

“Wall-E: Finding Signs of Life in a Post-Apocalyptic World”

Genesis 2: 4b-23

This Sunday, we begin our Summer Series, the Gospel According to Pixar. Over the next several weeks, we will be taking a look at a few popular Pixar movies and discussing how their message ties in with our own faith story. Before anyone thinks I have lost my mind or that these movies are just for kids, I want to share that with these movies, there is so much more than meets the eye. Sure they are entertaining for kids. They are bright and action-packed, filled with fun characters.

But the characters in the Pixar movies are not just fun. They are relatable. They experience the ups and downs of life. They inspire us as ones who are watching the film to use our imagination and dream. The characters in these movies also help us explore the “dark side of human capability” as well. In these movies, there is always the question of will the bad guy win or will the main character overcome?

Pixar does a great job through these movies of reminding us, both kids and adults alike, reminding us that life is messy, that life is not always as black and white as we think. At the core of all the Pixar movies is the understanding of how

great story telling can inspire and offer virtuous living, just like our Bible does for us as people of faith.

Our faith story is filled with story after story of relatable characters experiencing the ups and downs of life, characters who inspire us, who challenge us to vision and dream. And yes, no one would ever deny that our faith story also brings us face to face with the ugliness and brokenness found within the human experience we call life.

Think about it. We have Adam and Eve. Jacob and the disciples. Think about how Jesus engaged people each and every day by telling them stories, by telling them parables, using ordinary things like a mustard seed or a field to expand the people's understanding of the Kingdom of God.

The stories found within our Bible, yes even the stories found within the Pixar movies are stories that we can relate to because....because every story is about living out our lives as the people of hope, the people of love that God calls us to be, the people that this very world needs us to be right here, right now.

Our first Pixar movie is Wall-E. It is probably not one which is very familiar to many of us. However, it was the first Pixar movie to be nominated for an Oscar 6 times. It is also contains many lessons and themes that as people of faith we can relate to and apply to our journeys of spiritual growth.

So without further ado....Let us watch the beginning of Wall-E!

As we can see, “in the not too distant future, the world has become a garbage dump. It is uninhabitable. Humans have abandoned Earth and relocated to a cruise ship to live, promising a way of life that is reminiscent of a return to the Garden of Eden. In other words, perfect. This supposed promise of Eden removes accountability from humankind and leaves robots like Wall-E to clean up the mess the humans have made of the Earth.

That’s how Wall-E starts. Now, let’s hear how our faith story starts.

Read Genesis

The beginning of our faith story could not be more different than the desolation shown to us in Wall-E. In Genesis, we are told God created the Earth and called it good. We are told of Earth’s beauty and wonder. In fact our faith story shows a direct contrast. According to Genesis, there is no way humankind should accept or allow God’s creation to become an uninhabitable garbage dump, dry and barren, like the one shown to us in Wall-E.

And here’s why I say this. In both creation stories but especially in Genesis two, we are told that as ones created in the image of God, we are called to tend, to care for God’s creation. In verse 15, we find the language of “till and keep”. A better translation of this is “to be indebted to” or “to serve”.

In reading this story, we realize that the first thing God does when creating the world is form man, form humans, with the purpose of protecting and working the ground. God created us to be in relationship; to be indebted to the beauty and wonder of God's world.

From the very beginning as people of faith, we are connected and intertwined with all of creation. God did not ask us to maintain creation. God did not ask us to preserve creation. When God created us as humankind, God gave us the responsibility of bringing along all creation, to help it reach its fullest potential possible of sustaining and shaping, of bringing forth the gift of new life.

Yet, time and time again, we as humankind have rejected this special task. And through our arrogance, we have made matters worse. We have polluted the rivers and waters of our world, destroying their healing nature. We have filled the sky with smog and other toxic substances. We have cut down rainforests and other natural areas, leaving behind desolation in our paths. As humankind, we have not embraced our responsibility to care for all of God's creation.

It has been interesting the timing of this summer series. Two weeks ago, we learned of the US pulling out of the Paris Climate Agreement, an agreement that calls for all the countries of the world to come together in an effort to move towards more sustainable, Earth-friendly ways of living and working. Only three

countries pulled out from this agreement...Nicaragua, Syria and the United State.

To be honest, I'm not sure I like the US being connected with third world countries when it comes to policy.

That was one thing that happened which is connected to this whole creation care conversation. The other thing was this past week, the video featuring Midway Christian and our efforts towards creation care was released. It really is a wonderful representation of our congregation and the work we do here as people living out our call to be faithful stewards of God's creation. If you would like to see it, the video has been uploaded to the church's webpage. It is also available on the church's facebook page as well.

In looking at the video, the filmmakers did a great job of capturing the spirit of Midway Christian. We see some familiar faces and of course, we are eating. But I have to be honest, there is one part I do not like. It is the line that goes something like "We all know that we should walk more gently on God's Earth."

I don't agree with that part. Not that I don't think we should all walk more gently on God's Earth. I just don't think we all agree on this or that we all know we should do this. For many, the Earth is something that is to be used and abused. They don't care about what we are doing to the Earth as more and more water becomes polluted, as more and more animals go extinct, as more and more people

are affected by climate change. For many, the Earth is a resource. They do not see the beauty and wonder that fills our world. They only see something to be used for their own gain.

I told the filmmakers that I had a problem with this line and could we say something else. But as you will see, they added the line any way. What I've learned from my 15 minutes of fame, is that when it comes to filmmaking, I may not always be able to shape the larger narrative. But as a person of faith, there is a place I can always turn to, to know who has the last word. Our story as the people of God tells us that God is always at work in this world to bring healing and wholeness to all of God's creation.

Which is why I find this last section of Genesis 2 so interesting. When we take a look at it, in verse 18-23 of our text, God takes the humans' decisions and actions into account as God continues to shape creation. God lets the human decide the names of the animals. God lets the human shape the new direction for God's creation, well God does so up until a point. God does not let humankind shape the outcome. For this, we are left hanging, or at the very least, we know that we are only at the beginning.

You see, our text tells us that all of creation, in fact the very essence of life, depends on what humankind does with what God provides, does with what God

presents. “The future stands genuinely open here” at this point in our faith story. Everything is open-ended, “suspended in this creative moment.” This unknowing of what happens next for creation, what happens next for humankind leaves us as asking... “If what humankind really does shape, really does determine the direction for God’s creation, then what will the future hold for us? Will humankind accept the responsibility of caring for God’s creation? Will humankind join God as partners as they both work together to bring healing and wholeness for all of God’s Earth?

At this point in Genesis, at this point in our faith story now, all of this remains unknown. And as I thought about the uncertainty of this, I couldn’t help but think funny how our faith ancestors were asking these questions over 2000 years ago. Maybe it is time that we did as well.

I know how Pixar answers these open ended questions about humankind and the fate of our planet. What I don’t know is how we as people of faith will answer them. My hope is that we reconnect with the beauty and wonder of Earth and that we do all we can to prevent our home, God’s creation from becoming an uninhabitable garbage dump ever and ever. May it be so. Amen.