

Discipleship Moment

Sermon Text: Acts 1:6-11

I love fairytales, I always have. Growing up, my favorite movie was the great American fairytale *The Wizard of Oz*. I would watch it on our VHS player and as soon as it was over I would re-wind it and watch it again (much to the annoyance of my parents). I was caught by the simplicity of the characters, the way the story makes ordinary things (like scarecrows) magical, and the incredible videography and direction of the producers and directors. One of the most striking elements of *The Wizard of Oz* is the transition from black and white (while Dorothy is in Kansas), and the vivid technicolor when she enters the land of Oz. The impact of this transition from drab black and white to vivid color is best summed up by Dorothy's amazement as she leaves the black and white house and says, "I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

The Wizard of Oz uses all of the great fairytale themes. The most important of these themes is: the lost protagonist who finds herself in a magical world. This theme can be seen in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*, in C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and in J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. In every great fairytale, the hero (or heroine) finds him-or her-self in a situation where a weather event, a birthday, a physical place, or some other ordinary event transports them from their normal, mundane, regular life, into a wild and imaginative adventure. In *The Wizard of Oz* this is a tornado. As the storm bears down Dorothy's family and friends desperately call out for her but are forced to go into the tornado shelter without her. By the time Dorothy makes it to her house it's too late—the tornado is imminent. She (and the house) get swept up into the tornado, spinning dizzily and lazily up into the atmosphere. She is hit on the head by some debris and begins to see her friends and, most disturbingly, a witch in the tornado. After an awful and terrifying few minutes she lands safely in a new world. More often than not, when change happens in our lives—if we lose or retire from our job, if we lose our spouse, if we get a bad diagnosis from the doctor, if we move to a new city, or have another child—when these changes happen, we can feel like we're in a tornado. Our emotions are spinning out of control and we may get caught in an obsessive thought spiral—we replay the traumatic event, or we imagine the worst possible outcome, and we think and think and think. Change is always difficult and when change enters our lives it is like entering a tornado of emotions and uncertainty.

In the sermon on Sunday we heard a promise that Jesus gave his disciples. His promise was that the Holy Spirit will walk with them and empower them long after Jesus is gone. And in the gospel of John, Jesus says that the Spirit will guide them into all truth (16:13). Peter, by the power of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed that the Holy Spirit is promised not just to the disciples, but all believers, and their children, and those who are very distant (Acts 2:39). With this Holy Spirit, the disciples were changed from being a bunch of skittish observers of Jesus (they all ran away when Jesus was arrested) to bold, courageous ambassadors of Jesus to Jerusalem and the world. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus was the tornado that the disciples experienced, and the Holy Spirit was the vivid technicolor reality that they were going to experience—their magical land of Oz.

Fairytales teach us about Jesus' promise to his disciples (and us!). Change will come, but ultimately all change is worked out for the good for those of us who love God (Romans 8:28). Eventually, all change brings us closer to God through struggle and suffering. The tornado of change moves us from the drab, black and white land of our comfort, and transports us to the amazing, beautiful land of Spirit filled adventure in Christ. Will we stay in the comfortable black and white house, or will we leave it and enter the wonderful land of Oz?

Going Deeper

1. Do you like change? Why? Do you not like change? Why not?
2. Is there a recent change in your life? Or is one coming up? How did you respond to it? Did you get angry, or afraid, or some other emotion? Why?
3. If you feel overwhelmed by change, spend some time praying for the strength and boldness that Jesus promised the disciples.
4. Do you have a favorite movie or fairytale? How did the main character experience change in that story? What was the outcome of that change?
5. Next time you experience change, how can you be better prepared for the change emotionally? Is there an attitude you can change or an action step you can take to make that change a positive experience?
6. Spend time praying for Pastor Ben and Pastor Erik as they begin to shepherd New Life and cast vision for God's will in our church and community.