

The Lion and the Lamb (Family Talk)

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[0 : 00] Well, Merry Christmas, everyone. It's great to be with you on Christmas Eve. And it's... I had my fingers crossed about that video, because every year we try to show a video, it never seems to quite come off, and I thought that was just exactly what we were hoping for.

So it was great to hear and see the Christmas story together, to hear it sung and hear it read, and see the children's artwork that we were working on during Advent.

And it's really quite a story, isn't it? I want us to think about this story maybe in a new way tonight that maybe you haven't thought about before. And to help you do that, I want to ask you a little question, and this question might seem like it's coming from out of the blue.

So let me ask you this, boys and girls, I'll look for some of you maybe to help me with this one. Can you tell me what animal is the king of the beasts?

What animal is the king of the beasts? A sheep. Not a sheep, buddy. I'm sorry. He wants to be the king of the beasts right here. You are a sheep, Benjamin, but you are maybe food for king of the beasts.

[1 : 14] Yeah, Aaron, what's the king of the beasts? The lion. Yes, the lion is the king of the beasts. And some of you may have even seen this image before. Because all through history, lots of nations have used the symbol of the lion.

What country is this one from? Just shout it out. England. Yeah, yeah. When was the last time they won a World Cup of soccer? I think we're celebrating an anniversary of that, actually. An anniversary of futility.

So this is the symbol for one of the royal families that uses the crest of the lion. But there are lots of countries that have used it. And did you know that God's people, Israel, also used the lion as one of their symbols?

This is what it looks like today for the city of Jerusalem, which is still where the throne of David is thought to be. This is the symbol for Jerusalem, the lion of Judah.

The lion of Judah. Okay. So why am I saying this? Well, the Christmas story, as we just sung about, is the story of the birth of the king.

[2 : 22] And in case we could forget it, Luke reminds us three times, I don't know if you picked up on this, but three times in that story that was read by Toby, Luke says that Jesus is born into King David's family.

Did you know that Joseph, his earthly father, came from the, he was like the great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandson of King David. And so Jesus is born as the rightful, anointed Messiah or King of Israel.

He is, Jesus is the lion of Judah. Now, Aaron, mate, stay awake.

If your country were to have a king, I'm afraid I'm just going to pick on you. I don't think, I don't think New Zealand would have a lion. I think you guys would probably have like a, what's your animal?

A kiwi? Kiwi. Kiwi bird. The lion. How intimidating is the kiwi bird if you put it in the middle of that, hey? What do you think? Yeah. Yeah. Not really, right? There's a reason why we choose the lion.

[3 : 34] Why is that? Boys and girls? Why would you want a lion to represent your country and not a kiwi bird? Or, to be honest, Canada has a beaver, which has really sharp teeth, but it's not really like a combative animal.

How about over here? Why would you want a lion to be on your royal crest? What would that tell people about your country? Nick? That it's strong. Yes, that you're strong. What else? What else? Yeah. You're brave.

Okay, you're brave. Yeah, we think of lions as being courageous. Yeah, shout it out, Rachel. What else is about lions that you love? Yeah. Yeah. Big voice. Big voice. Yeah, lions have huge voices.

Thank you. I don't think that's what was happening there, but Lucy, yeah, one more. Intelligent. Okay. If lions could talk, they probably would be intelligent. Yeah, but maybe they are. I don't know. They have prides. So they have families. They're intelligent. Okay. Okay. How many of you have read the Chronicles of Narnia? Lots of us, probably.

[4 : 31] If you haven't, it's a great thing to read over the Christmas holidays. The Chronicles of Narnia. Narnia. What animal did C.S. Lewis choose when he wanted to represent a great king of the beasts?

Aslan is his name. This is how the beaver describes Aslan to the Pevensy children when they're first brand new to Narnia. He says, they think Aslan must be a man.

And he says, Aslan a man? Certainly not. I tell you, he's the king of the woods and the son of the great emperor beyond the sea. Don't you know who the king of the beasts is?

Aslan is a lion. The lion. The great lion. So let's consider for a moment how that fits with the Christmas story and what we hear the angel announce about this newborn king.

