

**BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI**  
**THE WORSHIP OF GOD • JULY 7, 2019**  
**“THE GOSPEL ON BROADWAY”**

**Litany**

Based on Psalm 30

You drew us up like people who had stumbled into a pit.

**You set us free, saved, and healed us.**

Weeping may linger with the night, but joy comes with the morning.

**You turned our mourning into dancing!**

Let us pray:

**As you have clothed us with joy, now we give thanks to you forever! Amen.**

**The Scripture**

John 1:1-5

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.*

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

**The Message**

***Blinking, Stepped into the Sun***

**Terry Overfelt**

**The Musical: *The Lion King* – “Circle of Life”**

Big Love: All are created for truth, love, and light by our Triune God. John’s Gospel opens in this proclamation. Ours is to seek the balance of flesh and spirit and address the tension we feel in the imbalance, as a call from God to pay attention.

We, the people, called “*to form a more perfect union.*” This is the hope of our nation and our God. This is the Preamble to the Constitution, and much like the proclamation John thunders in his Gospel opening. God, Jesus, and Spirit are one.

So, while on this seventh day of July, we can still smell the smoke of celebratory fireworks in the air, we can also pause to have the winds carry us to the “ooaa,” light up the sky-ness... of this One God for ALL of us. God breathes life into humanity in both our independence (flesh life) and our interdependence (Spirit light).

John speaks his Gospel to the people of his age, who he desperately wants to unite in the Christ of Jesus: Jew, non-Jew, ALL.

Jesus was God in the flesh. He is the Word present from the beginning; inseparable and the source of life and light of all people. Today's reading ends with this light in us, "Shining in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it."

I want us to note that the darkness is not gone. Like the creation narrative, the darkness and light are both present and not overcome. The tension of our being flesh and spirit is a gift; necessary and powerful, like gravity pulling us down so we can stand up. The tension is like the image of the yin (dark) and yang (light); both parts to complete the circle. Here we are, in the circle of life.

***From the day we arrived on the planet and blinking stepped into the sun*** we are life come to being through God/Word/Light... fully human with a divine spirit and created to step from, with and toward light. When any of experience a shift in the balance of being both flesh(dark) and spirit (light)...to the dark side, turning away from spirit and more toward the desires of the flesh, the light that John is talking about in this gospel may diminish but by his proclamation cannot be overcome. This is the Good News.

### **Prayer**

Will you pray with me?

May we hear you, Word of God. May we see the truth of you and our createdness in you as life-giving! Amen.

### **Lion King**

As we move through our summer series, today we spotlight the Broadway musical, *The Lion King*. Through a series of fortunate circumstances, we saw the show the second night it opened in New York. Four-and-a-half-year-old Hannah stood clinging to the mezzanine rail for the entire performance. She wouldn't even take the "half time" intermission break for fear of missing a moment. Twenty-two years later, it is still running. It was heart stopping, amazing, and revolutionary in the use of puppets on the Broadway stage. The visible puppeteers animated and voiced the puppet stars. They were dressed to extend the soul of the character and simultaneously blend as their habitat or spiritual inhabitant without distraction. It was amazing.

The opening of "The Circle of Life" brought giant, hollow elephants, giraffes, and soaring jungle birds down through the audience aisles to rich African chants that simultaneously warmed and excited. The mural Grandma painted on Hannah's childhood walls afterward still reminds us of her awe.

### **Picture**

The main character, Simba the lion, has something to say to us about John's gospel and our created essence. His fabled character, like all of us, lives in the unbalanced tension of sin's hold. It keeps him from being who he was created to be from his beginning.

### **The Tension**

We all absolutely know the tension of imbalance; it is often felt in our bodies. It is in this place, in our community, in our nation, world, and in ourselves. Do you remember and still hope for days when this tension was/will not be so present as to pull us more to the dark side?

Nick named many of the dark tensions for us just last week. Today, I want each to just acknowledge the constant pull and to realize that the counter to it is to faithfully seek more of our life originating light of God in us, to "*step into the sun.*"

Martha and Amy, two of our members, knew how to respond to the pull this past week when they went downtown to ask the political leader to please make a trip to the border to see for herself. That morning, the world news opened with the reporting of immigrant conditions and the compelling comment that it was only the symptom of the problem. We were challenged to look back to the countries of origins for these immigrants and address the root causes of the exodus *in addition* to making sure the detainees have clean water and benevolent treatment in the processing. Thank you for the response of light.

Every single one of us wants the tension to be abated with right answers, and people of faith. **This tension** is our sacred prompting that what we are feeling matters to God, too. What our souls and consciences are seizing over is an internal, spiritual identifying of something or someone among the ALL of God being **in exile and** looking for home. And this was just Tuesday's news. The rising tension calls us to attention!

