. She is cursed: deprived of meaningful relationships with others because she cares about them so. Who she is can hurt them. They might be afraid of her, call her a monster, run away, if they only knew.

Her parents tragically die...does Disney have a thing about absent parents? Think about it.

Anyway, Else eventually turns 18, and it is time for her coronation as queen. Anna is extatic, because the palace has been a prison to her, and they finally "open up the doors" to let people in. But it terrifies Else: "Don't let them in, don't let them see, Be the good girl you always have to be, Conceal, don't feel, put on a show, Make one wrong move and everyone will know."

She almost makes it. But Anna has managed to fall in love with a guy she just met, and within hours they commit to get married. Else freaks out. She tells them they can't get married, and an argument ensues. As her feelings fly, so does her powers. Everyone sees.

People are surprised. Some freak out. A few begin to call her dangerous, a menace. One calls her a monster. This is her worst fears. They are turning against her. So Else turns, and runs.

She decides to just put it all behind her. She'll go live by herself where she is free to be herself. No judgement. No fear. She becomes the Snow Queen.

Video Clip: FROZEN - Let It Go Sing-along | Official Disney HD

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0MK7qz13bU>

3:45 minutes of 4:02

Let it go. Let the storm rage on. The cold never bothered me anyway.

PP#9: *Image of Else all by herself in the big ice castle.*

This feeling resonates with so many. The gloves come off. No more trying to be careful. That perfect girl is gone. No more always trying to do the right thing. Finally free to do what your heart longs for. Let it go.

When I first saw this movie, I was horrified at this scene. Kids being taught that they can just let it all go. Do whatever you want. Give up trying to do what is right and good. Stop all the self-control stuff. Just be who you feel like. Forget everyone else. Turn away and slam the door. No right, no wrong, no rules for me, I'm free. "The cold never bothered me anyway."

And this song went viral. It has been everywhere. "Let it go!" Radio...internet...stores...it was even in a birthday card...I turned 45 this past week. Let it go. Let it all go.

Wooa!

You see, as a pastor, and as a parent, my main job is to tell people to not let it all go. It's not "let it go," it's "No!" Don't just live by your feelings, or whatever feels right. Yikes! What would that do to my marriage? To my career? To my degree program? To my savings? To anything I have to work hard at, consistently over time.

Yes, this song resonates with us, with our deep yearning to just break free and do whatever we would want. That has universal appeal! It sounds so good! Sleep in. Forget work. Buy the new gizmo. Eat the doughnut. It is something we think we want. But my job is to help people see that that selfishness is what sin is made of. It's caring only about yourself, putting yourself first. And it's so destructive! When you let it go, you actually lose what you are hoping to have!

I went to go visit Blanche. She just heard that her truck-driving husband of 26 years had filed for divorce. She was devastated. "I still love him, but he says he doesn't love me. What can I do?" Her husband had refused to try to work things out, go to counseling, nothing. "I would do anything," she sobbed, "but he won't. I can't make him. I'm stuck." He had let it go.

PP#10: Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a person, But its end is the way of death.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

You see, it may seem so attractive, but it doesn't really deliver. Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way of death." It doesn't deliver.

Instead, I go back to deeper wisdom, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." Your path is straight, truly fulfilling—life with true purpose and meaning—if you submit to God's way.

So, I was horrified with millions of children singing "let it go" across the country, and all their parents downloading it for their kid's I-Pods. Yikes.

But then I started to go through it again, and I discovered the genius that Disney had actually put into this story.

You see, that was not the end of the story. Else did experience that release by walking away from it all and creating a beautiful castle for herself. But—and here's the key—she was still all alone! Just like her room, her beautiful castle was simply a fancy prison. She was able to have no meaningful relationship with anyone. She may have thought the cold never bothered her, but she was lying to herself.

Anna comes after her, because Anna believes that together, if Else would just work with her, they could work everything out.

Video Clip: Disney frozen - Elsa strikes anna's heart with her powers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNR_LVlkgL4

2:46 minutes

PP#11: Let It Go!

1. You are born with special powers
2. We fear being alone

3. “Let it go!” can be a trap

Else realizes that what she thinks is freedom, actually isn't. Disney so excellently captures the paradox. Else thinks she can be free by just letting it all go. But she finds out that there is no such thing. She has hurt all those she cares about. Her powers affect others. And in her frustration, she even hurts the one person she cares about the most, she accidentally “ice zaps” her sister, in the heart!

