

Sun., Sept. 12 -Rally Sunday

Memory Verse: “The Lamb will emerge victorious, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” -Revelation 17:14

Message: “Always Winter, Never Christmas”

Text: Romans 6:20-23 “When you were slaves of sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. 21 What consequences did you get from doing things that you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. ... 23 The wages that sin pays are death....”

Reading of Scripture: Romans 8:18-25

Sermon Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-2

Blurb: This Sunday we begin our fall message series, exploring how Jesus is our King. As we don't understand monarchs very well here in America, we're turning to the world of Narnia (constructed by C.S. Lewis in his *Chronicles of Narnia*, particularly in the movie adaption *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*) and its lion king Aslan to see how we can relate to Jesus as our good and mighty King. For our first Sunday we'll see how Narnia's perpetual winter teaches us about our human condition and struggle. We need a Savior-King!

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew

MEMORY VERSE: -Pastor Andrew

“The Lamb will emerge victorious, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” -Revelation 17:14

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

How Can I Keep from Singing?

Jesus Shall Reign

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Covenant Song* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE: -Pastor David

“The Lamb will emerge victorious, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” -Revelation 17:14

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify*How Can I Keep from Singing?**Jesus Shall Reign**Build My Life*

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]**READING OF SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:18-25 -Reader:**

In Romans 8, Paul talks about how sin has corrupted not just humans, but all of creation, and how God's redemption will set all of creation back in order. Romans 8:18-25,

"18 I believe that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us. 19 The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God's sons and daughters. 20 Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God's children. 22 We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. 23 And it's not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. 24 We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? 25 But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience.

SERVE MOMENT: Flood Bucket Collection -Pastor Andrew**PRAYERS: School starting -Pastor Andrew****GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: Lemuel the Lion -Pastor Andrew and Vicky****MESSAGE: King of Kings (Narnia) #1: Always Winter, Never Christmas****BUMPER VIDEO****PP#1: King of Kings: Always Winter, Never Christmas**

"When you were slaves of sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What consequences did you get from doing things that you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. ... The wages that sin pays are death...." -Romans 6:20-23

King of Kings: Jesus is The Lion of the Tribe of Judah: Always Winter, Never Christmas. From Romans 6, "When you were slaves of sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What consequences did you get from doing things that you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. ... The wages that sin pays are death...." (6:20-23)

PP#2: *Image of two candles on a traditional Christian worship altar table*

As followers of Jesus, we often see Jesus as our leader, our teacher, our helper, healer, friend, brother, co-traveler in life. And all these are true. But if you notice, all these also keep Jesus down on our level: one with us, partner, teammate, friend. After all, the Bible says that Jesus is Emmanuel, “God with us,” right? God became flesh and blood, became a human being, just like us, becoming one of us.

But there is more to Jesus than that. Too often we limit Jesus to this understanding, one that makes sense to us. Look down to our altar table. Most churches have two candles on their tables. Do you know why? Flames represent life, and Christian churches have two flames because we proclaim that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine - one candle reminding us of each. And so we may think of Jesus as our human friend and teacher, and perhaps even savior, we must never forget that Jesus is also our God...He is fully divine.

PP#3: *Image of Jesus as a throned, regal king*

One of the dominant biblical images for Jesus is that He is Lord and King. As our memory verse says, Jesus is Lord of all lords, and King above all kings. Now, we here in America don’t have a monarchy. We revolted against the monarchy of England and instead set up a modified democracy. We fiercely value our independence and autonomy. “Don’t tread on me!” So we do better understanding Jesus as our savior-friend, but we struggle with understanding Jesus as our divine Lord and King. We don’t do well with concepts of submission, yielding, obedience, deference, serving, even worship. Yet we cannot be Jesus’ true disciple until we treat Him as the Lord that He is. And it is only when we do that we will have victory over our sins and struggles! One of the reasons that we struggle with nagging sins is that we do not submit to Jesus as our King.

So, this fall, we’re going on a quest to find Jesus as our king. The Bible calls Jesus the King of kings (Rev. 17:14), the Lord of lords (Rev. 19:13), the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Successor to the Throne of David (Isaiah 9:7), the Majesty on High (Hebrews 1:4), the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). It points back to the kings of Israel and says that the Savior will be a king in the line of the ancient kings, but He will be perfect, and all powerful, and His renewed Kingdom will never end: He Himself will be eternally the perfect King.

PP#4: *Image for the Chronicles of Narnia series*

Now, every fall I try to pull in some images from secular media to help us understand biblical truths better. So, this fall, I’m going to the *Chronicles of Narnia* series, created by C.S. Lewis, to help us understand kingship, and Jesus as King. The main character in the series is a lion called Aslan, who is King of All Narnia. So, we have a lion king, to help us understand Jesus as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. You may also think about how lions are called the king of the jungle, or perhaps go back to Disney’s *Lion King*, set in the African serengeti.

But we are going to use *The Chronicles of Narnia* to help us, particularly the book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Most of us may know it better from the movies produced by Disney and Walden, back in 2005.

