

Heroes of the Faith: C.S. Lewis

By Chris Grace

[Musical Introduction]

"Father of Lights" by John Barnett. "Holy Love" by Andy Park.

Worship Leader:

Father God, we thank you for this day. I pray that You were glorified in our song. And I pray that You would just speak to us, speak to our hearts, Father. And just- just tell us what to do, Father. And we just give You glory for, um, sustaining us thus far uh. Finals are coming up and our papers are due. And thank You so much for, um, keeping us sane. We praise You Father, Amen.

Announcer:

Thanks guys for leading worship. Good morning, and welcome to our last Heroes of the Faith Chapel. I'm guessing by the numbers that most of you have missed a lot of chapels so are trying to make 'em all up. A couple announcements, um. Celebrate the Son tickets are still on sale in Metzger for this Friday and Saturday night. If you have never been, go. That is a great traditional and amazing time to sit and just worship the King. Um, I think that's really it on announcements. So with that, I'm going to introduce your speaker. He is a distinguished professor of the psychology program. He, uh, has spoken both by himself and with his wife at different Torrey conferences and chapels. Um, he was voted to the A-League all-star team for football, intramural football. Um. And he's just all around a good guy. So with that, he'll be speaking on C.S. Lewis. Please welcome with me, Dr. Grace.

Chris Grace:

Thanks, Jason. Is this (microphone noises). It's real fun to be here, and I know some of you may not necessarily feel the same way with finals week coming up, and I hope to keep you awake. And I realize this is a real tough time for you all, but too bad, we've all gone through it before. And you'll survive. You really will. This is a very interesting topic for me and one that I felt very excited to talk about and that is Heroes of the Faith. And by the time Jason got to me, most of the heroes had been picked. So guys like David and Paul and all the others. And so I had thought that well one of the persons that- one who probably exemplified a lot of different qualities that I'll talk about today, who would be considered a contemporary, someone who was alive less than 50 years ago, and even actually died in 1963, was C.S. Lewis. And so I thought of him immediately. And I'll tell you why.

Well, when you think about heroes, if you haven't been to these Thursday chapels before, kind of the topic has been about heroes of the faith. And when you think about a hero, there are lots of things that might come to mind. I mean, we have people who have-; in fact, the definition of what a hero is is someone who has outstanding qualities and great achievements. And there are a lot of people with wonderful qualities and even great achievements. In our society today it seems like there's kind of a lack of heroes though. We even point to some who do well in sports. Mark McGuire is a hero for many people. My son and even my daughter knows the name Mark McGuire. Now, is that a hero? Has he done anything that deserves someone's adulation or someone's worship? Well, probably not. Someone few years from now is going to probably come around and beat his record.

But what is a hero and why are there so few? Does it seem like you've heard this story before that we don't have as many heroes as we've had? People used to think that presidents would be heroes and people used to hold presidents-. I don't think presidents today are heroes. At least this president today probably isn't a hero for many people. So what is a hero? A hero is someone who is greatly regarded for his achievements and for his qualities, qualities like bravery and valor and qualities like courage.

We know a lot of people like this, people that you might have on your list. It's probably doubtful that it's a sports hero, though many of our younger generation and especially kids growing up, would think of those as heroes. Some of you might even have heroes like- that are more contemporary, like maybe Billy Graham. You might think of someone who has earned the respect of people all over the world. He's earned the year of presidents. Billy Graham is rightly a hero. He's committed to the message of the Gospel, and he preaches that without fail. Other heroes, maybe Mother Teresa is a hero, someone who has a commitment and self-sacrificial love for people. She can fall in almost anybody's list of being a hero.

I want to talk, though, about someone who, for me personally, comes to mind close to top of the list and that is C.S. Lewis. You probably know a lot about C.S. Lewis, who he is. I'll give you just some background. His name is Clive Staples. I don't know if you knew this, but when he was five years old, I think he was very intelligent because he decided he didn't want to be either called- he didn't want to be called either Clive or Staples, which is probably a smart thing for a kid. He decided he wanted to be called Jacksy. I don't know if you knew that or not. So his

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friends called him Jack. And so, from five years of age, he refused to answer it- anything but Jack. And that's C.S. Lewis.

