July 5, 2015

Ephesians 4:1-6

*At the Movies:* Avengers

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Ephesians 4:1-6 The Message

In light of all this, here’s what I want you to do. While I’m locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don’t want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don’t want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences. You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

This morning we begin a new sermon series at Greenland Hills, “At the Movies”. When we are immersed in a movie, we are reminded that anything is possible. We get caught up in the story, on the edge of our seat. When the screen goes dark, and the lights go up, we are reminded that we are in the middle of our own story. Sometimes our own plot has more twists and turns than we know what to do with. We are called to be a hero or to find our way out of the audience and into the action. We are called to face down the villains that plague us, or to rescue our neighbor in distress or to leave a legacy.

Today as we watch a clip from the Avengers, we are going to see what we can learn. Let me give you some background. It all starts when Loki meets with a leader of an alien race. In exchange for retrieving the Tesseract, a powerful energy source, Loki is promised an army of warriors, who will help enslave the human race to Loki. As soon as Loki steals the Tesseract, Nick Fury, the director of SHIELD recruits Iron Man, Captain America, the Hulk and Thor to work with Black Widow and Hawkeye as they join forces to try and defeat Loki, who is actually Thor’s adopted brother.

Iron Man, Captain America, the Hulk and Thor have all been off doing their own things. Thor has been helping keep watch over Earth; the Hulk, Dr. Bruce Banner, has been living and working as a doctor in India, helping very poor people. They’re all doing good work on their own, but Director Fury reactivates the Avengers, and begins the process of recruiting them all to come together and save the world from the attack of Loki and the alien army.

There was no way that just one of the Avengers could have taken on the alien army. They would have been defeated. Director Fury knew that the Avengers could do even greater things if they would work together. We do more good when we work together. But when the Avengers work together it is not easy. In this clip, the Avengers are discussing the best way to defeat the powerful Loki and prevent him from taking over Earth, but each of them have a different idea about what would work best. Take a look at what happens to the mighty team and how they treat each other as the conversation wears on.

**Show movie clip.** (1 hour 7 min to 1 hour 12 min)

The dialogue shows that the Avengers are not functioning as a team, they want to fight each other. This is probably the lowest point in the movie. The bad guys are winning and they are about to strike again. But the worst part is the good guys aren’t even functioning as a team. They go from disagreeing with each other to insulting each other. Dr. Banner, The Hulk, says two different times that they aren’t acting as a team.

It is not easy for these superheroes to work together. They have different ideas of how to fight the army, they don’t always see eye-to-eye, but they eventually realize that they are better together than on their own. What helped the Avengers come together was that they shared a common mission, a desire to protect the world and its people. We have a common mission, too. We are all invited to join together, to partner with God, and to seek to bring about God’s kingdom here on earth, as it is in heaven.

**Read Ephesians 4:1-6 (The Message).**

The thing about the Avengers is that no matter how powerful eachof the superheroes were alone, they could not defeat Loki unless they worked together. Not even their superhero abilities were as important as their teamwork. I think about the things in our nation that are on my heart today, I think about racism and the murders in Charleston and of the black churches that have been burned. “Love is the fire that will ultimately burn away the effects of hatred.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

“The Bible says that the church is like a family, where we are brothers and sisters with each other.  If your family is like mine, then there are a lot of important things that you and your family members disagree about or even fight about.  But at the end of the day you are still a family; you are still held together by something deeper than whether or not you agree.  You are held together by the fact that you have been made part of one another, and you are held together by stubborn, durable, steady love.

The church is a family like that.  We are a family that can disagree about important things, but at the end of the day we are held together by something deeper than the fact we agree about everything, or even about every important thing:  we are held together by the fact that God’s grace has rescued us and is remaking us and has made us a part of one another. We are held together by love, the love of Christ. That love does not banish disagreement, but it does join us in a oneness deeper than all difference.”[[2]](#footnote-3)

“Perhaps God has God’s own purposes in putting us very different people, with our dueling facebook posts and our rival news sources, all together next to each other in the pew.  Perhaps one of those purposes is to learn the meaning of love.  Perhaps it is only by learning to love people we disagree with, only by learning to love people who we know are wrong, only by learning to love sinners that we learn what love, Christ-like love, even, yes, married love, really is.”[[3]](#footnote-4)

Glennon Melton on her Momastery blog said, “in response to those with opposite opinions, theology or politics, let’s say, ‘I hear you, I vehemently disagree with you, and I love you.’” The body of Christ is not a place where everybody agrees with you 100%. But it is a place where we weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice, even if it means we try to force a smile through our tears because at least our friends are happy. We stay together in the church and try to respect and love each other and fail and ask forgiveness and forgive and then try again.

 “When in doubt, err on the side of compassion and acceptance. Because there are things more important in this world than your opinion.”[[4]](#footnote-5) Our calling is to witness to the love of God and to share that love with others, not to build walls. When I heard the Supreme Court ruling over same sex marriage a little over a week ago, I was in Arkansas on the all-church mission trip and I looked around at my church family that was gathered there and I thought of the civil rights that would now be guaranteed. The right to be the next of kin when your loved one is in a hospital room fighting for their life. The right to be listed as a parent to your child that you have raised and loved. I thought of the 19 couples here at Greenland Hills who have been married in other states or were waiting to be able to get married here in their home state. So, I want to invite any one here who now will be able to have their marriage recognized in Texas, to come forward so we might rejoice with you and pray for you.

1. http://blog.chron.com/pastorrudy/2015/06/love-in-a-post-charleston-world/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://viamediamethodists.wordpress.com/2015/06/30/till-death-us-do-part-a-call-to-unity-offered-the-sunday-after-scotus-decision/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://viamediamethodists.wordpress.com/2015/06/30/till-death-us-do-part-a-call-to-unity-offered-the-sunday-after-scotus-decision/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. From Rev. Larry Thomas at University Christian Church in Fort Worth. https://vimeo.com/132115722 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)