

**Sermon: 2019/06/02 (Ascension Day / 7th Sunday of Easter Day) - Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 97:1-8; Revelation 22:12-14,16-17,20-21; & Luke 24:44-53\_BTR**

Ok!

Let's play a game:

I want you to guess the Disney movie by its intro song...

Kids, first one to shout out the right answer gets a piece of candy!

Ready?

Here we go:

[Play CD.

- i) Aladdin
- ii) Frozen
- iii) Moana
- iv) Pinocchio
- v) Sleeping Beauty
- vi) Toy Story
- vii) The Lion King.]

Life can seem sooo(!) chaotic; so random and pointless can't it?

Unjust and vicious too.

Like we're all caught on this *immense* carousel, which goes around and around and around...relentlessly.

This dispassionate cycle of desire, disappointment and death is dubbed, grandly, "The Circle of Life" in *The Lion King*.

And we're supposed to just embrace it; not fret about it: "Hakuna matata," right? *Wrong*.

If you fall off this carousel, it doesn't stop.

It doesn't say, "Hey, you ok brother?"

It just *grinds* on.

And you know what?

It was always that piece of equipment in the playground that I dreaded most when I was a little child.

The chute?

Easy.

Climb the ladder; *woosh(!)*, down you go.

Sticky metal?

Not to worry.

Do the bum-shuffle, and push yourself along with your hands.

(Now, I have had some rough landings: crispy, new bark-mulch can make the end uncomfortable.

But it's over very quickly.)

The monkey-bars?

Great.

You can either do them or you can't.

Splits the men from the boys.

But the carousel... *yikes!*

Those crazy centrifugal forces push you back and back, and if your grip slips from the handle then you're either flung out, out onto the tarmac like a meteor being slung into space, or you're mercilessly dragged around, limbs flailing against the frictional ground which shreds them to bits.

*"Stop! Stop. For goodness sake: stop pushing. Too fast, I'm gonna hurl."*

We've all been there, yes?

Some not so long ago.

And maybe, if you're lucky, there's a kind co-passenger with you; who takes pity and helps to pull you back onto that whirling torture-trap. Or the kid driving it in circles at a sprint slackens their pace and it slows down enough for your head to stop spinning; but, in the real world, these charitable strangers are few and far between.

And the fortunate - those with dependable, employed family - get a "leg up;" or maybe the government offers a mediocre "hand out."

But the "Circle of Life" moves forever on, and many are crushed as it does.

We need, then, something to distract us, divert us; *deliver* us.

We're so focused on the carousel and yet so confounded by it; tyrannised by it.

"Is this it?" We may think.

But actually, there *is* more than what we see.

Appearances are deceptive:

1. Jesus says, '...everything written about me in the law of Moses' - that's the first books of the Bible, the "Pentateuch" or "Torah" - 'the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled', and then he 'opened' His Apostles minds to see how *He*, their rabbi, had done exactly that: the miracles, the exorcisms, *the resurrection*. [Lk. 24:44-45] *In other words*, despite the *many* centuries that had passed, and all the calamities and crises that had occurred, there *was*, after all, *a pattern*; a *design*. What seems like a (repetitious, monotonous) "cycle" - a mindless "carousel" - is actually a single trajectory streaking to a glorious conclusion. You won't see it if you're too intently consumed with the messiness of the here and now on the ground, staring at the craziness on

CNN. No! We need to break our fixation and look *up* - 'up into [the] heaven[s]'. See there the majestic clouds, like 'the lilies of the field', [Mt. 6:28] silent, beautiful; the warm sun; *and*, beyond those things, picture Christ on His throne, commanding, sustaining, *grace*-ing.

2. Though Jesus ascended *away* to Heaven, He is in fact still 'with us to the end of the age.' [Mt. 28:20b] Luke omits those words, but they're important to *Matthew* who kept them. It's a mystery; a paradox; but true nonetheless. In the Eucharist. In your heart.

Where both gospel authors agree is how we should *respond* to this *pair* of facts - a response that's called, "The Great Commission." Luke uses the *passive voice*, saying 'that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed...to all nations'. Matthew, on the other hand, stresses it more emphatically: 'Go therefore...' [28:19] You and me, to share these transforming truths, trusting that many are desperately "thirsty" to hear them.

Let's take a moment to reflect.