

EASTER, April 16, 2017

Beauty and the 'Beast'?

Spoiler alert! If you haven't seen "Beauty and the Beast," and don't know how the movie ends, don't read any more.

If you're still reading this, then you know that the movie ends with the Confederates marching on Richmond. Matt Damon is incredible as the unflappable Captain Stewart, seamstress to the Union Army known for gallantly repairing the coat of General Ambrose Burnside when he tore his cuff during the Battle of Fredericksburg.

Okay, that's not really how "Beauty and the Beast" ended. If you are ready to hear the truth--the cold, hard truth--read on.

The fact is, the story is inexorably flawed, including its ending. My thoughts on this immediately follow the proceeding colon:

1) Why did the prince get so depressed about being turned into a beast? Imagine just being an ordinary Joe, then suddenly being given super strength, and claws and an animal's sense of smell and hearing and sight and all that, yet still being able to read and enjoy movies and drive to Taco Bell? If it had been me, I'd be like, "THIS IS SO AWESOME!" It'd be like suddenly being one of the X-Men! I'd shout, "Thank you, strange person for the magical make-over! Your curse is truly a blessing!"

The first thing I would do as the beast is to march into town and let everyone know that, hey, I'm cool. I'd throw out a few self-deprecating jokes to put everyone at ease like, "I just washed my hair and I can't do a thing with it!" To which everyone would roar with laughter because it's so darned funny.

Then I'd invite the whole town over for a party, after which the townsfolk would go home discussing not my being a frightening beast, but instead how good the mini-hotdogs in barbecue sauce tasted.

And soon--very soon--they would forget that I look any different than they do! Soon I would just be Dave ... or Phil ... or Dennis ..., and they would think only of what's in my heart and mind, not my outward appearance.

But instead? Once the prince is transformed into a beast, he gets all depressed and hides himself away to pout for years on end: *Oh, boo hoo. I'm such a beast. Poor, poor me.*

What a waste of time! What a waste of gifts! What a waste of awesomeness.

2) And here lies the second thing that bugs me about the story: So, Belle, she becomes the only one who really enters his life. First, she's taken aback. That's understandable. She's a prisoner in his castle, after all. But eventually, she's like, "You know? The beast is really not so bad! In fact, he's really charming! And he likes Shakespeare! And ... and when his fleas jumped into my hair, I don't even care!"

That's right! She's so totally into him that she doesn't even care about catching his fleas. She falls in love with him--just the way he is, fur, fleas and all.

Let's think on that for a moment.

Have you thought on it for a moment? Okay, let's move on (only if you're ready).

The irony is that once Belle expresses her deep love for him, the spell is broken and he is changed back into the human being he once was.

We're asked to think, "*Ahhhh*, he's again a handsome prince! Now their love can be true! Oh, happy, happy day!"

The problem is that transformation had already occurred in her heart! He already *was* beautiful to her, fur and all! That's what love is! (As a side note, their half-beast, half-human children would be too cool for words.)

Granted, over time she will grow to love the guy as she did the beast, but not before urging him to grow out his hair and nails.

As the movie concludes, it feels as if she's with someone else entirely. Have you noticed he doesn't speak at the end? That would be just too much separation between the creature he was, and the person he's become. He would seem *too* different.

To make it a truly happy ending, the pair would have thanked the “witch” for changing the candle-stick and clock and various and a sundry dinnerware back into their human counter-parts, but *if you would be so kind, we both were okay with me being the beast.*

See, you and I, we’re already transformed! At our baptism! We’re just the way God made us--the way God made *me*: crooked, far-from-white teeth, ski-jump nose, a slumping back that makes me look like a walking question-mark, an impressive collection of moles, and an inability to discern when my hair is getting way too long.

I sometimes even wonder how it is that my wife--an incredible beauty--could love such a beast. And she looks at me with such love, and says, “I thank God for you every day.”

I’m not perfect looking, to say the least, but I’ve got friends, I’ve got people who love me, and most importantly, I’ve got the love of Christ--a love so great that He whispers to each one of us individually: *You are worth dying for.*

This also means that no matter what you see when you look in the mirror, you are looking at one of the most beautiful creatures on earth.

I hope you all have a very blessed Easter!