PP#5: *Image of C.S. Lewis at his desk in Oxford*

The Chronicles of Narnia was originally written by C.S. Lewis, an English professor at Oxford, in the 1950s. Now, C.S. Lewis was an atheist, but his friendship with J.R.R. Tolkien, of *Lord of the Rings* fame, and others, eventually influenced him to give his life to Jesus. And C.S. Lewis became one of the great Christian writers of the 20th century. I believe everyone, for example, should read his *Mere Christianity*.

PP#6: The Chronicles of Narnia

<i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i>	Aslan defeats the White Witch
<i>Prince Caspian</i>	Prince Caspian reclaims Narnia
<i>The Voyage of the Dawn Treader</i>	Narnia saved from invading evil
<i>The Horse and His Boy</i>	A boy and his horse are freed
<i>The Silver Chair</i>	Narnia's lost prince is found
<i>The Last Battle</i>	The end of Narnia
<i>The Magician's Nephew</i>	The origin story of Narnia

Well, Lewis wrote the *Chronicles* for children, set in the fantasy world of Narnia, into which human children go have adventures. He wrote each book thinking it would be his last, but then kept writing more, seven in all. Each book has children, but Aslan, the Lion King, appears in them all. The world of Narnia is inhabited by all kinds of wondrous creatures, but no humans! His first book is where we will spend most of our time.

PP#7: *Image of the wardrobe and Lucy, subtitled, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

C.S. Lewis was a single professor in a big house during World War II. He had a sibling group from the city come stay with him to be safe from the bombings. And this is how he opens his story in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. A sibling group of four: Peter (age 14), Susan (age 12), Edmund (age 10) and Lucy (age 10) Pevensie, whose father is off fighting in the war and the mother is working in the war effort, live in London. During the air raids on London, called “The Blitz,” the children, like most of the children of London, are sent to other town where they could be safe from the bombing. While playing hide-and-seek, they stumble upon a wardrobe in the attic, a large piece of furniture used to store clothes. They discover that the wardrobe is a portal to the enchanted world of Narnia. As the children continue their adventures in Narnia, Christian readers and movie watchers notice striking parallels to the story of salvation in the Bible.

Now, C.S. Lewis held that Narnia was *not* an allegory for the Christian story of salvation. You can’t “de-code” Narnia to be the Christian story: Aslan is Jesus, the White Witch is Satan, Edmund is Judas, and so forth. Instead, he called it a “supposition” - *suppose* there was a wondrous world of Narnai, and *suppose* God had to come and redeem it from an evil queen, then, how, do you *suppose*, God would do it? Well, in our world of humans, Jesus came as a human. Narnia didn’t have humans, so, it could be *supposed* that Jesus would come as a lion.

And in Narnia, C.S. Lewis said, the purpose is not for us to learn the story of the Bible, but it is to help us fall in love with God. In the *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, when the children have to go back to our world, Edmund asks Aslan, “Are—are you there [in our world], too, Sir?” ... Aslan answers, “I am, ... But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.” (Chapter 16)

That's what we're doing! We want to know Jesus better in our world. So, why is it so important that we know Jesus as King? Is it really a big deal? Well, it is. Actually, it's the biggest of deals. You see, we really, *really*, need a savior-king! The opening of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* help show us why. Take a look at this video clip.

Video Clip 1: Opening scene of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* of the London blitz

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_A18p4n67Q

[Play from 0:50 to 2:20, then fade.]

PP#8: *Image from the movie of the children leaving on the train*

The opening scene not only sets the situation for the story, it also serves as a reminder of what life is like for us in this life. We identify with the four children living in a crisis, a mess, in a world fraught with danger and upheaval beyond their control. There is a war on. And there is the personal inner struggles and the struggles with others. Peter doesn't know how to be a leader or take care of his siblings. Susan holds on, and is stuck in, trying to make rational sense of everything. Edmund is resentful of his father being gone and can only focus on himself and what he wants, and Lucy just gets swept along in it all. We can resonate with each of these characters, so we go with them into Narnia. Are you identifying with them at all? You're supposed to.

Well, the next scene is the sad scene of the mom sending her precious children off to a strange house. Again, there is a war going on in the real world. Danger is real. Lives are disrupted. Pain and sadness prevail. Can you identify?

PP#9: *Image of Narnia as cold and snowy*

And that's also the first scene we have of Narnia, as the kids literally stumble through the wardrobe. They find a world frozen, literally, in winter. At first it seems like a winter wonderland, but then, as they get to know more, they find life struggling to survive in Narnia, for it is a land that has been under the curse of the evil white witch for a hundred years. And there's a war on. Tumnis, a mythical faun, takes Lucy to his house and helps her understand their dire situation. Take a look.

Video Clip 2: Opening scene of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, tea with Tumnis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wlgpe-908EQ>

[Play only to 1:31, then fade.]

PP#10: *Image from*

<https://www.jaandrews.com/always-winter-never-christmas-an-overly-dramatic-tale/>

Did you catch how Tumnis described Narnia? "In Narnia it's always cold. Always winter, never Christmas." Now, this hot summer, I found myself dreaming of winter now and again. But imagine always winter...never spring, never life, never warmth. Christmas is the highlight of winter for kids, so no Christmas is sad, but imagine a world trapped in cold, in darkness, in winter, with no proclamation of a coming king to save it. "Always Christmas, never Christmas," is a horrific description, for it describes a world locked in lifeless hopelessness.