Well Jack had a very interesting life. Today, you know C.S. Lewis for a number of reasons. He- he was born-, I don't know if you knew this or if you've been keeping up with events in the world. But he was born exactly a hundred years ago last week or a couple of weeks ago. And he made the cover of the L.A. Times and Time magazine a couple of- I don't know how long ago that was. He was on USA Today. He's very well known. And again, he would have been one hundred years of age just this past week. He also, if you don't know anything about him, C.S. Lewis was a professor at Cambridge and at Oxford. He's a prolific writer, author, apologist, poet. And he has quite a number of amazing books that are out there. He died on the exact same day as who else that we know of? Yeah it was J- it was JFK, the day JF- John F. Kennedy was shot and killed is the same day C.S. Lewis died.

All of these kind of point to some of a little bit about who Lewis is, but I'm sure many of you know him by some of his other achievements. He's well-known by the books he's read. Let me see your hands if this particular book or this area is something that you've enjoyed or have read. Here's some of the reasons why he's well known. One, because he's written books from a lot of different genres, fiction and nonfiction. Raise your hand at your favorite. How many of you love the Chronicles of Narnia or have ever read it? And all of those within- The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, and the Prince Caspian, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, and the Silver Chair, the Magician's Nephew.

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You know, I was so disappointed when I finally read *The Chronicles*, not because I was disappointed with them, but because I never had these as a kid. I was raised in a non-Christian home and C.S. Lewis was no one. *The Chronicles*, I'd never heard of. I was an adult when I read these. And maybe in some ways I'm kind of glad because I had maybe new insights. But anyway so you- many of you liked it? How about his fiction and fantasy, the space trilogy like *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength* and *Out of the Silent Planet*? How many like other fiction like *The Screwtape Letters* or maybe *the Great Divorce*? Any of you all?

He's had other books on topics and issues. Um an- anybody have a favorite offhand that they can think of? Maybe *the Problem of Pain*? If I mentioned one or if you want- if you know of one that you just love, go ahead and shout it out. That's fine. Or *the Joyful Christian*? What are some others on topics? *Miracles*. *A Grief Observed*. And maybe you don't-. What was that? Oh *Mere Christianity*. He's written books on apologetics like *Mere Christianity* or *the Four Loves* or- or *the Abolition of Man* or *Pilgrim's Regress*. All of these are things-. And maybe you've just seen the movie *Shadowlands* and that's a good one too. If you haven't- if you don't read, that's fine. *Shadowlands*.

In fact, he's so well known that not only did he make the cover of, like I said, the *L.A. Times* and the *USA Today* and- they have a conference in his name every three years. Did you know that? *The C.S. Lewis Institute*? I was at Cambridge and Oxford in 94 and- though I was studying science, that was in his name - the *C.S. Lewis Institute*. And just this summer, in celebration of his- what would have been the centennial year of his birth, there was the 1998 *C.S. Lewis Institute*. There's fifteen thousand people on that mailing list. He's had a movie made about his

life. But we all know this, having a movie made about his life is a major accomplishment. All of his books are major- major accomplishment. But this doesn't a hero make, does it?

There are probably more criteria, just like there are more criteria for me. First, as far as what a hero is for me, it doesn't matter if he's written a lot of books or had a movie made about him or her. I think what's important are a couple of other qualities and some criteria. Why do I believe that C.S. Lewis and- or maybe why is he a hero? I'll give you kind of maybe just three quick reasons. First of all, I'll tell you something about myself. I absolutely love to read. Now, I know that might not sound very appealing to you at this moment because for you, reading is a job and a chore. And I, frankly, I was the same. In college, reading was like, oh gosh, another textbook, another book to read. And every once in a while, I'd probably read The Denver Post or I might even read the Rocky Mountain News or something when I was in college. And and maybe I might even be able to pick up a little book here or there. But for the most part, for those four years in my undergraduate work, I- reading was a job and I didn't really necessarily like it.

