



You saw an early showing of the Passion of the Christ movie. What did you think?

In a word (or two) it left me speechless and drained.

It takes a lot for pastors to be left speechless. There were a great many pastors at the movie screening and all were left speechless. You know how we typically walk out of Good Friday worship not saying anything, because of a note in the bulletin that tells us not to? Well, about a hundred people walked out of the movie without saying a thing - not because of any instructions, but because what we saw left us speechless.

What did we see? A very accurate portrayal of the Gospel accounts of what happened for the last twelve hours of Jesus' life before he was executed on the cross. We saw two hours of very intense suffering *on the part of our Lord*. Mel Gibson stated that one of his goals was to make sure people saw what really happened to Jesus. No glossing over. No romanticized portrayal of what happened. But the brutal reality of the physical, emotional and spiritual suffering Jesus underwent in our place. That is exactly what we saw. Brutal reality. Satan throwing his best evil at Jesus. And Jesus taking it all. Willingly. In our place.

It was physically very draining to watch. It's not a "fun" movie that will have you coming away refreshed. Real sin and real evil and their consequences are not fun. They are horrible and hurtful. And maybe that's what sets this movie apart. It treats sin and evil just the opposite of the "fun and exciting" way that Hollywood typically portrays them.

Movies are typically a couple hours of escape from reality. They put us into a fantasy world. This movie was draining, because what we saw on the screen was real. No fantasy. Brutal reality. Brutal reality that actually happened.

Is it a movie you should see? Definitely. You cannot see the movie without being changed. It may change the way see God. It may change the way you see yourself. It may change the way you respond to God. It may change your attitude toward worship. But it will change you - just as those who came into contact with Jesus 2000 years ago were changed. And this movie provides an unprecedented opportunity to invite a friend who isn't sure about Jesus. It will leave a lasting impression. The movie will raise a lot of questions. Questions that God has answered in the Scriptures. Questions, that when answered, will force people to answer two other questions of eternal significance: "Who do you say that Jesus is?" And "Do you believe?"

Because of the intensity of the violence done to Jesus, the movie is not suitable for those under age twelve - and likely some over twelve too. It is rated "R" because of this violence. If you have teenagers, you should see it with them. But you should see it.

If you haven't already done so, make plans to join us on Sunday, March 7 to watch the movie as a congregation. You can find the details elsewhere in this newsletter.

A couple things to remember that will help immensely as you watch the movie:

1) This is not happening to a mere human being. Jesus is God in-the-flesh. This is happening to *God*.

2) Jesus was not a victim of circumstance. This is what he came to do. He *chose* to undergo this.

3) Jesus did this for *you*... It wasn't the Romans or the Jewish leaders that put him through this. It was your sin... and his loving desire for your sin to be paid for, so that you might be reconciled to God.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net