



Have you seen any good movies lately?

This is a question that father and son toss around from time to time in our household. I did get a chance to watch a few movies on vacation. The ones that have been out for awhile we watched on DVD. One was new to the theaters, and we got to watch it while decked out in those "cool" 3D glasses. (I kept mine, just in case I ever want to dress up as Roy Orbison for Halloween.)

There were three movies worth commenting on, but before I do that I should add this disclaimer: When it comes to movies, I probably critique them differently than most people. I tend to evaluate movies based on the message they send to the viewers. Movie makers always seem to have an agenda - a point of view they hold that they want the viewer to adopt. Many viewpoints (agendas) coming out of Hollywood run contrary to a Christian worldview, so I always have my "radar" on in order to detect what message is being sent. As a result, I sometimes miss the entertainment value of the movie.

Violet and I tend to enjoy animated kids' movies (which really seem to be aimed at adults). My all-time favorite is *Monsters, Inc.* We've seen both *Ice Age* movies, so last week we went to see *Ice Age 3* - in 3D. We both came away feeling pretty good about some of the underlying messages sent in it. There was a good message about staying true to your values and your friends - even if those values and friends aren't the most popular. We also found a very positive "family" message. It was particularly refreshing to see the father portrayed as strong and loving and willing to sacrifice anything for His children (Sound like any God you have come to know from the Bible??). It seems to me that the few times movie families actually have a dad, he's either no longer a part of the family, very self-centered or just a complete 'doofus'. I was also impressed not to find the seemingly ever-present "gay agenda" in the movie. You can check with other folks for the entertainment value of the movie, but I'd definitely recommend it for the "message" value.

A second movie we had seen once before when it hit the theaters a couple years ago, *The King's Speech*. It's a movie about Queen Elizabeth's father and how he worked to overcome his speech impediment. I was reminded of Moses being chosen to lead God's people in spite of his own speech impediment. It has a good message about persevering, but I also noticed an underlying message that church leaders are selfish, power-mongers and the church itself is nothing more than silly rituals.

But one movie really "hit me like a ton of bricks." It was called *Machine Gun Preacher*. (An title that should at least get the interest of all the pastors in the world.) When Anthony asked me about it my response was one word: "Powerful." He asked me what I meant by that. I told him that it was one of a very few movies that actually leave you *really* wanting to do something as a result of what you have seen.

I came away ashamed of ever complaining ... about anything. The movie made me feel ashamed of all the times I spend money on frivolous things. It made me realize that 'by and large' the Christian church is a "country club" that simply seeks to serve the wants of its members instead of being an army dedicated to saving people from Satan and evil. (And, I'm not talking "army" in the military sense that might be suggested by the "machine gun" in the title. I'm talking "army" in the sense of our hymn "*Lift*

High the Cross... the love of Christ proclaim.”)

But most of all it made me want to do something about all the kids in the world who don't have parents - or who have parents that screw up their kid's lives.

Machine Gun Preacher is a movie based on the real life of one man and his family and their efforts to make a difference in the lives of real kids in the Sudan and Uganda - kids whose parents are killed and who themselves are then used as pawns in a civil war.

It is a movie about the power of God to change lives. It is a movie about the call of God to make a difference in the lives of people around you. It is a movie that, like *The Passion of the Christ* is not easy to watch - especially for parents. But I think it's a movie we - also like *The Passion of the Christ* - must watch. In fact, I will be showing it at some of our meetings, and Bible Studies in the near future.

My hope is that watching the movie together will motivate us to come up with ways to join with others in our Synod and District in helping The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya develop six rescue centers that will serve orphaned children. (The congregations of our District voted at our District Convention this spring to raise funds for one and a half of the four orphanages.)

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net