However, I've maintained- even before then, I used to read newspapers and magazines and- and little books that are around the house. But especially since I've gotten out of graduate school, I'm a voracious reader. I absolutely love it. I'll just pick up a book, like I picked up Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov, and just went through them so quickly this summer. It was- it-, for me, those things are just fun to do. And maybe at some point when you have more time, those will be of interest to you. But because I'm a reader and because C.S. Lewis-, or because I like to read and because C.S. Lewis is such a great writer, he naturally meets my first criteria of a hero; someone who can write and who writes very well.

Now, if this doesn't necessarily appeal to you, one of the ways he can maybe be thought of as your hero would be his books make great- great Christmas gifts. So you haven't bought anything yet, you can buy all kinds of things. I mean, if- if you know someone who, maybe your mother, is a fan; buy her a book called Jack, it's by George um. What is his name? Maybe I have it written down. Oh, George Sayer. It's a- it's a book about his life. She'd love it or he'd love it. If your father has maybe The Chronicles laying around, buy him in a hardback cover.

If you're wondering about Christmas gifts, maybe if you have a young nephew, do what I did. He had no exposure whatsoever in his home to readers like this. So I bought him The Chronicles of Narnia. That would be a great little gift for someone. If you want another perfect practical gift for Christmas, maybe for someone who- who reads crud like Goose Bumps, then give him maybe Space Trilogy or Chronicles. It's a perfect gift. If someone doesn't read books, buy him Shadowlands for that matter. Nonetheless, he has a lot of different areas in which he is well-known for and has written some other things.

For me, there's another reason besides that he's just a prolific writer. And that is Lewis has captured something for me that I find inherently interesting. As a psychologist, I love people. I love watching them. I love hanging out and- where they are at. I was just at the airport the other day meeting my brother there, who- he was flying to Australia with his new wife and their little baby. We had a few minutes. But that kind of thing just- I love it. I love sitting there in airports watching people. Do you like doing that as well? I know you all do. It's it's- we just find that

intriguing. It's fun to- to watch why they do what they do. I love to be entertained and people seem to be the focal point of that.

Kids, when you watch them; yesterday I had dinner and this little boy came and joined us, some friends of ours, and just watching how he responded as a 1 year old to French fries, and just chewing ah so ah he's so-. I love that kind of stuff. People do weird, funny things at times when you watch them. They intrigue us and they-. So as a psychologist, I went into the right field because that's the focus of study.

So based on that criteria, does C.S. Lewis give me anything? And the answer is he probably knows more about humans than any psychologist I know. And that's common for all- for many of you that are in the area of literature. Writers like him have, for some reason, wonderful insights into people into human. And when writers capture the soul, the core of who we are, and can entertain me at the same time, they've met something for me. And that's why C.S. Lewis is on my list. He can do things like this. He understands human functioning.

Listen to the- what he talks about with fear and guilt. How many of you all have read the Space Trilogy? Did- Perelandra, Out of the Silent Planet, and That Hideous Strength? It's a book on-; if you haven't done it, buy that book for yourself for Christmas, and then give it to your mom to give to you. The Space Trilogy, those three books, have some amazing insights into what people are like.

Listen to this. When I think about human emotions, when I think about, for instance, fear or guilt, I think about Christ. And I wonder really sometimes if He ever truly experienced those emotions. Hanging on the cross, certainly He experienced guilt. Certainly He understood fear. You could almost say that maybe when He was in the garden, He experienced fear. But fear is an emotion, is a very interesting one. Here's what C.S. Lewis has to say about it. By the way, as I- as I've kind of mentioned, I just don't see Jesus as being filled with fear. He doesn't seem to me to be scared of things or worried about them or anxious. Instead, whenever anybody was fearful, He would almost always say, don't fear, don't anxiously look about you.

