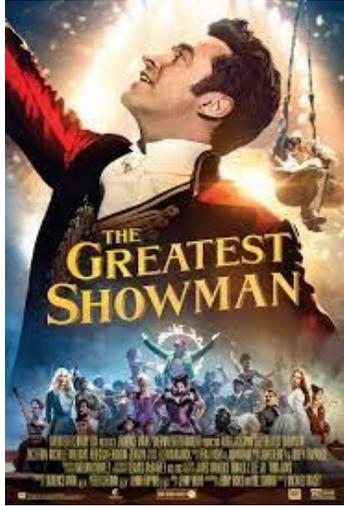


Lent Study

The Greatest Showman Bible Study



A 6-week course that will lead us through Lent, based on The Greatest Showman. Parts of this study have been reworked from the book “From Now On” by Rachel Mann, but there is no need to buy the book as all material will be provided within this booklet. There is also no need to have seen the film, as short clips will be shown within each week.

Each week will have a clip to watch and read and some questions to discuss.

Monday 1.00 pm - 2.00 pm in Dalgety Parish Church
Thursday 7.30 pm - 8.30 pm on Zoom

Contact Andrea or Christine for more information.

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Week 1 – Hope - “A Million Dreams”

Watch - 00.00 – 10.51

Dreams have fascinated people for thousands of years. The history of how people have tried to interpret dreams over these years is complex, Greeks and Romans believed that dreams were a way for the gods or dead ancestors to speak to the living; there are many examples in the bible of dreams acting as messages from God to chosen individuals or his chosen people, Daniel, Samuel, Jeremiah all experienced some sort of dream and of course Joseph experiences a dream about Mary's pregnancy. There are also many books on how to interpret dreams, as psychologists have tried to put meaning to what people experience, and as always, some people dream, and some don't; some dreams feel real and others not; some dreams we can remember for a long time afterwards and others we can't. Dreams are complex and intriguing. Dreams are of course more than just ones that happen when we sleep, it can be used to describe aspirations or ambitions or where we can have a 'daydream', where we take ourselves off to another place for a while to escape the reality of the moment we are in.

Martin Luther King famously wrote a speech on seeking civil rights in an unjust world, it was entitled – “I have a dream”, and the hymn “I have a dream, a man once said”, is a powerful one to hear and sing.

In the clip – “One Million Dreams” – Barnum and Charity are people who live with many dreams and ambitions, some in which enable Barnum to see a new life for himself, one free from poverty. At the moment these dreams are only that as it is difficult to see opportunities and not be able to achieve them especially if poverty restricts these opportunities.

Readings

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,^[a] or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?”

Acts 2:17

“God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your young men and women will see visions,
Your old men and women will dream dreams.”

Questions:

What dreams do you have, or did you have? Did you manage to fulfil them?

Is Jesus teaching in the beatitudes simply a dream or vision for us? Did he hope to see them fulfilled?

Are they fulfilled now?

How do we live our lives to fulfil Jesus ask of us?

Week 2: Belonging - “Come Alive”

Watch: 16.47 - 27.15

Families come in many different shapes, sizes and ways. Church communities are often regarded as families in some places. Acceptance of each other is often at the heart of family life, and yet this can at times be difficult. Communities of faith should offer a deep sense of acceptance for all. But being family can be hard.

The Circus family within the film offers that for each other, all are different, they are gathered in, and come from different backgrounds and have experienced different prejudices towards them at times in their lives. Barnum also has experienced the effect of “othering” – where an-other disregards someone because they are different, so he perhaps knows how that feels. In this clip, one of the characters Lettie, is anxious about appearing in front of an audience? Exposure as oneself, freeing in one sense, terrifying in another. But with family around her, she is able to find her voice.

Readings

Matthew 12: 46 – 50 – who is family?

⁴⁶ While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. ⁴⁷ Someone told him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”^[a] ⁴⁸ But to the one who had told him this, Jesus^[b] replied, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” ⁴⁹ And pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Matthew 9: 10-17 – Jesus eats with tax collectors

¹⁰ And as he sat at dinner^[a] in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting^[b] with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² But when he heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often,^[c] but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷ Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

Questions:

How does it feel to be included in a church family?

Are we accepted? Do we try and cover up who we really are?

How can we encourage those who aren't freely themselves to be reassured that they will be accepted just as they are?

Who are those we need to 'eat with'?