She's captured and is put in prison, symbolic of her plight. It's worse than before. She is still trapped, and this time, literally. Through a twisting of conspiracy and subversion, she is accused of treason against her own country and is sentenced to death.

Meanwhile, Anna's frozen heart starts turning her frozen. Her condition can only be healed by an act of true love. Everyone immediately thinks of a kiss from her fiancé. Evidently everyone *in* the movie has watched *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*. But it doesn't work.

The movie comes to a climax with a grieving Else about to be struck down with a sword, and a half-frozen Anna stumbling about, who in the last moment, turns to save her.

Video Clip: Frozen anna saves Elsa scene

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDjRQzDYdos>

1:18 out of 2:09 minutes

So, that's how the movie ends. Right?

PP#12: *Image of Else and Anna embracing in joy after Anna thaws*

OK, there's a little more. But, you know, they really milk these things. Anna stays frozen for 62 seconds—I timed it—oh the emotional drama they take you through.

Anna's sacrificing of herself for Else is the act of true love that thaws the frozen. She gave herself to another. When Else asks her, she says, “Of course, I love you!”

PP#13: Let It Go!

1. You are born with special powers
2. We fear being alone
3. “Let it go!” can be a trap
4. Agape-Love is a choice

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.” -John 3:16a

And that's the key to the whole movie. Love is what can heal the freezing power.

Here Disney gets it right again! This is the Gospel that is God's response to the human condition: love is the answer. But it is not the love that we normally think about. It is not a feeling or an emotion. Anna learned that in the movie. What she thought was love, and then wanted to get married, wasn't true love. True love is a choice. It is a decision of the will. It is action.

We see this in Jesus. He is the Savior of all people, because He loves us all. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.” “Go so loved...that He gave.” That's true love. In the frozen cold of winter, Jesus chose to be born as a baby, to come and give Himself to be our savior. The word the Bible uses is agape. It means self-sacrificing, committed, giving,

acting love.

True love is not a feeling in the heart. It is a commitment from the heart. It is a commitment that affects our actions, how we behave, what we do.

We are called to love like this. Just as Jesus loved us, so we are to love one another. This is how we are restored to the relationships we need. We are restored to God when we choose to love Him back. We are restored to others in our lives, when we choose to love them. But this means a love that affects how we behave, what we do. If you truly love someone, it controls how you interact with them. And that, then, restores your relationship with them.

This love is a gift. It is from God to us through Jesus. And it is in us to others through the Holy Spirit within us. It requires a continual act to resist not letting it go, but to give.

And love also was the key to controlling Else's special power. She is not to deny it, stuff it away, and hide from it. But, through committed love, use it to bless. And she used it to make her kingdom a wonderful, beautiful place, a place where people could love and be loved.

PP#14: Proverbs 3:5-8

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.

This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

"Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones." Notice the connection between living under God's way, and the healing it brings to us, from the inside out. Healing, being who we are created to be, comes from the love-commitment we make with God, and that we live out with others.

God created you with a special power, a power that can make a difference. That power in you can only bring life when it is used in love. It is unleashed when we wilfully choose and act, over and over again, to bring life. We long to live into what we have been created to be. Letting it all go can be helpful when it means letting go of all that keeps us from loving like this, from living like this, from acting like this, from giving like this. Living sacrificially is actually the path to healing, to true joy, to abundant life.

I was sitting next to Loren at the marriage conference. I went there to build my marriage. Loren was there to end it. He said that they had filed for divorce, but before they signed, they committed to go to this conference together. His wife was somewhere over with Reese on the wives' side.

By the third day, they had decided to put off the divorce. Despite their feelings of anger and bitterness, they had acted out of their commitment, and attended the conference. While there, they behaved towards each other differently. They made the willful decision to seek help and find a way to work it out. And it did. But only because they continued to make the willful choice. God, you see, could then work with them, and in them, to change their future.

PP#15: Let It Go!

1. You are born with special powers
2. We fear being alone
3. "Let it go!" can be a trap
4. Agape-Love is a choice

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son." -John 3:16a

Little kids can easily behave out of their love commitment, not thinking too much about the cost to themselves. Six-year-old Josh gave his favorite blanket to a girl at daycare who was crying. He acted his love. Jesus came as an act of love. We are called to become like this.

“Roses bloom and cease to be,

But we shall the Christ-child see.”

And they both sat there, grown up, yet children at heart; and it was summer,—warm, beautiful summer.

Amen.