

At The Movies Msg 1 – Aladdin
 Sermon preached by Dr. Rick & Judy Mandl
 Eagle Rock Baptist Church
 May 11-12, 2019

As you see at the front of your notes and from the LAMP I'm holding, today we're kicking off our "At The Movies" series with **Aladdin**

How many of you have seen the movie **Aladdin (Pic of Robin Williams)**

No – not that one.

But the NEW live action version of Aladdin starring **Will Smith as the Genie**

In the film - Aladdin is a poor young guy who lives on the street and steals just to make ends meet.

When one day he **finds a magic lamp** and unleashes a genie – played by Will Smith – who has the power to grant three wishes to whoever possesses his magic lamp.

So, Aladdin uses his wishes to become a prince and try and win the heart of the princess Jasmine.

Now let's admit – we've all dreamed of finding a genie, right?

We've all imagined what it would be like to have 3 wishes.

And **the only wish you can't have, is to have unlimited wishes.**

So think about that for a moment...

If you could have three wishes, what would be at the top of your wish list?

We asked that question on our **Church Facebook Page** this weekend, and the answers we received ranged from global to personal

From wishes for the whole world, to wishes for the very immediate.

One person answered:

1. World Peace
2. For me to be the best that I can be
3. For tolerance

A mom with 4 young children said:

1. **All my kids to be followers of Christ** once they are old enough to make their own decisions.
2. **I wish that During cold and flu season** my kids don't get sick all at the same time
3. **I Wish my parents** had lived long enough so they could meet their grandchildren and for me to repay them for all they have done for me and my siblings.

Someone else had a much shorter list:

1. **Just one wish tonight.** To feel better. Food poisoning today. Yuck

If you didn't get a chance to answer on our Facebook page, this question is also **one of the getting started questions** in your Life Group this week.

You and I know that God is not a genie – he doesn't live in a bottle and offer three wishes to the one who finds him and sets him free.

We also know that **God as a Genie** is not the only false view many people have about God.

Think about that for a moment –

If you had to choose a picture to represent God, what would it be?

That may be a tough question for you to answer – I'm not talking about how you **physically view God** – like as an old man with a long white beard

But rather the picture you would use to describe God.

It's an important question.

In fact the Christian writer A.W. Tozer said it this way

"What Comes Into Our Minds When We Think About God Is The Most Important Thing About Us. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God."

Tozer writes . . .

"Were we able to extract from any person a complete answer to the question, "What comes into your mind when you think about God?" we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that woman, man or child."

We all have images of God, and not all of them accurate

And these false images can really impact us and mess with our lives in a negative way.

The Apostle Paul describes it this way in the first verse on your notes from Romans 1...

“They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.” Romans 1:25

Maybe you’ve never thought about it but we do something similar all the time.

We trade the truth about who God really is – and buy into a cheap, false image of God.

We say, ***“I like to think of God as”*** and we fill in the blank with whatever fits how we feel in the moment.

And that incorrect view actually ends up hurting us.

We can misunderstand who God is and miss out on having a real relationship with him.

As I was watching the movie Aladdin, I began to think about how many people see God as kind of like, a genie in a bottle.

And it started me wondering about how

If we were really honest about our beliefs about God, some of us would have to admit that we more often is like a character in a Disney movie than the God of the Bible who says of Himself:

28 Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

***The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.***

***He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.***

***29 He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.***

***30 Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;***

***31 but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.***

***They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.”***

Isaiah 40:28-31

I'm sure most of us if pressed would say - That's what I think about God-

But our words, and our thought patterns might reveal a different view of God

So the question I'd like us to consider this morning is . . .

Is My God Too Mickey Mouse?

For some people, when they think of God they think of someone like Triton, a character in the Disney movie.

The Little Mermaid

When Ariel, the Little Mermaid, is late for the musical extravaganza she and her father, King Triton have this conversation...

Little Mermaid Clip #1 (:09)

Later on when Triton discovers that Ariel had been going to the surface, and has fallen in love with a human he confronts her, in her treasure storehouse

Little Mermaid Clip #2 (1:12)

Some of us feel like God is just like that

AN OPPRESSIVE DICTATOR, sitting up in heaven just waiting for us to do something wrong so that he can come down on us with a lightning bolt and so we cower in fear of his fury.

The picture that the Bible paints is decidedly different.

The Psalmist says . . .

***Let all that I am praise the LORD;
with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.***

Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me.

He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases.

He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies.

