

There's a powerful Victorian hymn that for some sound theological reasons didn't make it into our hymnal, but it does reflect the difficult truth about dwarfs and the possibility of choosing to live in light or darkness once and for all.

Once to every man and nation
comes the moment to decide.
In the strife of truth with falsehood
for the good or evil side.
Some great cause, God's new Messiah
offering each the bloom or blight.
And the choice goes by forever
twixt that darkness and that light.

We will never know what eventually happened to those dwarfs. They may have remained in that dark pit or they may have been part of Aslan's "other work to do." What we do know is that we have a choice to sit in darkness or walk in light.

All of us walk close to the darkness in our journey through life. Indeed, life is a struggle to push back those dark times when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, times of grief or depression, fear or guilt, pain or illness. The good news is that we have a light to show the way, a friend to walk with us, a helping hand to lighten our burdens. As the children of Narnia discovered, Aslan was always there when they needed him most.

I think it is important to remember that God took care of permanent darkness when he created this wonderful world. The very first thing that God did in creation was to banish the darkness which covered the deep. The first words out of God's mouth were, "Let there be light. Then God saw that the light was good and separated the light from the darkness." Scriptures remind us that we are created as children of light, thus we must reflect this light of God and like the Narnian children who go to the dwarfs, help God bring that light to those who sit in the dark.

"I have given you to be a light to all nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring prisoners out of their dungeons where they sit in dark-

ness." In today's familiar Gospel from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds his disciples (and each and every one of us):

You are the light of the world. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. No, they place it on a stand where it can give light to everyone in the house. Let your light shine, that others will see the good you do.

The old nursery song translates it more simply:

**This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine...**

Throughout scripture, God's presence has been associated with light as one Psalmist (139:10) who struggled to find God's presence declares:

If I fear that the darkness will cover me
and the light around me turn to night
(I will remember that) darkness is not dark
to you
The night is as bright as day
Your right hand will hold me fast.

Well that's enough for now. I'll close, as we opened, with another story to cement this point. This one is about a young boy who went along with his father on a business trip. It was the first time the lad had been away from home and as they settled into their hotel room on the first night out, the dad pushed his bed close to his son's bed, tucked him in, and then turned out the light. After a couple of minutes, the boy said, "Sure is dark in here, isn't it Daddy?" "Yes," responded the father, "It's pretty dark, but everything is alright." Then followed another silence after which the boy reached over and took his father's hand. "I'd better hold your hand," he said, "just in case you get scared."

AMEN

copyright © CS Lewis "The Seven Chronicles of Narnia"



**Wehnwood United
Methodist Church**

*To Serve, Invite and
Grow in Christ*

You are the light of the world. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. No, they place it on a stand where it can give light to everyone in the house. Let your light shine, that others will see the good you do.

Rev Edward Preston Pastor

814.942.6010
2511 Juniata Gap Road
Altoona, PA 16601

This little light of mine I'm gonna let it shine...

The Seven Chronicles of Narnia written by C.S. Lewis have, in their short life, become a classic on library and literature shelves for both young and old alike. The first of the seven books was recently made into a popular TV movie a couple of years ago entitled, *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*.

The chronicles are, at heart, adventure stories. They record the marvelous and often scary episodes of a small group of youngsters who enter the mystical world of Narnia when they walk through a secret doorway in a little used wardrobe in one of their homes.

Among other things, I think the chronicles help children (and adults) understand the fundamental battle in life between good and evil. Good is represented by a great lion named Aslan, an archtype of the resurrected Christ. In the land of Narnia, evil shows up in many familiar guises of wicked witches, horrible beasts, and dark dwarfs.



Seven Chronicles of Narnia

The last of the seven books is appropriately entitled, *The Last Battle* (Revelation?). In this chronicle, the evil characters are Narnian dwarfs. They are dark and gloomy folk, with sneering grins, who distrust the whole world. The basic issue is that they have chosen to live in

darkness, refusing to see the good around them, refusing to believe that Aslan can bring God's light into their lives and world. So, they live in misery, squalor, and self-imposed darkness. Near the end of the story, some of the children who follow Aslan go out into a field where the dwarfs live. They want to make friends; they want to help them see the light and the beauty of the world which surrounds them.

When they arrived, they noticed that the dwarfs have a very odd look and were huddled together in a circle facing inward, paying attention to nothing. As the children drew near, they were aware that the dwarfs couldn't see them. "Where are you?" asks one of the children. "We're in here you bone-head," said Diggle the dwarf, "in this pitch-black, poky, smelly little hole of a stable."

"Are you blind?" asks another child. "No," respond the dwarfs, "we're here in the dark where no one can see."

"But it isn't dark, you poor dwarfs," says Lucy, "look up, look round, can't you see the sky and flowers - can't you see me?" Then Lucy bends over, picks some wild violets, and says, "perhaps you can smell these." But the dwarf jumps back into his darkness and yells, "How dare you shove that filthy stable litter in my face." He cannot even smell the beauty which surrounds him

Suddenly the earth trembles. The sweet air of the field grows sweeter and a brightness flashes behind them. The children turn and see that Aslan, the great lion himself, has appeared. They greet him warmly and then Lucy, through her tears, asks, "Aslan, can you do something for these poor dwarfs?"

Aslan approaches the dwarfs who are huddled in their darkness and he growls. They think it is someone in the stables trying to frighten them. Then Aslan shakes his mane and sets before the dwarfs a magnificent feast of food. The dwarfs grab the food in the darkness, greedily consuming it, but they cannot taste its goodness. One thinks he is eating hay, another an old rotten turnip. In a moment, they are fighting and quarreling among themselves as usual. Aslan turns and leaves them in their misery.

They children are dismayed. Even the great

Aslan cannot bring them out of their self-imposed darkness. "

They will not let us help them," says Aslan. Their prison is only in their minds and they are so afraid of being taken in that they cannot be taken out. "But come now children," says Aslan, "we have other work to do," and they leave the dwarfs alone in their miserable world.

These chronicles of Narnia reflect an ancient way of presenting truth through stories - using allegory. Allegorical stories help us see, through ordinary events, another higher level of truth. In this tale, the earthly lion, Aslan, represents the heavenly resurrected Christ who brings hope and life and light into the world.

What the children of Narnia discover, to their dismay, is that everyone has a choice... to see and respond to that light or to sit in self-imposed darkness unwilling to see the beauty which surrounds them, to smell the violets held under their nose or eat of delights of God's table set before them. We all know people like this who live in the dark. It is a lesson Lucy, Edmund, and the other children will carry with them as they return home through the magical door which separates the mystical kingdom of Narnia from their very ordinary earthly home. It's a lesson we must all eventually learn as we walk through the shadowy valleys of life.

