

## THE LION KING

Week #2 of a 3-Week Series, "Metaphysical Movie Fun"

Rev. Stacy Macris Ros

Sunday, August 17, 2025

Well, yes! We're in our second Sunday of our three-week series called "Metaphysical Movie Fun," where I take one of our favorite films and I pluck out the spiritual lessons and ideas from that so we can apply it to our daily lives outside of the theater, and get even more out of these classic films that we all love.

Last week I covered "Star Wars" -- either the original or number four -- depending on which generation you're from. It was the originally-released "Star Wars." Today is "The Lion King," the 1994 animated film.

"Lion King": when this came out in 1994, I went and saw it with my best friend, who I met at the age of 11 at a Unity summer camp. So, we went and saw it together. And also with me was a friend at the time named Juan Ross: now my husband of almost three decades. So that's a little special something about this film. [Applause] Oh, it gets applause; okay!

Well, then, you'll like this next story ... because I was remembering, you know; we have two sons and I'm sure we watched "Lion King" with them a couple times. But one time, they were about three and seven years old, and we went on a date night ... You know, they tell young couples to go out on a date night, so we did. And we came home, and the kids were watching "Lion King." They were about a foot away from the television. [Congregants laugh] They were right up against it. And the babysitter was behind them on the couch sleeping. [Congregants laugh] So, I don't know if that says something about the movie, about my kids, about the babysitter. I can tell you she wasn't hired again. [Congregants laugh]

But, loved the movie then; loved it when I rewatched it last Sunday. I think it's a fantastic film! And here's actually some fun little tidbits for you. So originally, it was envisioned as a nature documentary. And then they decided to turn it into an animated film based on the plot line of William Shakespeare's "Hamlet." It was praised at the time for its music, story themes, animation. It was the highest grossing film of 1994. Did you know that? I know; I didn't know that, either. It won two Academy Awards, as well as a Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture, Music or Comedy. And it is considered to be one of the greatest animated films ever made. Isn't that remarkable? So hence, why we're covering "The Lion King" today.

So, for those of you who haven't seen it since 1994, or maybe you were the babysitter sleeping on the couch [congregants laugh], just thought: here's a recap of the movie.

So, in the pride lands of Tanzania, a pride of lions rule over the animal kingdom from Pride Rock. Animals from all corners of the kingdom head to Pride Rock, where King Mufasa ... Now remember: King Mufasa is voiced by whom? James Earl Jones, who also voiced Darth Vader. So, this is our first cross-reference here between "Star Wars" and "The Lion King."

So, King Mufasa (and that fantastic voice) and Queen Sarabi ... their newborn son, Simba, is presented to the gathering of animals by Rafiki, the mandrill monkey who's the shaman -- the wise advisor. And all the animals bow to the new prince. Simba will be next in line to the throne, and he's betrothed to a little female cub named Nala. However -- there's always got to be a "however" -- Scar is Mufasa's jealous brother, Simba's scheming uncle. And he wants to rule the pride lands for himself.

So, he hatches a plan with the hyenas to eliminate Simba and Mufasa so he can rule the lands. So, he traps -- he sets this trap -- where he lures Simba into this gorge, causing a wildebeest stampede to trample him. He tells his brother, "Uh-oh, look at Simba!", knowing that Mufasa will go to try to save his son ... which he does. He saves Simba. However ... now, there's a whole scene where Mufasa is, you

know, he's on the edge of this cliff, holding on. And Scar sinks his claws into Mufasa's paws and sends him ... sending him down to his death.

So Simba watches this helplessly as his father falls. He runs down; he sees his father's body. And Scar -- in true narcissistic fashion -- convinces Simba that it's his fault that his father is dead, so he should leave the kingdom and never come back again. *"Go into exile,"* he says.

So, Simba does. He goes into self-imposed exile, and he's taken in by two of our favorite characters, the very fun-loving meercat and warthog, Timon and Pumbaa, who have a very *"Hakuna Matata"* -- no worries, problem-free -- philosophy. And they really end up raising Simba.

So, years pass, and the three of them are doing their *"Hakuna Matata"* thing. When Nala -- now fully grown -- comes upon the three of them. And so, they're all reunited ... which means that, now, Simba has to look at the guilt that he has about his past. He's still struggling with that mistake that he feels is his: his responsibility for his father's death.

