

## Tale from the Garden!

Tuesday 1st February marks the start of the Year of the Tiger – one of the 12 animal signs of the lunar calendar-based Chinese zodiac. The Chinese New Year is traditionally a time for setting off fireworks, hanging red banners, family reunions & exchanging gifts of alcohol, tea, fruits & sweets.

In 2022, though, it's an opportunity to celebrate these magnificent creatures, of which there are only an estimated 3,900 left in the wild.

- Sovereign Stripes – Tigers have unique stripes that are found on their skin as well as on their fur. The four stripes on their forehead are said to resemble the Chinese symbol for king – 'wang' – which is seen as a symbol of protection & is linked to the god of wealth.
- Fearsome Facts – Did you know ... Tiger cubs are born blind & use scent to help find their siblings & mother in the den. Tigers can swim for 18 miles & sprint short distances at speeds of up to 40mph. A group of tigers is called an ambush or a streak. Tigers don't often roar, but they do grunt, growl, moan, snarl, chuff, hiss & gasp to communicate!
- Creature Comfort – Judith Kerr's classic children's book, 'The Tiger Who Came to Tea', was written as a bedtime story for her 3-year-old daughter after a trip to the zoo. Published in 1968, it tells the tale of a hungry tiger who invites himself to tea, & eats & drinks everything in Sophie's house!

In the animated movie Ice Age, when saber-tooth tigers attack a tribe of nomads, a mother and her baby attempt to outrun the man-eating beasts but are cornered at a raging waterfall. The little boy is discovered by a woolly mammoth named Manfred, a sloth name Sid, and a saber-tooth tiger named Diego. These three unlikely companions unite on a common mission to return the baby to his father.

As the trio trek through a mountainous terrain of ice and snow carrying the baby, at one point the mammoth, sloth, and tiger realize they're on an erupting volcano. The heat of the lava melts the glacier bridges atop the ice fields, separating Diego from the others. Isolated on a quickly melting island of ice, Diego jumps to reach the others, but falls short. Dangling from the edge of the ice field, his grip falters, and he falls. Manfred, unwilling to let Diego perish, leaps into the chasm after him and tosses the tiger upwards to safety. Diego, realizing the danger involved in the rescue, is moved by Manfred's compassion, courage, and sacrifice.

"Why did you do that?" he asks. "You could have died trying to save me."

Humbly, the mammoth responds, "That's what you do when you're part of a herd. You look after each other." Amazed at the convergence of circumstances that has brought these three together, Sid muses aloud. "I don't know about you guys, but we are one strange herd."

One strange herd! Don't you feel like that's a great description of the church sometimes? A mix of people with different personalities, different backgrounds, different ideas sometimes, who might never hang out together - except for the one thing that we have in common: we love Jesus. And in one way or another, we have been transformed by His amazing love and mercy. Because of that, we hang out together. But even more than that, as the film illustrates in a cute way, as a "herd" of Christ followers, we look after each other - even if we might look a little strange at times.

When the church is working right, it becomes a place where our old nature and our old instincts begin to pass away, and we start thinking completely differently about the people around us. People who we might never have associated with before, or people who we never would have thought we would befriend, suddenly become our brothers and sisters. And we find ourselves wanting to bring in more and more of those who might not belong anywhere else - we find a place for them. And our herd, our community, becomes a place of love and service; a place where people experience the transforming power of Jesus as work in their lives.

So, who was Jesus? If you had to describe His roles and 'jobs', what do you think you might say? There are a lot of wonderful, amazing, and miraculous things that He did while He lived on Earth. As far as jobs go, we know He was a carpenter. He worked with a lot of fishermen disciples. He also did amazing healing miracles, so in a way He was sort of like a doctor, too. And then there are some special ways that Jesus described Himself. He is the light of the world; He is the bread of life; He is the Good Shepherd; He is living water...

