

Advent 2, Year C
Dec. 8, 2019
Saint James, Wheat Ridge

By the Rev. Becky Jones

Peter and Susan were absolutely perplexed.
Their younger sister Lucy
had told them this outrageous story
of wandering around in a snowy world
that she had somehow gotten into through a wardrobe,
And of meeting a faun there.
She would not back down from that unbelievable story,
No matter what they said to her.
They feared that she was losing her mind.
They decided they better discuss this with an adult.

They went to the professor, and told him the whole story.
He listened to it all,
And then he said the last thing that either of them expected:

“How do you know,” the professor asked,
“that your sister’s story isn’t true?”
Susan and Peter sputtered a bit.
The story just couldn’t be true.

But the professor pushed them to think this through.
“There are only three possibilities,” he said.
“Either your sister is telling lies,
or she is mad,
or she is telling the truth.
You know she doesn’t tell lies,
And it is obvious that she is not mad.
Therefore, unless some other evidence turns up,
We must assume she is telling the truth.”

Peter struggled to wrap his mind around the implications of this.
“Do you really mean, sir,” he said,
“that there could be other worlds –
all over the place, just round the corner –
like that?”

The professor took off his glasses and began to polish them.
 “Nothing is more probable,” he said.

This, of course, is a scene
 From the “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,”
 Which we as a parish are exploring throughout Advent.

But from *Star Trek* to the *X Files* to *Harry Potter*,
 Fantasy and science fiction is filled
 With the notion of parallel dimensions
 and alternate universes;
 Other worlds that somehow exist alongside our own,
 With corridors or passageways or wormholes
 That somehow connect them to us.

C.S. Lewis, the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*,
 Of which “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe” is a part,
 Had his own term for these inter-dimensional passageways.
 He called them “chinks or chasms between worlds.”

Lovers of the Narnia stories know these chinks and chasms well:
 The Wood between the Worlds;
 The picture in Aunt Alberta’s back bedroom;
 The door in the wall behind Experiment House;
 And, of course, the wardrobe in the spare room
 In the Professor’s House.
 The wardrobe that opened up into Narnia.

I love this idea that
 There are whole universes
 Lurking right around the corner,
 That somehow it is possible
 For two separate worlds
 To occupy the same space
 At the same time,
 And yet we in the one world
 Only rarely seem to catch a glimpse
 Of what’s going on in the other world.
 Yet that world is there.
 We just don’t see it.

I think the lesson for us
in Lucy's adventure with the wardrobe
is that sometimes we, too, unexpectedly slip into other worlds.

Without us even knowing how it happens,
Divine serendipity sometimes strikes,
And at any moment
We may slip through an unseen crack in our world.

And so we find ourselves in a strange and marvelous land,
A place beyond the walls of our known universe,
A place not bound by the limits and realities
Of the world as we know it.

There IS such a place,
And it's not limited to the imaginations
Of science fiction writers.
Happily for us,
OUR world isn't all there is.
Nearby, all around us, just out of our conscious sight,
Is that other dimension,
The dimension where God dwells.

For all its invisibility, it is real and it is present.
And at any given moment,
It is ready to burst in on us,
Drag us out of our workaday world
And into a realm of mystery and majesty,
All when we least expect it.

This is the good news that John the Baptist brought,
When he appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,
"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near."

"The Kingdom of Heaven has come near."
John caught a glimpse of that other world,
Called the Kingdom of Heaven.
So did the prophet Isaiah.

And just as Lucy came back from Narnia
Describing a land filled with strange creatures,
With talking animals,
With animals behaving in ways we don't see in our world,
So too did Isaiah see a world
Where the rules governing life
Are quite different from our world.

Isaiah saw a world
Where the wolf lives with the lamb,
And the leopard lies down with the kid,
The calf and the lion and the fatling together;
And the lion eats straw like the ox.
And children play with snakes
Without fear of being bitten,
For the whole creation is full
Of the knowledge of the Lord.

It is a world where the rich and powerful
Do not prey on the weak and vulnerable.
It is a world where debts are forgiven,
Where prisoners are set free,
Where the blind have their sight restored.
It is a world whose leader is filled
With wisdom and understanding,
Who sees beyond the obvious,
And who invariably sides with the meek and the lowly.

As Lucy and John the Baptist and the prophet Isaiah discovered,
Another world waits for us,
Just beyond the veil.
If only we have eyes to see it.

Through the grace of God,
This other world might descend on us at any moment.
The Kingdom of Heaven may draw near at any time,
And like Lucy,
We may find ourselves falling through a cosmic chink,
And arise to stand face to face with the great lion,
Who some know as Aslan,
But who goes by another name in our world.

During this season of Advent,
We wait for the Kingdom of Heaven of come near,
We wait for the wardrobe door to open into Narnia,
We wait for the fresh green shoot to come bursting out,
out of the stump of Jesse,
bringing with it new life and new possibilities.

We wait and we dream of our future
In this wonderful new world that somehow co-exists with our own.
The Kingdom of Heaven is all around us.
And the doorways into that kingdom are all around us too.
We get there through prayer.
We get there through study of the Scriptures.
We get there through service to the poor and needy.
And sometimes we do nothing at all,
But still the great lion calls our name
And beckons us to come and romp with him.

Is it just a fantasy,
Or is it all a lie?
This story just cannot be true.
Can it?
Can there really be other worlds,
All over the place,
Just around the corner?
In truth, nothing could be more probable.
Amen.