

Take Courage
 We Have What It Takes: The Courage for Stewardship
 Esther 4:13-16
 Luke 19:1-10
 October 31, 2010
 Rev. Heather Leslie Hammer

Music and Skit

Dorothy, The Scarecrow, The Tin Man, The Cowardly Lion

Dorothy: I-I don't like this forest! It's—it's dark and creepy! Do you suppose we'll meet any wild animals?

Tim Man: Hmmm—we might.

Dorothy: Oh!

Scarecrow: Animals that eat straw?

Tin Man: (nonchalantly): Uh, some. But mostly lions and tigers and bears.

Dorothy: Lions?

Scarecrow: And tigers?

Tin Man (nodding): And bears.

Dorothy: Oh! Lions and tigers and bears. Oh my!

All (in rhythm with their steps): Lions and tigers and bears. Oh my!

Lion: Roar!

Scarecrow: Oh, look!

Dorothy: Oh!

Lion: Roar! (Lion advances, they retreat; he advances, they retreat...pretending to fight)
 Hah, put 'em up, put 'em up! Which one of ya first? I'll fight ya together if ya want. I'll fight ya with one paw tied behind my back! I'll fight ya standing on one foot! I'll fight ya with my eyes closed! (He closes his eyes. Then opens them.) Ohh—pullin' an axe on me, eh?
 Sneakin' up on me, eh?

Tin Man: Here, here. Go 'way and let us alone.

Lion: Oh, scared, huh? (Growls at Toto.)

(Toto is barking (??).)

Dorothy (to the Lion as she slaps him on the nose): Shame on you for scaring Toto!

Lion (bawling): What did ya do that for? I didn't bite him!

Dorothy: No but you tried to.

Lion (sniffing pathetically): Well, ya didn't have to go and hit me, did ya? Is my nose bleeding? (sobbing)

Dorothy: Well, of course, not! My goodness, what a fuss you're making! Well, naturally when you go around picking on things weaker than you are—why, you're nothing but a great big coward!

Lion: You're right. I am a coward. I haven't any courage at all. I even scare myself. Look at the circles under my eyes! I haven't slept in weeks.

Tin Man: Why don't you try counting sheep?

Lion: That doesn't do any good—I'm afraid of 'em! (bawling)

Scarecrow: Oh, that's too bad. (To Dorothy) Don't you think the Wizard could help him?

Dorothy: I don't see why not? Why don't you come along with us to the Emerald City? We're on our way to see the Wizard right now. (Points to the Tin Man) To get him a heart.

Tin Man: (pointing to the Scarecrow) And him a brain.

Dorothy (to the Lion): I'm sure he could give you some courage.

Lion: Well, wouldn't you be degraded to be seen in the company of a cowardly lion? I would! (sobbing)

Dorothy: No, of course not! Come on,... to Oz! (linking arms)

Scarecrow: To Oz!

Tin Man: To Oz!

Lion: To Oz!

All: We're off to see the Wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz!

The Cowardly Lion

The Cowardly Lion sings:

Yeah, it's sad, believe me Missy,
 When you're born to be a sissy
 Without the vim and verve.
 But I could show my prowess
 Be a lion, not a mowess
 If I only had the nerve.

Actually the Cowardly Lion is more courageous than he claims. On the yellow-brick road, he leaps across a chasm with a companion on his back. He dares to leave his friends to go off and hunt for food, even offering to kill a deer for Dorothy. He decapitates a giant spider. When the Wizard gives him something called "courage" to drink, he becomes almost a bully, ready to take on the world. Courage is just acting in the face of fear. The Lion proves he is quite able to do just that. He has what it takes.

Stories of Courage...