But Nala informs him that all life is dying in Tanzania. The people or the animals are dying, plants are dying. And so, with the help of Rafiki -- that wise shaman monkey -- Simba realizes that his father's spirit and legacy will be guiding him. And so, he accepts that he needs to take his place as the rightful ruler of Pride Rock to restore balance to the circle of life and stop his greedy uncle's tyranny. Which he does. He returns home; there's a rustle; there's a tumble between Simba and Scar. Scar begs for mercy. He falls from the rock. Symbolic, right? The hyenas rush in; that's the end of the story for Scar.

And now we have -- at the very end of the movie -- Simba and Nala, now king and queen. And Rafiki now presents their cub, Kiara, to the rest of the animals, thus continuing the circle of life. End movie. [Congregants whoop and applaud]

And all of that is done in 90 minutes. [Congregants laugh] It's fast action!

So, interesting ... I don't remember this from 1994, but there really is an overarching Jesus theme here that's happening. There's a lot of Christian metaphors and symbolism that I don't remember seeing in this movie before; maybe just a different place as a minister now that I'm in. So, I thought that was interesting. I'll come back to that in just a little bit.

But there definitely are three themes that popped out at me that I thought I really wanted to share with all of you today. The one is how our mistakes of the past -- and the shame and guilt that come with them -- can delay us from stepping into our purpose or our dream. Another one being the *"circle of life"*: that all life is connected. And also that change is a part of that. Change is a natural part of the season of life. And the third point being: we love to skip the challenging parts of accomplishing our dreams and goals and just be king. Right? But it takes action to manifest our visions and have them come to life. So, let's dive into those three ideas first.

The first is: **TO CONFRONT OUR PAST TO MOVE FORWARD.** So, we've all made mistakes; *all* of us. We're human; we've all made mistakes. You're not unique. All of us have made mistakes. Unfortunately, we can't take back those mistakes. But what happens is: we often let those mistakes dictate who we think we are now in the present moment, which holds us back from moving forward and embodying our true selves -- our divine nature.

So, when I say to confront our past to move forward, what I mean is to really look at: What's holding you back from going after your purpose? Because if you don't look at it, you can't learn from it. Right? If you don't look at it, you can't learn from it. So, when I say, you know, looking at a mistake and the choices we've made, to really sit and say, *"Okay, what was it?"* It's going to be uncomfortable -- but: *"What was*

*the mistake or that choice that I would maybe do differently now?"* But even more so: What are the feelings around it?

Because, see: there's the emotions that really get in the way. Two of the biggest emotions in this movie - and in our lives -- is usually guilt and shame. Those are the two that really slow us down the most. So, guilt is that: I've made a mistake and now I'm going to internalize that as a negative evaluation about myself. And shame is when we now put a whole lot of feeling around it, and we conclude that we're a bad person or we're unworthy or we're flawed in some way. And these are two really strong emotions that usually go hand in hand.

And we can sit in these feelings of guilt and shame without really unpacking them and looking at them and healing for years. For Simba, it's childhood to adulthood. Because he just wants a "Hakuna Matata" life.

And it's funny, because we usually we think of that song as being a real positive, right? Ah; carefree! No worries! But as I was watching it last Sunday, I thought there is some serious emotional bypassing happening. [Congregants laugh] *"I don't want to look at the pain. I don't want to look at the past. I'm just going to sing and I'm just going to eat. I'm just going to lay on the grass and have a problem-free life."*

That's emotional bypassing, because we're ignoring the underlying feelings versus looking at them and healing them. So, in New Thought -- or in Unity -- ways that that could sound would be, *"I'm just going to think positive. I'm just going to put it in God's hands. Everything's in divine order. It's all good."*

And I'm not saying sometimes that's not appropriate. Sometimes that is appropriate to say. But when we say it without really looking at the feelings behind it, that's where we start to get ourselves in trouble. It's when we skip the healing work, because it doesn't feel good. Because we just want to feel good. We want to "Hakuna Matata" it. But that's exactly what keeps us stuck in the past ... because we push it down. And so now we're tied to that past versus excavating it to create more room for forward motion.