He fills my life with good things.” Psalm 103:1-5

Others may get their picture of God from the Disney movie . . .

Pinocchio

And more specifically from the character

Geppetto

Do you remember Geppetto?

He was the woodcarver, he was the creator of Pinocchio

As a woodcarver he was good,

He could make a marionette out of a block of pinewood

He was powerful, but his power was limited

Take a look at what I mean . . .

Pinocchio Clip (:36)

Geppetto could make Pinocchio but he couldn't make him real- He couldn't make him complete

He was powerful, but he was limited in his power . . .

But **the God of the Bible isn't limited in his power.**

The prophet Jeremiah announces:

"Ah, Lord God, Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and Thine outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for Thee!" Jeremiah 32:17

How many of you have ever seen the Disney film

Cinderella

If you've seen it, you'll remember that Cinderella had a

Fairy Godmother

And the fairy Godmother had powers and was very good when it came to the work of

TRANSFORMATION

Cinderella Clip (:58)

It was like a dream come true, but only until midnight.

And then you had to wake up because the dream was over and so was the transformation.

Your chariot turned back into a pumpkin

And you were no longer a princess, but instead a scrubgirl.

Cinderella's Fairy Godmother had the power to transform her but only until midnight.

Her powers were limited.

The Bible tells us that God as the creator and sustainer of the universe, doesn't have that limitation.

He is powerful enough to complete the work that he begins in us.

Philippians 1:6 says

***"And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."* Philippians 1:6**

Some of us see God like

Peter Pan

If you've seen the Disney animated movie . . . **Peter Pan**

Then you remember that the key to everything was to just think happy thoughts . . .

If you haven't seen it, take a look at this. . .

Peter Pan Clip. . . (:46)

For some people, when they think about God, what they think is that God just wants us to just think **"happy thoughts"** so that we can soar through life.

But the **Bible paints a picture of a God who understands** that we're **not always going to be happy**, we're **not always going to soar**.

And so God hears our cries, and sees our tears

***"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."* Psalm 147:3**

And then of course there's the Disney movie that we've chosen as our kick-off for this series . . .

Aladdin

Even if you haven't seen the movie, you're familiar with the story.

Aladdin (1:09)

Of all of the Mickey Mouse views of God . . .

I'm sorry, of all of the Walt Disney views of God, this one - - -

The view of God as being like Aladdin's Genie, is probably the one that has influenced us the most.

This is a view of God we develop from the time we are very young.

And again, it's represented here onstage by this Genie Lamp.

This view of God says, "**Just rub the lamp... Just pray.**

Just ask God for what you want. And "alakazam" God will give it to you!"

How has this view influenced us?

We'll think about it

When we pray and talk to God – what's the first thing we usually do?

Do we **THANK** God, or **PRAISE** God, or **ASK FOR FORGIVENESS**.

No – we **ASK GOD** to give us what we want.

Now – there's nothing wrong with asking God for what you need.

He wants you to ask Him for what you need.

He wants to give you good things.

He loves answering your prayers.

But here's the thing about a Genie – a genie is just...

A PERSONAL WISH FULFILLER

A genie is someone who says, "**Your wish is my command. I exist to serve you.**"

But we have it backwards – God doesn't exist to serve us.

We exist to serve God.

And **this view of God as genie will hurt you** because **it puts you at the center of the universe** and God existing to meet your needs.

Instead of the reality – that He is the one true God and we exist for Him.

Life will never make sense if you view God as a genie.

As powerful as the genie in Aladdin was, there were still some things he could not do.

1. **He can't kill anyone**
2. **He can't make anyone fall in love**
3. **He can't bring anyone back from the dead**

The God of the Bible is not limited in power or wisdom,

There is nothing that he cannot do

And we **don't need to find a magic lantern** to find him.

We **don't need to work hard** in the hope that he will accept us.

The God of the Bible has, through Jesus Christ, done everything necessary for us to be able to have a relationship with Him.

Our Memory Verse for this week says it this way . . .

Jesus speaking in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 20 . . .

(Jesus) "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends." Revelation 3:20

That's a promise.

If we open that door – He doesn't say maybe – He says I WILL come in.

He will have a relationship with us.

He will give our lives purpose, meaning, direction and joy.

He will give us eternal life in heaven.

All you have to do – is open the door.

To know God and experience everything He wants to bring into your life now – and to know that you'll spend eternity in heaven when you die – all you need to do is open the door to Him.

