

AT THE MOVIES

Saving Private Ryan

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Discussion Notes

The Crossing Church

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OPENING

Everyone loves a good story. Jesus was the master storyteller and, when He talked about spiritual truths, He used modern day stories to bring truth to life. Movies are like modern day parables and we are using these modern day stories to help us understand spiritual truths.

SCRIPTURE¹

Acts 8:1-3 “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.”

Acts 9:1-16 “Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked. ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. ‘Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, ‘Ananias!’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he answered.

The Lord told him, ‘Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.’ ‘Lord,’ Ananias answered, ‘I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.’ But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.’ “

Acts 9:20-22, 26 “At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, ‘Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?’ Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. ... When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing he really was a disciple.”

Ephesians 4:1-3 “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

¹ All scripture listed is NIV unless otherwise indicated

OBSERVATION

In Acts, chapters 8 and 9, the Church started and thousands were coming to faith in Jesus Christ. St. Stephen began to speak boldly about his faith and he was arrested and stoned to death. The subsequent wide-spread persecution was all part of God's plan. Then Saul continued the persecution of Christians for three years. He was confronted by Jesus on the Damascus Road who asked, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He gave his life to Christ and, as St. Paul, he became the foremost character in the Book of Acts. God took the most unlikely candidate in the 1st century and turned the world upside down because God came after the one.

Question: Why do you think you are the most unlikely candidate for a calling from God?

APPLICATION

Live a life worthy of the calling. The "Saving Private Ryan" movie provides the parable. Ryan's three brothers had all been killed in World War II and eight soldiers were sent to bring him back to his family.

- Ryan had a responsibility to those who had sacrificed to save him;
- There was no way that he could EARN the price paid for him;
- Still that was his motivation to go forward after he was saved;

Question: What did God save you from?

Question: What is the moral of the parable posed by "Saving Private Ryan?" How does it apply today?

This is our calling today, too. Live a life worthy of the calling we have received because Another paid the ultimate sacrifice for us.

Question: What does it mean to live a life worthy? How does this happen in our lives?

God's calling is personal. He went after one man - St. Paul - because He had a specific purpose for his life. He has a specific purpose for your life, too.

Question: What are you living for?

Question: What is the purpose God intended for your life?

- You may consider yourself religious;
- You may consider yourself spiritual;
- But God is calling you to a personal relationship with Him.

Question: In what ways is your relationship with God personal? What do you need to do to make it more personal?

Living a life worthy of God's calling means making progress in your spiritual walk.

- Be more humble, more gentle, more patient;
- Move toward Jesus and no longer stand still;
- Be more like Jesus than you were a year ago;
- Grow in your faith;
- Have the Fruit of the Spirit growing in your life;
- Realize that God saved you for something;

Question: Where would you be if Jesus hadn't saved you and changed you?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that you have called us to serve you. We love you, but don't always understand the direction you are taking us. Please reveal to us the unique purpose you have prepared for our lives. We know that we can't earn the price Jesus paid for us. He did it out of love - to make a way for us to be reconciled with You. Help us to be like Stephen and Paul and trust you completely no matter what comes against us. In Jesus' Name. Amen.