

Christmas at the Movies

Week 1 - Hope

You may have heard it already, but this will be my first “Merry Christmas” of the season, so “Merry Christmas” everyone. And with that we begin our last message series of the year called “Christmas at the Movies.” For the next five weeks we will be looking at different Christmas movies and how they connect to the various themes of Advent. And it’s only appropriate that we start with the old, the very old, classic “It’s a Wonderful Life.”

However, before we do I need to make a confession. When I first read our Christmas message theme, I was less than thrilled. I don’t mean to be Scrooge, but apart from one of the movies on our list, I’m not a real fan. It’s not that I dislike those other movies, it’s just for me, they were way over consumed. You see, in my family, between my dad, mom and sister, we were going to see “It’s A Wonderful Life” every Christmas. And most years, more than once. So, when I had kids I vowed, I wouldn’t do that to them. Instead, we watched “A Christmas Story”. You know, Ralphie and his Red Ryder BB gun. Yeah, that one. So, what did we do? We watched it until no one wanted to watch it anymore. And now that our kids are grown and married, we have new Christmas classics. But not just one, three of them, “Hot Rod”, “Nacho Libre”, and “Kung Pow! Enter the Fist.” And pretty much any movie that my boys know will irritate their mom just a little bit. And so every season, my wife has a new hope and prayer. That is, that one day, maybe one day, they’ll get tired of those movies as well. I don’t know why I felt the need to explain all that, but I do feel better. And I’m sure the dads are out there thinking, good choice of movies. But the moms are shaking their collective heads thinking, what did that poor women do to deserve that.

Sorry, I digress. Back to “It’s a Wonderful Life”. I think it’s fairly obvious that I was permanently scarred by this movie. So, I haven’t seen the movie in a while and can only remember the basic story line. So, I did what I always do, I googled it looking for any quotes or any stories about the movie that might be helpful. And luckily, I found both.

The main character in the movie is George Bailey, who is played by the legendary actor Jimmy Stewart. George Bailey is a pillar of the community of Bedford Falls, who on this particular Christmas Eve, is contemplating suicide, because, for various reasons, his life just hasn’t gone as he planned. That’s where Clarence, the angel-in-training, comes in. He is told that he can earn his wings if he can show George what a profound effect, he’s had on the community of Bedford Falls, and what a void would be left if he went through with his suicide. And of course, in the end, Clarence earn his wings, the community embraces George, and he realizes that “It’s a Wonderful Life” that he is

living. But there is one scene in the movie that I think is especially appropriate for this week. George Bailey is sitting in a restaurant, hopeless, in despair, and feeling the weight of the world when he looks up and asks (pleads), *“God ... God ... dear Father in heaven, I’m not a praying man, but if You’re up there and You can hear me, show me the way. I’m at the end of my rope. Show me the way, God.”* Jimmy Stewart later admitted, *“As I said those words, I felt the loneliness, the hopelessness of people who had nowhere to turn and my eyes filled with tears. I broke down sobbing. This was not planned at all, but the power of that prayer, the realization that our Father in heaven is there to help the hopeless, had reduced me to tears.”*

As I read that, I must admit that I got a little misty myself. Because at this time of Christmas, a time that is supposed to be filled with hope, for some, for many, it simply is not. There are far too many that have not come to the realization *“that our Father in heaven is there to help the hopeless.”* So, this Christmas, let’s pray for my poor wife, let’s pray for our families, our friends, and even ourselves, and let’s pray for a world that need to hear there is hope in Jesus. Let me close with what is probably my favorite scripture this time of year because we all need the hope of a Savior.

‘For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’

Luke 2:11 ESV