

Thought for the Day 24th June - John Reed

Read 1 Peter 5:6-11

Having grown up in Kenya, I am familiar with many stories about the dangers of wild animals. Although statistically the most dangerous animal in Africa is either the mosquito (if you count insects as animals) or the hippopotamus (if you don't), it is the "king of the jungle", the lion, that captures the public imagination.

I grew up on the legend of the "man-eaters of Tsavo", a pair of rogue man-eating lions that were responsible for the deaths of a number of construction workers on the Kenya-Uganda railway between March and December 1898.

I also remember my Uncle Neil (my father's twin brother) telling us the story of how he was camping out in the bush when he heard a lion's roar getting closer and closer to his camp during the night, until eventually a huge paw slashed through the side of his tent – he wasn't sure whether it was his terrified scream or his shotgun going off that scared it away in the end!

Every so often one hears yet another story about locals, hunters, or tourists being attacked by lions. Which brings me to this news story I came across from last week, which shows some footage of tourists in a vehicle in the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania who thought it was a good idea not only to have the window open as the lion got up close to them, but to reach out and try to pat it!¹ Fortunately, they survived the experience. Others have not been so lucky.

Lions may look cute and cuddly, but they are far more dangerous than your pet cat at home. They are much bigger for a start. They have huge claws and teeth. And they are by nature hunters, and their only interest in you is not as a photo opportunity, but as a meal. Rather than try to pat them, your best bet is to make sure you keep them at a safe distance.

Peter likens the devil to a lion – a predatory creature prowling around plotting to devour you. Rather than play with him, he says we should be "sober-minded," "watchful," and resist him.

I suspect we can all think of times when perhaps we've strayed too close, or stuck out our hand, and risked being bitten. Maybe you actually have been bitten. The good news is that Jesus not only offers to rescue us from the lion's mouth (remember Daniel's experience?), but to heal and restore us, no matter how far we've fallen. Nonetheless, he urges us not to take the dangers lightly, not to put ourselves in danger, but to be careful and constantly on the alert to protect ourselves spiritually.

¹ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tourist-pets-lion-africa_n_5ee8205dc5b6ddc7bdcaaec6?ri18n=true