Narnia has a king, but he is away. And in his place the white witch has taken over and put a perpetual curse on Narnia. So Narnia is like the world of the children: caught in war, disrupted

family, siblings bickering and fighting, everything in a mess, seemingly without end. Cold and darkness is winning.

Can you identify? This is our reality, too, isn't it. The plight of humanity in our world is that we find ourselves struggling in perpetual winter, endless war, ensuing mess. Headlines tell us of military conflict, natural disasters, homes, lives destroyed, violence and aggression, anger and hatred, conflict, pain, sorrow. It's too much to bear. And it's our own, personal reality as well. Broken relationships, crushed dreams, finances gripping us by the neck, diagnoses of debilitating illnesses, losses greater than we can bear. We walk slower and slower, as if trudging through the snow, and the cold and darkness takes over. Always winter, never Christmas.

This is the human situation in our world, littered with monuments of bloodshed, oppression, tyrants, holocausts, failures and defeat. And this is also our inner condition, too. We see that in the children. Peter feels like an overwhelmed failure. Susan is desperately trying to hold on to some semblance of reason to keep her going, but facing incomprehensible confusion. Lucy is overlooked and dismissed, not believed. And Edmund: he becomes the face of our inner selfishness. Take a look at the scene where he meets the white witch, and how she appeals to his selfish desires.

Video Clip 3: Edmund meets the white witch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8LQMeP7ksk>

[Play from 2:00 to the end, 3:48]

PP#11: *Image of the Turkish Delight container from the movie*

Edmund is struggling with missing his dad, off fighting the war. He's angry at his family, especially his older brother who is trying to parent him, although always critical. He wants things his way, and so the white witch showers him with personal attention. She offers him whatever treats he can imagine, like Turkish Delights, a sweet confection. She calls him special and more important than his siblings, telling him that if she brings the others to her, she will make him king and the others his servants. There will be rooms full of Turkish Delights. And Edmund's pain and anger and selfishness make him unable to see the witch's true nature. All the signs are there, but he is too focused on what he wants. Even after he's told she's a witch, he still wants what he wants.

In the human heart it is always winter, never Christmas. When you take a closer look inside, to you find that inner war? Do you find that winter is winning? Do you find yourself a bit too much like Edmund...or Peter, or Susan, or Lucy? When left to ourselves, our world is a cold, dark place.

PP#12: Ephesians 2:1-2

"1 At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. 2 You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience."

In the Bible, people are shown caught in sin: we are violent, ungrateful, contentious, and selfish. In the Old Testament, in 1 Samuel 8, God's people want a king, even though God warns them that human kings will make them slaves. Yet they demand to have their own king, and sure enough, ungodly kings lead them astray, and they are dominated by other nations. Paul, in the reading we heard from Romans 8, describes how all of creation is trapped in winter, suffering, groaning under the curse of sin. It longs to be set free. Earlier, in Romans 6, Paul admits that "When

you were slaves of sin.... What consequences did you get...? ... “The wages that sin pays are death....” Or, in Ephesians 2, Paul puts it this way, “1 At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. 2 You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God’s will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience.”

The Bible is brutally honest about the human condition. When we look without, when we look within, we see the wages of sin. There is ongoing conflict between the good and the evil, and the evil seems to be winning. Always winter, never Christmas.

PP#13: *Same image of King Jesus as PP#3*

The human condition is that we need a savior, a ruler, a power, a king, who is stronger than the winter. We need a savior who is big enough, powerful enough, mighty enough to defeat the rulers and kings of this world. We need a King over all the other kings, a Lord over all the lords that keep us trapped.

And this is where the Bible declares a hope! We are not alone here in our darkness. For the Bible also declares to those stuck in winter—Isaiah 9:2—that, “the people walking in darkness have seen a great light.” In Romans 8, when it described creation groaning under sin, it also says that all of creation is waiting...hoping...looking to God. There is a King, more mighty and powerful than our slave masters. In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, God says that when the human kings fail the people and die, “I will raise up your descendant—one of your very own children—to succeed you, and I will establish His kingdom. 13 He will build a temple for my name, and I will establish His royal throne forever.”

Yes, we are locked in winter, but there is word of a coming King. Yes, there is winter, but there *is also* Christmas!

Next week we will hear the promise, the prophesy, the hope. But until then, we wait. We groan. We struggle. We face our sin, and in misery, we turn to God.

Amen.

[IN-PERSON WORSHIP ONLY] CLOSING SONG: *The Lion and the Lamb* -Sanctify

OFFERING: -Pastor David

-Give of your monies to God’s work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in, drop it off or, most conveniently, you can make an electronic transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the “square” on the bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Sign up for Grow Groups! See brochure. Sign up in the lobby.
Next Sunday’s message: King of Kings: “I Am Coming Soon!”
Wednesday night: Echo & Youth Group

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“The Lamb will emerge victorious, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” -Revelation 17:14

BENEDICTION -Pastor David