Lewis talked about this in his book. Well, a couple of different ones, in *Malacandra* and his travels to that planet in *Out of the Silent Planet*. Here's what he said. In *Out of the Silent Planet*, the first part of- the first part of his pace- Space Trilogy, the central character is named Ransom. Now Ransom, Ransom has been forced to travel to this new planet, *Malacandra*, or what we now know as Mars. He was forced there because the humans, the bent ones, as humans are called, were thought that they needed to have a sacrifice for the- the Oyarsa, or the angel that was in charge of Mars. And so these scientists took and captured Ransom on Earth, brought him with them to Mars to give him as a sacrifice to this angel that ran the planet.

These men also were most interested, one of them, in the scientific pursuit of kind of the idea that we should go off and populate other planets and continue the human race. The other one was mostly motivated by greed and getting blood, what they called sun blood, which was the gold on the planet. So anyway, they take Ransom and they give him to this person. However, before he gets there, Ransom figures out everything and he escapes. And so he's now, as soon as they land

on this new planet, Ransom, the hero of the Space Trilogy if you want, escapes. He goes off onto this new planet. And there he learns the language because he befriends some of the animals or if you want, the people animal-like things that live there. And he learns their language.

Well, it comes to the point where now all three humans are on this planet and they're all brought now together later on after he's been there and learned the language, they're brought to Oyarsa, the I guess the head angel, if you want, of this planet. And he says a very interesting thing. And remember, this is C.S. Lewis' take on what fear is like. But he says this, the head angel of Malacandra, Oyarsa, ultimately confronted all three of the bent ones, that is people who have sinned, and that would be all humans, like Ransom, Weston the evil scientist or the other guy Devine the greedy gold digger.

Oyarsa had little contact with individuals from Thulcandra, Earth, the Silent Planet, since Satan was restricted to the lordship of Earth alone. Because of that it's called the s- this earth is called the Silent Planet. All the other, if you want, planets in C.S. Lewis' trilogy talk to each other. And this one, it's known as the Silent Planet. When finally Oyarsa was able to meet a human, he recognized that they were set apart from all other creatures that he knew because of their bentness, because of sin. And you know what was most bent about them? is because of their experience of fear. Do you find that interesting?

The thing that most bent them in his eyes was because he thought we were wounded in our brains and we were wounded because we were filled with fear. Isn't that interesting? I find that amazing. And it brings us right back. Here's what he said. Here's Oyarsa saying, it is the bent

one, Satan, the lord of your world who wastes your life and befouls you with running around from what you know and running away from ultimately will- ultimately overtake you in the end. And that is death. If you were the subjects of Maleldil, subjects of God, you would have peace. That's an amazing insight. It's- it's fascinating.

He also gets insights for me into things like also the idea of guilt. If you've read Screwtape Letters, which I-, if you want a fun book, pick up Screwtape Letters. But in this, Lewis gives another example of his insights into humans by showing what our guilt is like. How many of you all experience guilt at times? And know what that's like and you hate maybe because of this guilt. We know it so well. It does so many things. And Screwtape, this book was written as a fantasy in which the senior devil Screwtape was teaching his little nephew, the junior devil Wormwood, all kinds of ways in which to get at humans. How many have read The Screwtape Letters? Ah.

And what he does is he says, I want you to get- capture men's souls. That's your goal. And here's one way you can do it. How would you make guilt part of that process? Here's what Screwtape said. He tells- and this gives us great insight into how guilt works. And because of this, gosh, it gives us insight into what we are like. He tells Wormwood, his junior devil, that it serves Satan very well to get people to experience guilt without turning this guilt into what? It serves Satan very well if he gets you to keep your guilt and can- prevent it from turning into what? What should guilt lead us to do? What should be the function of guilt?

