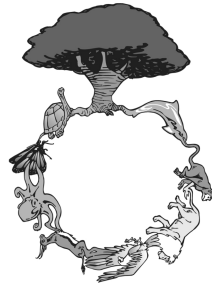


THE CIRCLE OF LIFE



Scripture:

2 Samuel 5:1-5; 9-10

The Ark is brought to Jerusalem

¹Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, 'Look, we are your bone and flesh.

²For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel.'

³So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.

⁴David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for forty years.

⁵At Hebron he reigned over Judah for seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

⁹David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inwards.

¹⁰And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.

Mark 6: 1-6

The adult Jesus returns to the town of his childhood

¹He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him.

²On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands!

³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence at him.

⁴Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honor, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.'

⁵And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.

⁶And he was amazed at their unbelief.



DAVID UNITES ISRAEL

Our first scripture describes the anointing of David as the King of a united Israel. After years of fighting, and sometimes fighting among themselves, tribes came together at Hebron, and said that the shepherd boy from Bethlehem,

- who had been the companion of Saul,
- who had sung the weary Saul to sleep with psalms praising the Lord,

• who had slain the Philistine giant Goliath with a slingshot and a stone, this was the boy who would be their first King.

David was king for forty years and this became the beginning of the Golden Age of the Israelites. David went to Jerusalem to establish his stronghold there. He named the City of David that stands to this day, south of the Temple.

THE ARK IS BROUGHT OT JERUSALEM

David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The Ark was the golden box that carried the Ten Commandments. During battles, the soldiers carried it in front of their soldiers attributing magical powers to it.

In Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant became the centerpiece of the Temple. It was placed behind a screen in an area that became known as the Holy of Holies.

This lesson is the center of the story of three generations of religious leaders:

- Saul was mighty in Battle
- David united the tribes and brought the ark to Jerusalem
- And Solomon built the Temple.

DEFINING MOMENTS REVEAL THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

David's life had been a life of promises made and fulfilled.

This story leaves us with the questions, what are the promises of God that you are still patiently waiting to see fulfilled? What defining moments directed your own career, the moves you have made, and the family and children you gathered.

This defining moment in the life of David is one reason that I felt that the scriptures called us to think about "the circle of life" this morning.

But it's not the only reason.

JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH

In the Gospel of Mark we read of Jesus' return to Nazareth. Jesus had moved out his boyhood town of Nazareth, to live in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, sixty miles away. He had made friends in Capernaum, and he stayed in the home of Peter.

You can visit Peter's House when you are in northern Israel. A large church has been built above the remains of Peter's house, and the church has a large glass floor that allows you to look down into the remains. This was the place to which Jesus returned following his travels to the small cities around the lake.

In Capernaum, Jesus called the twelve disciples, and established himself as a traveling, teaching

rabbi who had twelve disciples, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Word spread about his miraculous healings. He challenged both the Scribes and Pharisees of Judaism, but also the Roman Legions who occupied the country.

YOU'D THINK HIS FAMILY WOULD BE PROUD

So you would think this would be proud day when Jesus returned to his boyhood town, to meet members of his extended family, his brothers and sisters, and the friends he left behind.

But this was not a happy homecoming.

Jesus had the honor of read from Isaiah in the synagogue, and said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus was confident and assured. Did they applaud? Did they throw a big reception to the wise rabbi who had grown up among them?

Absolutely not. They said, "Where does he get his authority, where does he get his wisdom? Isn't this the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and didn't he also have sisters? The leading opinion makers in Nazareth were offended by his arrogance.

A PROPHET IS NOT HONORED AT HOME

They ran him out of town, to the edge of the stone quarry, which still remains in Nazareth to this day, and they were ready to push him off the edge, which might have killed him in Nazareth before the main portion of his ministry had happened, but he was able to get away from them, and he never returned again.

FAMILIARITY

Familiarity with Jesus blocked people from seeing who he really was.

So we find ourselves reflective, asking how does our own family react to our faith in Jesus? How does their reaction affect us?

After this Jesus sent out the twelve disciples from village to village as his ministry caught fire. He sent them out two by two and gave them authority to speak in his name. "Travel light. Stay with the people you meet, share their food. Let them take care of you because you have important things to teach them. And if you are not welcomed, then move on, shake the dust off your feet, and leave them with your blessing." (paraphrase)

GROWTH LEADS TO DISCOVERY OF THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

This second scripture leaves me once again examining “the circle of life lesson.”

**Here, the lesson is growing up,
discovering who you are,
indentifying your goals and faith,
and realizing that life calls you to
respond in your own unique way.**

Sometimes that leads away from family and friends, just as it leads to the rediscovery of friends and rediscovery family from a new perspective. It happens in every lifetime. We are led on character-defining adventures that help us discover who we are, and then we must establish new adult relationships.

