***Faith at the Movies 3: Shrek***

Scripture: Matthew 23:25-28; Galatians 2:6; Genesis 1:26-28a

July 12, 2015

**SERMON SUMMARY**

Shrek is an ogre who is living in self-imposed exile in his swamp when the overlord, Lord Farquaad, declares that every fairy tale creature living in his kingdom is banished so that he may have a “perfect” kingdom. In the opening scenes of the movie, Farquaad’s minions are paying a “finder’s fee” for turning in any and all fairy tale creatures and then relocating them. Shrek returns home one day to find that his swamp is filled with the creatures desperate to find a new home out of Farquaad’s reach. This movie is filled with a number of faith-related themes such as God chooses the unlikely; rejection and oppression can lead to separation from God and humanity; we are made in the image of God; and transformation is possible (among othersd).

**A Guide for Daily Reading and Meditation**

**A Prayer for Every Day:**  Author of all humankind, come to lift us up to our full humanity as we worship you in this hour. You surround us on every side and are acquainted with all our ways. You know our shallow motives and our deepest thoughts. You are aware of the distinctions we make and the favoritism we express. Yet you welcome us, not as strangers but as heralds of your reign. We want to worship you and to represent you well. Meet us now with your transforming power. Amen.[[1]](#footnote-1)

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 **Faith Themes**

* **God chooses the unlikely**. Like our hero from last week, Shrek is a most unlikely “Moses,” yet he manages to free the fairy tale creatures. Shrek is ugly and irascible, largely because he has experienced rejection throughout his life – because he is ugly. He seems not to have experienced love in any form, and he has chosen to reject the society that has rejected him. Through a series of circumstances and out of self-interest, Shrek sets out to “set the ‘people’ free.

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* **Transformation.** Transformation is a central biblical theme, and this week’s movie is yet another illustration for this biblical principle. Shrek himself is transformed, finding acceptance and eventually love as he seeks the answer to the fairy creatures’ problem (and, of course, his own); the princess is transformed in a surprising event at the very end of the movie; a fire-breathing dragon becomes a friend and falls in love; the townspeople, loyal throughout to Lord F out of fear, are also freed and transformed. These are just a few of the transformations in this movie.

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* **Love has the power to heal.** Similar to the biblical principle of transformation is the biblical them of how love can heal. Shrek’s healing begins with the persistence of an aggravating talking donkey who is determined to be Shrek’s friend. As Donkey and Shrek journey to free the princess, Shrek begins to see how relationships can grow and heal.

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* **Each person is created in God’s image.** **Every person is a person of worth, and it is important to look beyond surface appearances.** Throughout the struggle against the Evil in the kingdom, as personified by Lord Farquaad, the story subtly lifts up the value of each creature, alluding to creation in God’s image. There are many times in the movie when creatures are judged on outward appearances rather than by seeking to know them based on their character, heart, or their value as a creation of God.

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* **Accountability and forgiveness are key to authentic friendship and loving relationships.** Donkey wants to hold Shrek accountable for his behavior; Shrek always pushes people away and doesn’t accept love or friendship. But Shrek is upset for many reasons throughout the movie, often aggravated by Donkey and not understanding that conflict is something we work through in relationships and if we don’t, conflict may destroy relationships that we value.[[2]](#footnote-2) (Ecclesiastes 4:10)

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* **Christian community is important to our growing faith.** Shrek’s transformation would not have taken place without the influence of Donkey and the princess. In our walk with Christ, gathering with our faith family offers support for us to grown in our knowledge and love of God, to be held accountable in love as we seek to become more like Christ, and to be inspired in worship and study so that we do not become stuck in our personal agenda or issues. (Hebrews 10:25; Ecclesiastes 4:10)

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**MONDAY**

Read the scriptures used on Sunday and in the thematic material above:

*26* Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." *27* So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. *28* God blessed them. (Genesis 1:26-28a)

As for those who were considered important in the church, their reputation doesn’t concern me. God isn’t impressed with mere appearances, and neither am I. And of course these leaders were able to add nothing to the message I had been preaching. (Galatians 2:6)

*25*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. *26* You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean. *27* "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth.  *28* So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:25-28)

If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. (Ecclesiastes 4:10)

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near. (Hebrews 10:25)

Ask yourself these questions:

* Consider that you are made in God’s image. What does that mean to you? What difference does it make when you see others and remind yourself that they are made in God’s image? When have you judged on outward appearances?
* How does your faith family help you to grow in your knowledge and love of God? What are 3 things that you need to do so that you continue in that growth?
* When have you allowed yourself to be defined (as Shrek was) by other people and then “hidden away” (which can mean many things) and lived in your own swamp? What helped you overcome – or, what do you need in order to overcome – your tendency to withdraw?

**TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY**

Beginning today, take one or two of the faith themes lifted up in the movie and meditate on where you meet those issues in your daily life.

Be sure to read all of the scriptures above as you meditate each day, and consult any notes you took as you viewed the film.

 ~ Rev. Vivian McCarthy, Pastor

 Reisterstown UMC

 July 19, 2015

1. Unison Prayer (altered) reprinted by permission of United Church Press from Led by Love by Lavon Bayler. Copyright 1996 by United Church Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From *Shrek* Bible study by Teddi Pettree, based on an original idea by James Krieg; The Source4YM as found at <http://goo.gl/tvQoyY> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)