Week 3 – Temptation - “Rewrite the Stars”

Watch: 39.44 - 43.30

Barnum has found success, acceptance, by building community with those who were/are the outsiders and by doing things differently, on a professional and personal level – begins to desire the praise of the middle-class and so-called respectable people. This scene allows us to reflect on our need for acceptance from those outside our faith, and how we respond when we are asked about our faith.

Reading

Luke 9:46-48 – Who is the Greatest?

⁴⁶An argument arose among them as to which one of them was the greatest. ⁴⁷But Jesus, aware of their inner thoughts, took a little child and put it by his side, ⁴⁸and said to them, “Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest.”

Questions:

When we have opportunity to share a little or a lot about our faith, or are we tempted to avoid the questions or change the subject?

Is Barnum’s anxieties about not being included sensible? Does he need to operate on both levels?

How did Jesus experience and treat all those he came across? How did he engage with those who were in power and those who were not?

Do we ever struggle to share God with others within our community?

Week 4 – Betrayal - Never Enough

Watch : 53.40 - 57.44

Betrayal is a hard word to hear and one in which we probably don't ever want to experience whether we are the betrayer or someone who experiences betrayal. Judas is the betrayer within the Easter story, and traditionally there is not much sympathy for him. We might like to believe that we are above betrayal but it can take on many forms. Barnum's desire to be popular and respectable leads him to betray what he most believes in: his family and friends and he has his head turned by the character Jenny Lind – a professional singer. At this point in the film, Barnum already has more than enough – money, blessings, and all good life brings. Barnum, not satisfied wants more, especially in position, status, and respect from those who are higher up in society. It places him in a situation in which he might lose everything, turning towards fame and his back on what is real and long-lasting.

We meet the character Lettie again, this time not uncomfortable about performing or sharing her feelings, but is able to lead the performers through her anger in song where they end up back in the Circus singing "This is me."

Readings: Luke 22: 4- 6 - Judas agrees to Betray Jesus

⁴ he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. ⁵ They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. ⁶ So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.

Hebrews 4: 14-16 - Jesus the Great High Priest

¹⁴ Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested^[a] as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Questions:

How would you respond to being pulled towards bright lights and away from the everyday normality of life?

Do you have sympathy for Barnum in this part of the story?

Do you think there is any protective element in Barnum's behaviour or is it just shame and embarrassment?

Barnum says "he wants to offer something real for once?" To what extent is that his real motivation? Is Barnum now excluding those he accepted?

What is your response to Barnum's treatment of the circus members?

Would you ever be tempted to betray past commitments or friends, if it meant going for something you have always craved/longed for?

Have you ever felt as Lettie sings "This is me"?

Week 5 – Redemption - From now on

Watch: 1.11-14 - 1.17.30, 1:19:02 - 1:23.04

The Easter story offers us the idea of redemption in God. At the core of our Christian faith is that we believe in a God who loves and forgives no matter what, there is complete and unconditional love and acceptance from God for everyone. Barnum seeks forgiveness of those he betrayed, or those he side-lined whilst he followed another dream. Following the dream was not wrong but discounting those who had made him successful was. The community of circus performers are more than just work colleagues but are family and Barnum was part of that, but betrayal hurts, especially when those who betray wield power over us. But none the less, the community come and accept him back, pick him up when he was down, and love him and accept him as one of them. A member of the family, of the community who has not been there and now is needing a home, whether emotionally or physically.

Readings: John 21:9-19

⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Questions:

How do we respond to God’s overwhelming love for us?

Do we truly believe we are forgiven?

Would we welcome someone back to our church family who perhaps might need our forgiveness?

Week 6 – Growing our faith

Watch: 1.26.58 – 1.33.07

The circus community pick through the rubble and help to rebuild – the impossible begins to come true. Jesus rising from the death was also the impossible coming true, and faith is needed to believe in the future with a God who does the impossible. A God who is full of surprises for us, and where sharing of stones and passing of faith onto others is important.

Reading: Galatians 5:16-22

¹⁶ Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy,^[a] drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,

Questions:

What in your life or community needs to be rebuilt? Where is the impossible occurring?

How do you feel about a God who surprises?

And what do you need to grow your faith?

How easy do you find sharing your faith with others?

Reflections through Lent

Journey through Lent with themed reflections within the church throughout Lent. Each week there will be a different theme.

The church will be open for personal reflections, as follows,

Monday to Friday - 10 am - 12 noon

Monday to Wednesday 7 - 8 pm

Holy Week (11th - 15th April 2022)

Monday to Friday 10 am - 4 pm

(Evening times to be confirmed and service information for Holy Week to follow)