LEARNING FROM OUR CHILDREN

Our own family has been blessed that as our children have grown they have only become more interesting to us as adults. Despite the distances and dissonances and time zones and calendars that separate us, Cheryl and I have learned more from our children than we ever taught them.

In our case, one of the lessons is, if you want to keep in touch with your children and grandchildren, you have to learn how to text message and send digital photos. That’s not Holy Scripture, but this has been a year of interesting text messages for us.

Here’s one that came in yesterday:

Hey Dad! The pilot flew us over Victoria Falls on our way into Livingstone. We were in a 4 seater plane so we flew about 3000 feet over the falls, got some great pics. ... yesterday we toured an African village, so many kids and lots of them are orphans due to their parents dying from AIDS. We also walked across the border into Zimbabwe. Will text you more when we get better internet service. Love, Jess

The last two years have been defining years in the life of each of our three daughters, and none more than our youngest, Jessica. She is completing a year of discovery unlike anyone I have ever known. So that is the third reason that the theme,

“circle of life,” has been on my mind. My daughter has been on Safari.

LION KING

A successful Broadway play, based upon one of the most popular Disney cartoon films was one that our children watched over and over when they were growing up. It is the story of the *Lion King*, a lion cub who grows up on the Savannahs of Africa.

I’m guessing some of you have seen it, while others have not. It is the very simple story of the Lion King and his lioness who give birth to a son. It is clear to all that this son would be the new king when his time came. The picture on the back of the bulletin is the cover of the movie jacket, and shows the parents proudly seated at a ceremony in which the Holy Ape lifts the lion cub up in the air and displays him before the other animals of the jungles who have gathered for the presentation ceremony. It makes me nervous that the person conducting the presentation ceremony is portrayed as a purple baboon.

This is a jungle ceremony that is like the scene in the film series, *Roots*, in which the father holds his child in the air to announce his name, bless his destiny, and present him to the rest of the tribes.

Of course this resembles the presentation of Jesus at the temple, or your own children in baptism. So in the picture you see the family members, you see the elephants, giraffes and other animals on the plains below, and in the lower corner the other lion who thinks he should be king, and plots all kinds of mischief for the lion cub.

This is where I cue the music from *the Lion King* that is called “The Circle of Life.” The music tells about the significance of this moment. I love the African tribal rhythms. The singer is Elton John.

Songwriters: Elton John and Tim Rice

**From the day we arrive on the planet
And blinking, step into the sun
There's more to be seen than can ever be
seen
More to do than can ever be done
Some say eat or be eaten
Some say live and let live
But all are agreed as they join the stampede
You should never take more than you give
In the circle of life
It's the wheel of fortune
It's the leap of faith
It's the band of hope**

**Till we find our place
On the path unwinding
In the circle, the circle of life
Some of us fall by the wayside
And some of us soar to the stars
And some of us sail through our troubles
And some have to live with the scars
There's far too much to take in here
More to find than can ever be found
But the sun rolling high through the
sapphire sky
Keeps great and small on the endless round**

**WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FROM
"THE CIRCLE OF LIFE?"**

There are many. Most of the great novels, plays, and movies we see are about growth on "the circle of life."

One generation grows, makes its mark, and gives way to the next. Accept this process. We have no choice. It is our birth contract:

- That the world would be fair sometimes and unfair other times.
- That there would be happiness and that there would be sorrow.
- That there will be birth, growth, injury and healing, lessons learned and lessons relearned.
- That there will be faith and there will be doubt.
- And that all of it will be interesting.

I particularly like the line in the song, "You should never take more than you give." It sounds like scripture to me.

This is an environmental lesson in making sure that we don't use more than our fair share of the earth's resources, and that we don't live in a such a high and mighty way that we believe that the purpose of others is to meet our own needs.

There are people who take more than they give. We find that upsetting because God gave even the most calloused among us a sense of fairness. When we see nations consuming disproportionate amounts of resources, entertainers spending foolish amounts of money on personal luxuries, and political and business people exceeding all logic in their lavishness, it feels like a violation of something basic.

Mother Teresa expressed it well in a popular poem that is attributed to her:

**People are often unreasonable,
illogical and self-centered.
Forgive them anyway.**

**If you are kind, people may accuse you
of selfish, ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.**

**If you are successful, you will win some
false friends and some true enemies.
Succeed anyway.**

**What you spend years building,
someone could destroy overnight.
Build anyway.**

**If you find serenity and happiness,
they may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.**

**The good you do today, people
will often forget tomorrow.
Do good anyway.**



**Dr. John H. Cushman
Presbyterian Church of the Roses
2500 Patio Court
Santa Rosa, CA 95409
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