



*God at the Movies, Flops:
Waterworld*

Acts 9.1–19

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This Morning for part two of our God at the Movies Series, I will be referencing the movie *Waterworld*, but I will not be talking about the content of this movie really, instead just the circumstances of its production release and notoriety.

When asked to think of major box office movies “Flops,” the movie *Waterworld* often ends up on people’s minds. It was a Futuristic Kevin Costner movie where the earth is completely covered in water and people survive on small boats and small floating Atolls. The major reason that this movie has gained notoriety as a “Flop” is because production costs continued to balloon and it became the most expensive movie ever made at that time. It cost over \$175 million dollars because of the expansive floating sets, uncooperative weather, and extended weeks of filming. Even today, \$175 million price tag for a movie is rather expensive, but in 1995 it was astronomical, so in many ways *Waterworld* was already fighting an uphill battle when it was released in theaters.

Despite debuting as the number one movie, the initial Box office ticket sales were not strong enough to recoup the incredible amount of money spent to make the movie, combined with lackluster reviews, *Waterworld* may have lodged itself into our memory as a Flop, but interestingly this story does not end there.

You see, *Waterworld*, despite its inflated costs to produce, did actually end up creating quite a profit over time. After tallying up all the domestic and international Box office revenue, the movie grossed more than \$260 million in theaters, and that does not include all of the money eventually made in DVD, and TV rights for the film. So according to Pastor Greg’s definitions from last week, I believe this movie would fall into the sub-category of Flip/Flop or, is it Flop/flip? Now I am not going to stand here and say that

2 *Waterworld* is a great or even a good movie, but numerically speaking it does not show up on lists of movies that lost money and so it is difficult to consider it a “Movie Flop” as many often do. While this unearned distinction is unfortunate for *Waterworld* it is all too common in the world we live in. Quite often, the world remembers our gaffes and our first impressions, making it difficult to pivot and start fresh, begin again and reinvent ourselves. We too, do this to one another, filing away grievances, remembering slights and disappointments.

Living out a new identity or turning over a new leaf can be difficult, change is hard and there are often people in our lives that will insist on reminding us about our history. And while there is value in learning from past mistakes, it is also important that we drop the baggage we carry if it prevents us from moving forward.

Fortunately, we serve a God who holds a deep love for us regardless of how we may view our own past. God has a profound desire for our best selves and calls us forward into that reality. Nothing is irredeemable or beyond reconciliation for the endless, unconditional, unfathomable love of God. And this brings us to today’s scripture about the dramatic transformation of Saul, a persecutor of Christians to Paul one of Christianity’s greatest apostles.

Scripture Acts 9:1–9, 17–19

This is a powerful story and one of the most popular “conversion stories” found in scripture. It is worth noting that this is not just your average story of redemption of someone seeking to simply live a better life. Saul was quite the threat to Early Christians; he literally approved of the execution of Christians like in the stoning of Stephen, and yet ultimately became one of the most important ambassadors

for Christ the world has ever known. This was an example of a real turn around.

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So what does this mean for us today? I can admit that I have never had a road to Damascus experience where Jesus appeared and spoke directly to me with instructions, and I hardly know anyone else who has. However, I have seen Jesus. I have seen Jesus in the countless mentors and adults in my life, who have taken the time to redirect me, guide me, teach me and show me the compassion of Christ. I have heard Jesus in the singing voices of children around campfires and in the stillness of the forest. I have felt Jesus when I feared I was alone and surrounded by darkness. I have recognized Jesus in the outpouring of special ministries supported by this congregation and most recently, I have known Jesus within the powerful life giving miracle of the recent birth of a son.

There are few things in my short time on this planet that have so dramatically shown the life giving, ever changing, renewing nature of God like the recent birth of our son, Oliver. This miraculous event has only reaffirmed that God is ever present and ever moving in our midst. God is not static; God is active, changing, growing within and through each and every one of us. Sure, the existence and the love of God may never change throughout time but the way that we encounter God, the way that God encounters us, the Divine Dance that takes place each and every day is an evolving miracle. It is all too easy for us to forget that this is a dynamic, living and changing world, we can get sucked into our daily routines, the normalcy, accepting the labels that we are given by others and forgetting that we are truly alive and capable of participation in that divine dance happening all around us.

On this day of receiving new members, it is easy for us to see a clear example of what change and transformation can

4 look like within the Body of Christ. But transformation is not only reserved for new members. Any day, every day, we are invited to be transformed by Christ. We can read in the book of Romans, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Following Jesus is not a onetime act but a lifelong commitment. Have we forgotten that this is a gift and not a burden?

We can embrace the challenge and celebrate the newness of every day. Even the days that do not go well, the pain and the suffering in life that we endure, these are experiences of existence. They are difficult, but are still reminders that we are alive and living. The creation of this World was never a guarantee, existence was never a given, the very fact that we are here, aware, breathing, alive, this is a gift from God. Obviously many things disappoint us in this world, there are great troubles and systemic failures, powers and principalities, evil that threaten and challenge us each day. And while the world will continue to find ways to remind us of our past failures and current shortcomings, we can celebrate that we are loved by a God that does not measure us by our beginnings and does not remember us by our greatest failures.

We are called towards greatness; we are called into love, we are called to be the hands and the feet of Christ and we are called into that existence each and every day. You have not missed your chance; you are never too late or too old to follow your heart and to answer the call from the Creator of the Universe.

For, this is the day that the Lord has made, rejoice and be glad!

Change comes to those who seek it, and while there is uncertainty and coincidence, it is through our efforts in working

together with God in the example of Christ that we can create a more positive future for ourselves and all of those that come after us. Our lives are meant to be lived, fully. We must open our eyes to the beauty and creativity of the world, step forward in confidence in our faith in Christ. We are not to be defined by our past mistakes, or immobilized by our failures; we are to walk forward with them and seek to be better.

Perhaps you think the world has labeled you a flop, perhaps you have even started to believe it, but it is never, never too late to reclaim tomorrow, for tomorrow has not yet come. We serve an incredible God, the Creator of the Universe who does not count our sins against us, but is always rooting for us, cheering us on every step of the way. And I think many of us already know this, we feel it deep in our bones, we just have trouble remembering it all of the time. It is one of the reasons we come here each Sunday, to feel that love and to worship God... Oh how good and pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity!

The movie *Waterworld*, by definition, is not a flop, maybe at the start after the first weeks it was, but in time it gradually made its profits and has since been enjoyed and loved by millions. Likewise, we do not need to limit or confine ourselves to who we were yesterday or remain stuck as who we are today.

I was reminded just a few days ago in one of the most profoundly earth shattering ways that God remains active and moving in this world. Every time that I look at our new son, Oliver, I am reminded that the world moves forward, it creates, it grows. God is doing a new thing and God has been doing new things. It is our calling as followers of Jesus to get onboard with it. We are loved by the Creator of the Universe, we can seize the day, we can start today and we can do it again tomorrow. No matter our past failures, our

6 current inadequacies, or the insults from others, It is never ever too late to commit or recommit ourselves to following in the ways of Jesus, and in doing so, no matter how the world labels us, we will never be a Flop in the eyes of God.

