

## From Myth to Faith

When I learned to read, my favorite subject was fairy tales along with Greek and Roman mythology. The enchanting fantasy cast me into a world outside of my own. Then, in high school and college I discovered the writings of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis who wrote of courageous hobbits and lions who were willing to give their lives for others. Since then, my reading interest has shifted to other fiction and nonfiction subjects.

In February, I attended a book presentation and signing. This author is a man of letters, Martin Shaw, who holds a PhD in Myths and is a born-again Christian. He believes that legends and storytelling are important to reaching maturity in our faith journey. He dramatically retold an age-old story of a young man named “No Song” whose great ambition was to sing for people even though he had a terrible singing voice. Deciding he didn’t fit in with the villagers, he lived on the outskirts near the forest.

A fox (who smokes cigarettes according to Shaw) approaches “No Song” and gets a strong whiff of the aromatic stew “No Song” is cooking. The fox proposes a deal. In exchange for all of “No Song’s” stew, the fox will give him the gift of an enchanting voice. The swap takes place, and “No Song” is able to sing a “Sacred Song”—but this gift is only to be used for special occasions such as weddings, Baptisms, funerals, and the like.

“No Song” returns to the village with the new name of “Beautiful Song” and uses his gift to serve the community. However, he ultimately begins to use it not only at Sacred occasions (as he had promised the fox) but also for his own selfish purposes. One day while “Beautiful Song” is sleeping, the fox returns and takes back the gift of beautiful singing.

The moral of this story was easy for me to understand. I should be using my gifts with the purpose of serving others, and if not, the gifts might be lost. An interesting thought I had when Shaw finished his story is that the fox could have been God, or the devil, or even me—a weakened human being.

Shaw expressed a view of the Gospels which I had never heard. He said that the Gospels read like a myth: A man (Jesus) is born a fugitive; He dies an outlaw; and then He comes back in glory to the astonishment of all! Now that sounds like fantasy! The difference is that it is a true story—not a myth—but the wonderful, real-life story of Jesus.

Sometimes, when I think of my past fascination with fantasy and myths, I feel a little foolish. However, after hearing Shaw’s presentation I have a better understanding of why these stories are helpful in teaching us about life’s choices. I know, more than ever, that the Gospels, as fantastical as they seem, are the ultimate, real-life story. One point that Shaw did not address that evening is that faith is needed to believe in the Gospels. My gift of faith makes this story believable for me and that makes all the difference.

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