There's another special and important title that Jesus has: He is the king! Now, this was somewhat confusing to some people around Him. Some of Christ's followers wanted Him to be ruler of an Earthly kingdom & hoped that He would be king over the political powers of the time. When He was arrested and questioned before His crucifixion, Pilate (the governor) asked Him if He was the King of the Jews. That became the accusation made against Him that got Him killed. People made fun of Jesus and gave Him a crown made of thorns to mock Him for saying that He was king. When they put Him on the cross, they said His 'crime' was being king of the Jews.

But they didn't know the whole story, and they missed out on something very important. Jesus did not come to rule over people on Earth. He was not trying to overthrow political power. Jesus was the king of the people in a spiritual sense. He was, & is, King of all things. He is God, reigning in Heaven. He wants to rule and reign in our hearts, too. He is the victorious conqueror of sin and death. In all of the things that Jesus did and does for us, He is master and king. He is not a tyrant, but a loving king who sacrificed His life to save ours. Jesus came to be king, but He did so by service and sacrifice. He came to free us from the powers of sin and death. He continues to love us, and He wants us to honour and serve Him as we recognize His authority. We show that we love and respect Him when we live lives of devotion to God. We can pray, read our Bibles, go to church, and do positive things. But all of that "doing" is not as important as putting Jesus first in our lives. We can recognize His kingship when we truly love Him and love others.

And so to the garden... what better plant to focus on this week than the Tiger Lily!



The tiger lily plant is the generic name for *Lilium lancifolium* (L. tigrinum). It is a species of lily that is indigenous to parts of Asia such as China, Japan, Korea. You can also find it in many parts of eastern North America, where it has developed naturally. It is one of the most popular species of lilies. It is considered a classic garden flower, an "oldie, but a goodie. Did you know that the lily flower was discovered more than 2,400 years ago? Historically, lilies hold a reputation for being majestic flowers in ancient Greek mythology, where it is believed that Zeus' wife Hera, is the creator of lily flowers. In fact, it was the drops of her milk that fell to the ground (after refusing to feed Hercules), which were believed to be the seed to growing lilies!

#### About The Flower

The Tiger Lily, bears large, fiery orange flowers covered by spots. Tiger lilies come in different variations of orange hues which makes it so vivacious! The name 'tiger' probably refers to the spots on the petals. The tiger lily can grow up to 3 inches across and has a strong, sweet & distinctly lily scent.

#### Facts

- The Tiger Lily was first described by the famous Swedish botanist Carl von Linne (Linnaeus) in 1753.
- It might interest you to know that the flower bud is edible. Dried Tiger Lily buds can often be found in Asian markets. Look for soft buds and store well in a cool, dry place. Tiger Lily buds must be soaked in warm water for about 30 minutes to soften them before adding them to the dishes. The tough stem attached to them should be removed. Besides adding to Chinese dishes, they can enhance the flavour of egg dishes and salads. The bulbs of its plants are boiled and eaten in some countries, especially China. They taste like potatoes!
- Although it is safe for humans to consume these flowers, tiger lilies are toxic to cats and can cause vomiting, kidney failure, and even death!
- There is a superstition that sniffing the tiger lily will give your freckles!
- Tiger lilies represent wealth and prosperity. Tiger lily is also a symbol of protection against harm. For those who believe in this superstition, growing this plant in their homes and surroundings is a way to remove evil spells, ghosts and all kinds of evil.
- There is an old legend from Asia about the Tiger Lily. A Korean hermit helped a wounded tiger by removing an arrow from its body. The tiger asked the hermit to use his powers to perpetuate their friendship after his death. The hermit agreed and when the tiger died, his body became a tiger lily. Eventually the hermit drowned and his body was washed away. The Tiger Lily spread everywhere searching for its friend.

This majestic flower is a fitting reminder that Jesus is present with us, each & every day, in all things. He brings us riches beyond compare, he is our protector at all times, our friend through the light & the dark - Jesus is the king!