And it's not until Nala shows up and she's like, *"Hey, you avoided your responsibility and your divine appointment, and we're starving over here. Everything's been destroyed over here."* And so this initiates Simba now to have to really face his past and his feelings around it: his feelings of guilt and shame; of the heaviness and the pain of losing his father and feeling responsible for it. Which has all kept him in denial of his true role in the world. He's been so stuck with this one mistake -- which, again, is not even his mistake.

So, if he had stopped and looked at it through his adult eyes earlier, maybe he would have healed faster. But he was so stuck there that he that he stuck in this idea of, *"I'm unworthy of the throne, of to be king, to lead."*

And yet, she's in his face saying, *"You're our only hope."* She says that to him. *"You're our only hope."* Where did we hear that before? In "Star Wars," right? So where Leia says to Obi-Wan at the very beginning of the film, *"Obi-Wan Kenobi, you're our only hope."* Here's Nala saying it to Simba: *"You're our only hope."*

See, both Simba and Obi-Wan Kenobi have been in hiding. They're hiding their gifts; they're hiding their potential; they're hiding from their true destiny to bring about the good in the world. And so, here's a great reminder to all of us: don't be in hiding. Don't hide your gifts. You're our hope -- each and every one of you -- our hope!

And then, of course, we have the wise monkey, Rafiki, who shows up. And he says, *"I'll show you your father."* And Simba is like, *"Wow!"* So Rafiki takes him to this pool of water, and Simba looks in and he sees his *own* reflection and he says, *"That's not my father."*

And Rafiki says, *"He lives in you."*

And then we hear Mufasa's voice from the heavens saying, *"Remember who you are."* Remember who you are!

See, sometimes we have to get in our own face -- or have a loving family or friend get in our face -- about the past. First, remember who we are; remember our divine identity. And then face the things -- those feelings -- that maybe we didn't do well; we feel uncomfortable about it. Maybe we would do it differently. But we look at it and we heal it so we can move forward. And the moving forward usually takes forgiveness. It usually takes forgiveness towards ourselves.

Here's from the Book of Mark, Chapter 11, Verse 25: *"And whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."*

Forgive if you have anything against anyone. I would translate that as: forgive, including you; especially you. Forgive yourself. Forgive because Divine Love/Loving Presence forgives. Love forgives.

Charles Fillmore, Unity co-founder, wrote this of forgiveness, on the screen here: *"Forgiveness really means giving up something."*

So, let's just pause the quote there. Forgiveness really means giving up something ... meaning give up beating yourself up over it. Give up beating yourself up over that past mistake, or the thing you said or the thing you didn't say; the going around and around and around. Give it up. Give it up!

And then the next part of this quote continues: *"It is through forgiveness that true spiritual healing is accomplished. Forgiveness removes the errors of the mind, and bodily harmony results."*

See, as Rafiki says to Simba, *"The past hurts, but you can either run from it or you can learn from it."* Run from it or learn from it.

And it's only when Simba stops bypassing his feelings, and is faced with accepting his past -- his past actions -- that he's able to forgive himself and realize that he is, in fact, a child of Mufasa: a child of God; a child of the universe. And that's when he heals!

And he heals not only himself, but the other animals and plants are also healed. His healing brings the entire kingdom back to life. It brings a healing for all.

Because our second point: the circle of life. Because **WE'RE ALL CONNECTED IN THIS CIRCLE OF LIFE.**

Here's another "Star Wars" overlay, right? The Force. We're all connected by this Force: this invisible energy. Again, with the circle of life, we're all connected.

So from Unity.org's website; it says, *"Whether we realize it or accept it, we are all part of the same universe, part of something larger and more significant ... Every thought we think, every action we take, every word we speak, affects us and the people around us."*

And there's another aspect of the circle of life. And that is that life continues on. In the movie, we start with that great famous opening scene of Simba being raised up over pride rock; celebrated as the next king. And then, at the end of the movie, again; it ends with Simba's child now being raised up over Pride Rock as the next queen of the kingdom. There's a continuation.

From the Book of Ecclesiastes ... Hmm. Can I say it this time? Ecclesiastes. [Congregants laugh] Ecclesiastes; I had it last time! [Slowly] Ecclesiastes. You all know it! [Congregants laugh] I'm going to go practice that in my mirror in my bedroom tonight, but in the meantime ...