Repentance, right? But it serves Satan when he keeps it from going from guilt to repentance. Listen to this. If such a feeling-. This is, remember, this is Screwtape. He's a devil. All right? If such a feeling is allowed to live, that is the feeling of guilt, but not allowed to become irresistible and flourish into real repentance; it has one invaluable tendency. It increases the patient's, the human's, reluctance to think about God. All humans at nearly all times have some such reluctance. That is to think about God. We don't always necessarily want to, especially when we're guilty. But when thinking of Him involves facing an intensive- intensifying a whole vague cloud of half-conscious guilt, this reluctance is increased tenfold. Do you agree? When you feel most guilty don't you agree that that's the last thing you kind of want to do?

He says here, they hate every idea that suggests Him, just as men in financial embarrassment hate the very sight of a handbook. I mean of a bankbook. Sorry. This diabolical uses of guilt and consequently the need for repentance is an amazing thought. We know that sin, fear, guilt all came, and were ended when Christ came. He epitomized, I think, the antithesis of fear. He epitomized what peace was. He understood what it meant to be one with the Lord. He was never, never fearful. And for me, Lewis has helped me in this process, when I read his books, to think about my guilt, to think about my fear and how it keeps me from God. And that is a hero for me, someone who can make me think about my processes and your processes and my kids' thoughts on fear and guilt and then bring me closer to God. That's a hero. He does that.

There's a third reason why I believe Lewis is a hero. Like you, I want to be closer to God. I want to know Him. I want to be drawn into Him. I want to think about Him and praise Him. And I want to be more clear in how I think about Him. And Lewis does that for me. How does he do it?

He helps me to envision weird or abstract concepts like Heaven, like Hell, like sin. And he does this by the way he writes.

You see, when I read something like you're reading probably last night and today, textbooks, those are words. Words are important. Words will help you pass an exam. But words, when they're just written down, really don't have much bearing for us. When Jesus spoke, He didn't speak necessarily in words. He didn't write this out and say, here, here go read this. What did He do? How did He speak to us? What was Jesus' favorite way of talking to people? It was by stories! Why did He tell us in stories? Why did He tell us parables? Because He knew exactly what we were like. We're humans. What do we remember most? We remember stories. I don't remember the words to the prodigal son, but I remember the story. I know exactly- I have an image of it.

His use of imagery, Christ's use of imagery is what C.S. Lewis has mastered. He is a master at giving us pictures and ideas of what things are like that are hard to grasp. When I think of the garden-, what do you think of the Garden of Eden? What do you think about it? I sometimes think about the words, maybe yeah okay He made the garden and yeah, they were there and they bit from a tree, and uhh they messed up. But what Lewis has done for me is he's made me picture, and this is the key point, he's made me picture these weird, or maybe not weird, but abstract concepts that are hard to put into narrative; and he's given a picture for them. This is important because I know the way our memories work and how good we are at remembering stories and impressions. And he's been a master of this.

And it's through this that is the key point for me, and that is through his use of imagery, he brings me back and makes me want to reread, for instance, the Genesis story. In Perelandra, he talks about what the Garden of Eden is like, because when Ransom leaves Mars, the old planet, he gets called back to the new one, which is Venus or Perelandra. And it's kind of like the garden would have been before sin came. And I don't know about you, but I think of Heaven that way, and it's going to be like the garden. But Heaven for me is a hard concept sometimes. Yeah I'll be in heaven. I'll be with God. It'll be fun, we'll dance around, hang out and talk to people, whatever. But when someone can make me see it clearly or what was like before sin, they're a hero for me.

Listen to this. Here's- here's what he says about what the garden was like. Now, remember, this is a story. It's kind of like an allegory. It's kind of like what was happening in- before. And it's just a different picture. Now, he had just landed on a different planet. It was a planet in which there was no sin. It was a planet in which this person Ransom was to- to learn about but to protect, if you want, kind of like the Eve from sinning or helping her.