This is what the angel says. Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

[5 : 36] Okay, four things really quick. He's born in the city of David. Remember I said that's the city of the lion of Judah. He is a Savior. He's going to rescue his people and be the one who saves his people from their enemies.

He's the Christ. And that's the proper technical term for the king, the anointed Messiah. And finally, he's the Lord.

He's God's own son. And he's going to rule, that means, with strength and might, just like a lion. Well, this is surely good news of great joy, just as the angel declares.

And it's going to be for all people. All these titles that we're hearing about this newborn king, they're exactly what you would expect from a strong leader. The lion is finally here, and he's going to bring the kingdom of God to earth.

That's for sure. He'll conquer all his enemies, and he'll rule as a proud king. See? Right? Well, then, there's a little twist.

[6 : 43] There's a surprising twist. Because in verse 12, the angel's not finished yet. In verse 12, this is what he says to the shepherds. This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby.

I saw two almost newborn babies here tonight. You can look for them after the service. You'll see what I mean. A brand new baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. Wait a minute. The shepherds are going to find the royal baby, the lion of Judah, in a manger? In a manger? Because that's not a place for a lion.

That's a place for a little young Benjamin here, the sheep. A manger is where a sheep and a cow and those kind of animals, they go to eat. That's where they get their hay.

It's a place for the animals that lions eat, not for the king and the beasts. Surely a stable is too humble a place for the proud king, for God's son.

[7 : 41] Except that it's not. It's not. Because when God chose to take on flesh and become a baby boy, he didn't choose to come as a great lion sort of sitting in a big throne like this.

No. He came as a humble child. As a lamb who was laid to sleep in a manger.

And you and I, when we look at all the problems in the world, sickness and sadness and hunger and war and sin in our hearts and injustice in our cities, when we see all that, we long for a strong leader.

A rescuer to come and save us from all those things. All these problems. We long for the same thing that those shepherds were longing for that night. We long for the lion of Judah.

And we imagine that the only way that a strong leader can ever conquer and take the throne is if he or she can be the strongest and the toughest and the predator that hunts prey.

[8 : 58] Hunting down our enemies, crushing them with brute force, just like what Nicholas said about the lion. Hunting down our enemies, crushing them with pride. But this type of strength, this type of leadership, always, think about it for a moment, it always leads to tyranny and injustice.

Because in the end, that kind of power, it always comes and it takes, it never gives. And it causes fear, it never leads to love. But when God's son became the lion of Judah, the rightful king, he chose to be born in humility and simplicity, like a lamb, to show us, to show us, that he came to serve, not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

When we begin to see Jesus as our savior, who's both the lion and the lamb, together, we begin to see that Jesus' power as lord and king is displayed in an entirely upside down way.

He came as a fragile baby. His whole life, he served the sick and the outcast. And then he went to the cross as a sacrifice for sin, taking our place.

And finally, and most importantly, he conquered death and rose again in glory to new life. Now that is the power and the strength of a true king.

[10 : 24] And that's how King Jesus takes his rightful throne. And he does it all for our sake, not for his own glory. And so as we wrap up, this Christmas story that we've heard tonight together invites us to recognize the amazing thing that God has already done for us in Christ Jesus.

He's already done it. And we need to hear this story over and over again, don't we? Because, let's face it, too often, you and I, we live as if, we live in this world as if we're still looking for someone to save it.

We're constantly looking around every corner for a new savior. Someone who can solve the world's problems. But the victory is already won. We're not being invited to problem solve in this service together.

Let's break into small groups and form committees to solve the problems of the world. We're here to celebrate. Jesus is Lord and King and he brings peace on earth and friendship between us and God.

And the shepherds had the right idea. I don't know where you're going after this service, but if we're like the shepherds, we're going to respond by going out, glorifying and praising God and telling everyone that we meet tonight this story that we've shared together.

[11 : 44] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that you would give us hearts to celebrate this story as families over the next couple of days.

we pray that you would plant this story deep in our hearts, that it would transform the way that we see the world around us. And we would see you, Jesus, sitting on the throne as the lion and the lamb who has won the victory.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.