Esther

The Jewish people had been exiled into a foreign land where King Ahasuerus ruled. His reign extended from India to Ethiopia, an area of over 127 provinces. In the third year of his rule, he gave a banquet that lasted for 7 days. They had fine linens and purple and silver hangings in the courtyard. The King served drinks in golden goblets—as much as anyone wanted to drink. Queen Vashti had her own banquet for all the women, and on the 7th day, King Ahasuerus called for the queen. She didn't come as was expected, and anger burned within the King. The wise men of the court advised the King to call all the most beautiful young women of the land to come to the palace.

A man named Mordecai, a Jew, had raised his beautiful cousin, Esther, from the time her mother and father had both died. They were Jews. Mordecai told Esther to go to the palace, but not to tell the King she was a Jew.

The young women who gathered were given maids who pampered them for 12 months, applying perfume and oil, that they might be attractive to the King. And one by one, King Ahazuerus called for the maidens. When it came Esther's turn, he was transfixed! King Ahasuerus fell madly in love with Esther and made her his queen.

Now Mordecai was hanging around the palace gate, and he saw two guards become angry and scheme to lay hands on the King. Mordecai told Esther, his cousin, what they were intending, and she told the King. and that Mordecai had told her. The men were hanged and a good word was noted in the royal record book about Mordecai.

The King promoted a certain man by the name of Haman to be in charge of all the princes and servants of the court. Haman made everyone bow down to him, but Mordecai would

not bow down to him because he was a Jew and would only bow to the Lord God. Haman was furious, and planned to destroy all the Jews in the kingdom and hang Mordecai on the gallows. He went to tell the King his plan. King Ahazuerus agreed to have all the Jews destroyed. Letters were sent out to all the provinces ordering the annihilation of the Jews. When Mordecai heard the awful news, he dressed in sackcloth, fasted, and wept. Esther sent Mordecai clothes to wear, but he refused them. She sent for him and he said to her: "You are here in the royal court, 'for just such a time as this!' Save your people!" And Esther said she would go to the King even if he did not call for her, and she said bravely, "If I perish, I perish!" (4:14-16)

Esther went to the King as she had promised and asked him to save her people, the Jews. He did and hanged Haman on the gallows instead of Mordecai.

It takes courage "at such a time as this."

Today...

Liu Xiaobo

In Northeast China, in a remote prison, lives today a man named Liu Xiaobo. Liu is serving his fourth prison term, given to him for writing Charter 08, a document calling on the Chinese government to institute democratic reforms and to assure freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and freedom of expression. 10,000 brave Chinese people signed Charter 08. For daring to write this document and call China accountable to its own Constitution, Liu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this month. When the world heard the news, the Chinese government declared Liu to be a criminal, and security agents were sent to Liu's wife's apartment, who put her under house arrest, and took away her mobile phone.

It takes courage "at such a time as this."

Miners in Chile

In the Atacama Desert, 33 miners were trapped in a Chilean mine. They were all ages, 19-63, stuck in a small chamber 2,300 feet deep, for more than two months after the collapse in a gold and copper mine. They were 3 miles from the mine entrance. For 17 days the miners didn't know if anyone knew if they were even alive. It took great courage to wait and hope for rescue. On the surface, it took courage too. The families waited and had no idea how long it would be. They called the place "Camp Hope." President Piñera of Chile said the miners were rescued on "unity, hope, and faith."

It takes courage "at such a time as this."

Zacchaeus

There was a man named Zacchaeus, a tax collector. He was a short man. He was a rich man, but he was a lonely man. He had heard of Jesus, the rabbi, who was coming into Jericho. And so, Zacchaeus went to where the crowd was gathering. Something moved him

that day to climb a tree, so that he could see Jesus. Something gave him courage that day to see with new eyes. And when Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' s house, Zacchaeus had the courage to go with Jesus and listen to the Master. He had the courage to change his ways, to repent and sin no more.

It takes courage "at such a time as this."

St. John's

Here at St. John's, it takes courage to make a bold pledge to the church to offer one's prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness to grow this church in its vision. Take courage! We have what it takes—the brains, the heart, the courage—and God's grace! — "at such a time as this."