Adam and Eve, created and **good** and living in the garden home of Eden, soon found themselves tempted by the ways of the flesh to know everything. We can relate. It was a snake to tempt and a piece of fruit to give knowledge. Even for us today, the snake still derails, and the fruit confuses. Human beings, from the beginning, were created by both the mud and the breath of God. We *want* the dirt and the sigh. We are of the earth and of the heavens.

We have the free will and even the weakness of the flesh that might temp or cause us to turn from the light. Awareness of our unresolved sin or offense can land us in the exile of shame.

*Blinking in the Wonder, stepping out of the sun.*

## Simba's Tension

We can see ourselves and our separation from *The Lion King*. Simba, the cub, has an evil uncle appropriately named Scar; as he carries with him a massive darkness that he has never brought into the light. Though unnamed, we can fill in the speculations. There are plenty of contrived physical and emotional clues. ***There's more to see than can ever be seen.***

Simba is not a compliant cub. He disobeys his father by going to forbidden places. So, when Scar kills his brother, Simba's father, Mufasa, it is not too hard to get young Simba to believe it is he who is responsible. Simba believes this lie and feels himself complicit in the event that took his father to death's edge. Evil tricks us into thinking we killed our blessing and the blessing we can be to others.

Scar tells Simba to run away and never return. We've run, to not be reminded, to not confess, to not face consequences, to not risk the withholding of forgiveness.

Simba lives in exile. He is woeful and separated by sin, even perceived sin. He is rescued from his exhaustion in the desert by a meercat and a warthog. Friends come into our lives *for a reason*...even if these two thought it best to befriend a lion rather than be eaten by him later, for the moment, they changed him (a nod to last week's *Wicked*).

Simba grows up with them creating a carefree lifestyle and adopting a new motto, meaning "no worries." You know it...*Hakuna Matata*. What a wonderful phrase. But that philosophy can be treachery, because we do and will have worries, that's when our response to despair should be to turn toward the light in the tools of our sacred spirits: faith, hope, and love. Simba begins to remember. His father told him to look out over the pride lands saying, "Everything the *light* touches is ours. The sun will set on my time here and rise in you." Simba's light has been eclipsed by the darkness of guilt and despair.

*In this tension, blinking, he steps in the shadowlands of shame.*

## Remembering

The pride lands have fallen to desolation under Uncle Scar's rule. As he feeds his own flesh, he crowds out the life and the light. He cages those who oppose him. The pride land seems lost. ***More to find than can ever be found.***

*In a parallel to John's Gospel, three come for Simba...word, God, and light.* The first is a lioness, who leaves the pride in search of food. A meercat and a warthog would be a feast. Simba intercepts her, discovering that she is his childhood friend. Nala brings **word** of Scar's destruction and begs him to come home and be the rightful king she

knows he is. The world could be in perfect harmony. Simba refuses, unwilling to cope with his grief and sin. ***There's far too much to take in here.***

The second essence in Simba's moment of **truth** is the presence of the swirling wind, breath of **God**, Spirit, Ruach, that churns all around and through him to get his attention in the tension and breath new awareness although he feels there is ***more to do than can ever be done.***

Alerted by this wind, the third influence enters the stage. The spirited shaman, Rafiki, begins to enlighten him with truth. Truth that the past can't hurt you if you learn from it. Truth that he is more than he has become. Rafiki takes Simba to the waters of his own reflection and in doing so, Simba sees his father who lives in him and hears him say, "Remember who you are."

"It is time," says Rafiki in true Holy Spirit fashion. In the friend, the spirit wind and the father, (echoes of John's gospel, Simba rises up with courage to return to who he has always been and enters back into the Circle of Life: Birth, Life, Death and Rising Again. Flesh and Spirit in balance.

*Simba turns from exile toward his home and blinking, remembers.*

## **Conclusion**

The dark side of the human condition; sin, blame, shame, separation, deception, distraction, evil influence- these all would pull the intentional tension that we are created in. It is the tension that grounds us, pull us over to an imbalance of darkness.

When this balance is overrun by darkness, it is a sacred call to remember. The tension is our teacher. Instead of letting it push us further into darkness, turn around, repent if you need to, take heart, be accountable, accept the consequences, remember you are created for goodness, and you are, after all, human, too. Turn and step into the sun. God in you and will not be overcome!

Amen, Amen.

## **The Benediction**

Light and Darkness of the world, Christ, and humanity, illumine and quiet our spirits to know the hold of your grounding power. Let us feel the embrace of this perfect union that we might boldly walk in the tension, assured and unafraid to be your light and to be human, for your sake, for our sake and for the sake of the world. Go in peace. Amen.