Ecclesiastes. Why can't I say it? You know it; okay. It's famous; you've heard it. Are you ready for it? You can probably say it with me: *"For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven."* Right? That one. [Congregants laugh]

[Rev. Sandy from the congregation: "IH-KLEE-ZEE-AS-TEES."] Thank you, Rev. Sandy. [Congregants laugh] So it happens when you've been a minister a couple more years; you can say these things correctly.

But what a great message here about there's ... Everything has a season. There's a time for everything under heaven: a time to be born; a time to die; a time to plant; a time for it to be plucked. A time to kill; a time to heal; a time to break down; a time to build up. A time to weep; a time to laugh; a time to mourn; a time to dance. And it continues! Because there's a season to every aspect of life; of our lives.

And we want to maybe even try to stop change sometimes. But life changes! And change is constant. And that's the good news, everybody! Because change means growth. When you have change, you have growth. When we're resisting change, it means we're resisting growth. Because life -- new life, new vitality; that's all change and that's, then, growth.

So, in terms of the movie, the lesson really is: if you go into hiding and you try to stop life's progression -- life's change -- then life dies. Or you can step into life and purpose, and it thrives. The color comes back to it again.

And here's another idea, actually, that I had as I was watching this film that came to me. And that is: What kind of legacy do you want to leave? Because Scar, the evil uncle; he's so desperate for power and attention that he leaves a legacy of hunger and death and a gray landscape. And then we have Mufasa, who leaves this legacy of life; the idea of family. And not just his family, but the entire animal family. The importance of taking care of the other animals; the importance of making his part of the world beautiful ... not just for him, but for everybody. That's the legacy he leaves.

What kind of legacy do you want to leave? It's a great question that comes from this movie.

And then there's this other little spiritual insight here that popped up for me, which is this whole theme of wanting to jump right into being king. You know, Simba's this little cub; he's dancing around singing, *"I just can't wait to be king!"*

And he thinks he knows what being a king is all about -- the fun parts, right? He knows the fun part about just ruling and having a good time. He doesn't want to really take the time, the patience, the study, the observation, the hard work, the learning to actually be in that role of king.

And often -- maybe just me -- the same can be true for us. We want to do it the easy way. We want to just jump from lion cub to king. But that's not how it works! See, we can't just be sitting on our meditation pillow and visualize and affirm money falling into our laps, but not take the actions towards making that happen.

**WE HAVE TO TAKE ACTIONS TOWARDS OUR GOALS AND DREAMS IN ORDER FOR THEM TO GET MANIFEST.** We have to do the work! Otherwise, if we're not doing the work, it's called "magical thinking." You've got to do the work!

So, let me give you an example inspired by my workout a couple days ago. [Congregants laugh] We'll just make it real. This is how this applies to life. So, you know, we're in this workout. And we've got to do ... the coach is saying we're going to do five rounds, five exercises in a minute, ten reps for each one.

Now, we're in the second round, and I'm already thinking about round three and how I can make it easier on myself. [Congregants laugh] Like, maybe I only do eight reps instead of ten. Or maybe I go from 15 to ten pounds. Because it's hard, and it's uncomfortable. It didn't feel good.

And yet, my goal is to be strong; to be healthy. But in that moment, it's uncomfortable, and I want to kind of make it easier on myself. So, I have to stop myself. I stopped myself. And I said, "*Stacy, just focus on this rep, this exercise. Don't move forward to the next exercise, and especially don't start moving forward to the next round. Just be present and focus on what you need to do right now to get stronger right now. Acknowledge it's challenging, but also acknowledge it means a step closer to your goal of being stronger.*"

Because, see, manifesting is not just about the fun stuff: the vision boards, the cute affirmations, the meditating. But it's about using that life force within you -- the spiritual attribute of will -- to will yourself forward to take the actions that you need to demonstrate those goals and dreams.

It's our fifth Unity principle: It's not enough to know the other four that come before it, but you've got to put your feet to the sidewalk and walk it and do the work. Do the next rep, even if it's hard. Even if it's not fun. Send your resume. Make the call. Get the other doctor's opinion. Whatever you got to do ... but don't lie in the grass and sing "Hakuna Matata" ... [congregants laugh] ... and think suddenly you're going to become the king or queen of the kingdom.

Instead, we apply our faith, our spiritual knowledge -- along *with* prayers and meditation -- and take action. That's how it works.

