

FR HUGH'S HOMILY FOR 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 2025

Three characters are searching in the Wizard of Oz. The tin man, the lion and the scarecrow. Where they are headed is the wizard as they think they will find the answer there. But until they have someone to help them they are lost. What they do not realise is that to truly search they need to find their real selves first. And then arrives Dorothy, all the way from Kansas in her red shoes. So they set off on the yellow brick road.

Two things they need help to do. The first is to discover who they really are, either what they have lost, or never found. Once they do this then they will be able to face what they are looking for, though they do not know what that is yet. All they know is they have to set out to do it.

So off they go, they have Dorothy for their guide, and strength, and they have the yellow brick road to follow.

In the gospel the people are asked, 'Who did you go out to see?' Or to put it in a different way, 'What are you looking for?' 'What is your goal?' They are not really sure.

The other question, like the tin man, the scarecrow and the lion, is about who you really are. Now John the Baptist is looking for a Messiah, a leader, who will revive the Kingdom of Israel, who will recreate the Kingdom of David both politically and religiously. But the reply he gets back from Jesus is something completely different. Nothing to do with politics, power or religion, it is about healing.

"The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up." Note that it says, 'the blind receive their sight.' The healing is a gift from somewhere or someone. John would see this power as only given to the Messiah. But a new idea of the Messiah. A new idea of what the Kingdom he was hoping for is all about. The Kingdom of Heaven. Only a divine Messiah would have such powers as these.

What the three characters in the Wizard of Oz needed was healing. A particular type of healing where they found their true selves. Whole selves. And in doing so they had a new confidence in themselves. They did not need to be anyone else but themselves, real selves.

They don't discover this straightaway of course. Dorothy helps them find the yellow brick road, and it is in the course of their journey and its ups and downs that they find themselves. They are not sure what they are going to find on their journey. They set off into a different set of lands. What have they gone to see? They are not sure. But they know something is missing and they suddenly trust Dorothy to help them find it. Of course there is nothing there at the end but a little man with no power. The Wizard of Oz is not the gospel.

But at the start of the gospel Jesus is introducing the people to why he is here. Matthew is helping his community to understand what being a Christian is all about.

If you realise that we are here for a purpose, but are unsure what. If you are looking for the self God created you to be and why. Then Jesus is saying (if I might be cheeky enough to say) in Jesus you have a guide and in the gospel a Yellow Brick Road, which is in itself, once you set out on it, already the healing and discovery process as to why you are really here. Why we have been created. The start of being part of this Kingdom of Heaven, is simply to put a foot onto the road, to engage sincerely with the gospel. To find Jesus and to find our real selves.

Every pantomime has a meaning behind it. Some not so deep. The gospel always does. As we begin our gospel story in these early chapters, we are being introduced to the person and the story that will give us the meaning to our lives.