But anyway, now it says here, he just landed. Now he had come to a part of the wood where great globes of yellow fruit hung from the trees. Think of the imagery and this should maybe help you, at least it's helped me, think about what the Garden of Eden was like and what Heaven will be like. -the yellow fruit-, globes of yellow fruit hung from the trees -- clustered as toy-balloons are clustered on the back of the balloon-man and about the same size. He picked one of them and turned it over and over. The rind was smooth and firm and seemed impossible to tear open. Then by accident one of his fingers punctured it and went through a coldness. After a

moment's hesitation he put the little aperture to his lips. He had meant to extract the smallest, experimental sip, but the first taste put his caution all to flight. It was, of course, a taste, just as his thirst and hunger had been thirst and hunger.

But then it was so different from every other taste that it seemed mere pedantry to call it a taste at all. It was like the discovery of a totally new genus of pleasures, something unheard of among men, out of all reckoning, beyond all covenant. For one draught of- of this on earth wars would be fought and nations betrayed. It could not be classified. He could never tell us, when he came back to the world of men, Ransom that is, whether it was sharp or sweet, savory or voluptuous, creamy or piercing. "Not like that" he would say. And that was all he could ever say to such inquiries. As he left the empty gourd fall from his hand and was about to pluck a second one, it came into his head that he was now neither hungry nor thirsty. And yet to repeat a pleasure so intense and almost so spiritual seemed an obvious thing to do.

His reason, or what we commonly take to be reason in our own world, was all in favor of tasting this miracle again; the childlike innocence of fruit, the labors he had undergone, the uncertainty the future, all seemed to commend the action. Yet something seemed opposed to this "reason." It is difficult to suppose that this opposition came from desire, for what desire would turn from so much deliciousness? But for whatever cause, it appeared to him better not to taste again. Perhaps the experience had been so complete that repetition would be a vulgarity -- like asking to hear the same symphony twice in a day.

He goes on later and says he is walking on the planet, and he sees these kind of tree-like objects and they have bubbles hanging from them and they kind of shimmer like a big bubble wood. And what does he do? He says he walks through one of them, and it just cascades and overflows him with coldness because it's a warm planet and with tastes of-. When I think about what the garden was like, that's what it's going to be like. It's going to be a taste of something that is so amazing and so pure and so different that we'll just stop from being hungry and thirsty for that moment.

When someone in my mind is a hero, it's when they can bring together and draw me back and make me want, after I read them, to go back to my love, to my Lord and read His word. And so when I reread these things, you know what I do, I go back and I reread it with new eyes, the Genesis account. And you can almost see it in there. It's almost as if you can see now what it was like before sin came. That's a hero to me.

When someone could bring in my love for people, and what humans are like, for at least the love of watching them, can tell me what people are like and cut directly to the core of my being. And when someone can then entertain, as I read, and at the same time, bring me closer to God, they're a hero. Maybe you've read something about C.S. Lewis yourself and you don't like it. Let me suggest; he's written a lot of different genres. Find something else. If you've picked up Mere Christianity like ugh, find another book. If you've picked up Chronicles and like yeah, that's kids' stuff, pick up the Space Trilogy because you're bound to find something that you will like.

I'll leave you with this quote. It's from his book called Weight of Glory. And I believe this summarizes a lot about what he has to say. This is also on his Web page. By the way, he has a

Web page; and it's a quote right there from the Weight of Glory. "I believe in Christianity-", this is C.S. Lewis, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." By his Christianity, C.S. Lewis saw everything. And thankfully he wrote much- much of this down, and much of these visions that he had, he put on paper. He lived his life, a faithful life. God blessed his writings. And he is someone, I think, who can be rightly admired as a hero, one who could be greatly regarded for his achievements.

Thanks for your time. Let me pray for us. Father, as the students get ready for finals week, I just pray that You continue to help them. Many of them stayed up late. Many of them are asleep. Many of them are needing rest and strength. Many of them also just need encouragement. May they find that this break. May they finish their semester strong. And Lord, may You be with them. Also, Father, thank You for the heroes that we have, the men and the women who have written great works, who draw us closer to You, who give us insight into ourselves and all of us are desiring of that. I pray for these students today that You go before them. Thank You for Your word and Your blessing, and for Your desire to know us as we desire to know You. For this time, we thank You. In Christ's name. Amen.