And then the Jesus analogies. So interesting, I thought. Because we have here, Mufasa is the king: God. We have Simba, the prince: Jesus. And we have the pride -- the lion family -- who see Simba as the prince of hope, much like Jesus is usually reflected as humanity's hope.

We have Simba with a very close relationship with his father, just as Jesus talks about in the Bible having a close relationship with God. Then there's also Mufasa telling Simba that when he -- Mufasa -- dies, that he'll always be there in the stars to guide Simba. Again, this idea that God is always there to guide you.

And then Simba -- or rather, Mufasa -- is saying to Simba, "*Remember who you are. Remember who you are.*" And it reminds me of when, Jesus at the end of his life, and they're saying, "*You're saying that you're the son of God.*" And he said, "*I am the son of God.*" Claiming their divine identity. Claiming their divine identity.

And there are a lot of other moments within this movie that have some Christian analogies and symbolism. But I wanted to kind of look at this role: this idea of Jesus here. Because in Unity, we look at things metaphysically. So, Jesus -- human, the man from Nazareth. But also we see Jesus as that divine potential in each and every one of us. That you, too, have divine potential. That you, too, have the Christ light -- that Christ consciousness -- within you. That you also are created from that One Power, One Presence: God the Good. Each and every one of us. And that you are also part of the pride; part of the earth family. And so, what you do influences other people.

So, you can lean into ego and shame and take the "Hakuna Matata" easy way out of life. Or you can rise into your true identity as the heir to the kingdom: as the child of God that you are. As that expression of the Universe that you are. Because remember: what you do -- because you're connected to the All; you're connected to the Allness -- what you do affects others.

We think we're just one person; that we're not going to make a difference. And yet, we're all little balls of energy. We're all made up of energy. We have a frequency that we send out, whether we're aware of it or not. So, a butterfly's wings causes a stir in the air. A horned owl -- a horned owl in my neighborhood -- a bigger stir in the wind. An eagle even more so. They all make movement happen in the atmosphere.

And so, you, too, make movement happen in the atmosphere. You also make movement happen in the atmosphere.

See, Simba: when he thought he wasn't worthy or up to the task, the land died. But when he assumed his role and claimed his divine birthright, beauty returned to the land.

Don't play small. That's the first point we get here: don't play small.

And then we have Rafiki, again, that wise monkey. When he's telling Simba to look at the water to see the reflection. And Simba's like, *"I can't see it."* And Rafiki says, *"Look harder. You see he lives in you."*

See, if we look hard enough, we will see that God lives in each of us; that goodness lives in each of us. And because God Presence lives in each of us -- and because we're all connected by this invisible life energy -- every action affects others. Because you are part of the Allness. Every action. Every action!

So, like Simba, we can be selfish and think of ourselves and how we can benefit from an action or inaction, and kind of take that easy way out. Or we can think of the all -- like Simba does at the end -- and rise into the best version of ourselves: that Christ expression of ourselves; that divine expression of ourselves. And, in doing so, everyone benefits; everyone prospers. Because we're all connected. Because we're all connected! That is the connection of life. That is the circle of life.

So, as you move through your day, as you move through your week, asking yourself: *"How will this action not just affect me, but affect the whole?"*

And to be clear, there's times we need rest. But that's not selfish. Rest is not selfish. That's self-care so that you can go back to help the whole.

So, returning to this question: How does this action -- whatever the action is during your day ... How does that affect the whole of God's kingdom? How does this action (or inaction) have an effect on the Universe's beauty and all beings in it?

That's returning to our Christ nature. When we return to our Christ nature, that's returning to forgiving, loving -- the forgiving, loving part of ourselves that Jesus exemplified and that we see Simba do in this movie, as well. That we can step into that.

Here's a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. It says, *"Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the inter-related structure of reality."* We're all connected.

And so, friends, "The Lion King" reminds us: Remember who you are. It is time! Step into that Christ-like divine version of yourself. It's okay if you make a mistake. It's okay if you don't get it perfect. Forgive yourself and keep moving forward. Because what you do not only makes your life more beautiful, but it makes the world more beautiful. What you do can make the world more beautiful.

And that, my friends, are the lessons that we receive from this movie, "The Lion King."

Blessings, everyone!