So – how do you do that.

How do you open the door to your heart and invite God in?

It's as simple as

A – B – C

The "A" stands for

A DMIT

First – admit that you need God.

Admit that you need a Savior to get to heaven.

That you are not self-sufficient.

That heaven is perfect – but you are not.

You've messed up.

You've made mistakes.

You've sinned.

It starts today by admitting and owning up to it.

Have you ever done that?

Listen – you're not alone in this.

We have all sinned and messed up.

“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.” Romans 3:23

This is a hard one for some of us . . . because of pride.

Pride is the one thing that will keep you out of heaven.

In order for you to get to heaven you have to humble yourself.

You have to admit - “God is God and I'm not. I need a savior because I've sinned. I can't earn my way to heaven. I can't be good enough to get to heaven. I need a Savior.”

The Bible teaches that because we have sinned and turned our backs on God – and because God is perfect – there are consequences for our sin.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 6:23

Heaven is free.

God wants you to be there.

But what we earn because of our sin is death and separation from God.

That's why we need a Savior.

Someone has to overcome the result of our sin.

And that's Jesus. That's what He did for us.

“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” Romans 5:8

See – we need a Savior because there was no way we could get to heaven on our own.

So, Jesus took the punishment for our sin and died on the cross so we could be forgiven and have a relationship with God.

So – the first step to opening the door to God is to admit –

“God, I need you. I can't get to heaven on my own.

I need a savior.”

The second step is to

BELIEVE

Write that down.

To believe is more than just head knowledge.

It means I trust in, I rely on, I surrender to.

I believe so strongly that I'm willing to commit myself to it.

“For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God . . .” - Romans 10:10

So – I **ADMIT** I need a Savior to get to heaven.

And then I **BELIEVE** that Jesus is that Savior who died for me.

I trust Him with my life.

You say, ***“I believe in Jesus.”***

But do you?

Do you really believe that Jesus gave His life for you on the cross?

That God raised Him from the dead to overcome your sins and mine?

Have you trusted Him with your life and your salvation?

See – it's **one thing to say you believe there IS a GOD.**

It's an **entirely different thing to say you know Him personally and you trust him** with your life.

To **believe in your heart.**

Are you willing to say – ***“Jesus I trust you with my eternity. I believe in my heart.”***

You can believe in something up here [point to head] – but it doesn't mean you trust it here [point to heart]!

So, do you believe in Jesus? Not just that he existed – but do you believe He is enough for your salvation?

Or do you find yourself – plagued with doubts?

Like you have to be a better person to earn your salvation or to earn God's love?

If you have never believed in your heart that Jesus died for you. Believe today. Admit that you need God.

Then believe that God loves you so much that Jesus died for you.

Admit.

Believe.

And here's the third step to opening the door of your heart to God.

The final word I want you to write down is...

COMMIT

The first two actions to becoming a follower of Jesus are internal. Admit you need a Savior and Believe that Jesus is that Savior. This is a prayer that you pray to God.

This is what saves you.

But this next action is external.

It shows on the outside that you are a follower of Jesus.

You see – when you commit completely to God – it changes who leads your life and how you make decisions.

You're saying – "I want to fulfill God's purpose for my life. I'm tired of going my way. That hasn't worked very well. I'm going Jesus' way. I'm going to go God's way. I commit myself to you God!"

That's what it means for Jesus to be the leader of your life.

"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord (this means leader) / and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." - Romans 10:9

You pray an internal prayer to God where you ***"believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead."***

That saves you.

But **that internal belief flows out in an external, public commitment** in the way you live your life.

It means Jesus leads your life.

I'm no longer a follower of Me.

I'm a follower of Jesus.

God has a plan – and I'm going to trust Him.

I commit my life to follow you God.

When I decide who I'm going to date.

When I decide what job I'm going to take.

When I decide how to invest my money.

I'm saying – YOU are God.

And I am not.

I put my trust in you.

God desires a relationship with you

Through Jesus Christ He has **done everything necessary to make that relationship possible.**

He stands at the door and knocks

And if you will **ADMIT** you need God.

BELIEVE that Jesus died on the cross for you and was raised from the dead to overcome the power of sin and death in your life.

And then **COMMIT** to following Him – you can walk through that door right now – to God, to a fulfilling life and to heaven.

(Jesus) "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." - John 14:6

If that's something you are doing today - - let someone know.

CHECK THE BOX on the back of that card. . .

Let's pray