

The Gospel in Disney: #2 - *Aladdin*  
Using Adam Hamilton, COR  
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 CEV  
Sermon: “Diamond in the Rough”

Video Clip: “A Whole New World” carpet ride (sometime earlier in the service)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJJog4BJrUw>  
3:08 minutes (First 30 seconds a dialogue, 2:38 song)

**PP#1:** 1 Corinthians 1:26-28

26 Look at your situation when you were called, brothers and sisters! By ordinary human standards not many were wise, not many were powerful, not many were from the upper class. 27 But God chose what the world considers foolish to shame the wise. God chose what the world considers weak to shame the strong. 28 And God chose what the world considers low-class and low-life—what is considered to be nothing—to reduce what is considered to be something to nothing.

1 Corinthians 1, “Look at your situation when you were called, brothers and sisters! By ordinary human standards not many were wise, not many were powerful, not many were from the upper class. But God chose what the world considers foolish to shame the wise. God chose what the world considers weak to shame the strong. And God chose what the world considers low-class and low-life—what is considered to be nothing—to reduce what is considered to be something to nothing.”

**PP#2:** Sermon Series: The Gospel in Disney  
Sermon #2: “Diamond in the Rough”

“The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” -1 Samuel 16:7b

The Gospel in Disney. Not the Gospel according to Disney. No, it’s still the Gospel according to Jesus Christ! But we’re using some of Disney’s animated classics to see the Gospel illustrated in ways that make sense. Jesus did that. He used illustrations from everyday life to make His point, like salt and lamps and sheep and stories about ordinary people.

Disney’s classics, like all great art, speak to the human condition, showing it in a way that we all can identify with, a way that resonates. It speaks about what we are like as people, and the struggles we face as humans.

Disney speaks to the human condition. The Gospel is God’s response to the human condition. So, for a few weeks this fall, we’re going to use Disney as illustrations for what life is like, and each time we’re going to hear how the Gospel is God’s answer. We’re borrowing these ideas from Adam Hamilton, the pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City. We’re using his resources, like the GPS insert in your bulletin. Please take it out and use it to make some notes, and then use it all week long for daily devotions.

**PP#3:** *Image for the movie Aladdin, like video cover or poster.*

*Aladdin* came out in 1992, 22 years ago. That year, it became the highest grossing animated film of all time. It still ranks third, behind Disney’s *Lion King*, which is second, and *Frozen*, which

has claimed the top. It won 2 Oscars for its score, songs like “A Whole New World” which we heard earlier. It’s based on the Middle Eastern collection of stories in *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, but generously reinterpreted by Disney.

**PP#4:** *Image of Aladdin an orphan in the market place.*

Aladdin is an orphan, living on the street, with his monkey friend Abu. You first see him in the market in tattered clothes, stealing from vendors. You want to judge him. But be careful. What you are actually seeing, the movie is trying to show, is a diamond in the rough.

He steals some food, and then runs away to allude the police. When he finally settles down to eat, he sees two younger children going through garbage. They’re obviously street children, too, and they look very hungry. Aladdin gives his food to them.

Just then, a pompous prince comes through on his way to the palace. The horse nearly runs the little kids over, but Aladdin rescues them just in time. And it is at that moment that a very crucial exchange takes place, making you wonder, what do you see when you see Aladdin.

**Video Clip:** Exchange between Aladdan and prince (worthless, street rat, riff raff)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOYnMRV6AA0> 2:10 minutes

Is Aladdin worthless, just a street rat? How about that prince, he seems to be no good. But Aladdin: can you see not what is, but what could be? Can you see the potential? Can you see him as a diamond in the rough?

**PP#5:** *Samuel anointing David to be king, with the verse “But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” -1 Samuel 16:7.*

God sees people that way, you know. God doesn’t look on the outside. God sees the inside. In the Bible, back in 1 Samuel 16, is a story that actually happened. God sends the prophet Samuel to go anoint the next king. He goes to Bethlehem to the home of Jesse. He asks to see Jesse’s sons, so he can anoint one to be king. The oldest comes first, big, strong, handsome, skilled. Certainly king material, Samuel thinks to himself. But God whispers in his ear: “[Not this one.] ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” Same went for six other sons. Finally, he comes to the youngest, little David. Although he didn’t look like much, God knew his heart, and chose him.

God sees not what you have been, or what you are today, but what you could be. God chose Moses, the stutterer, Esther, the beauty queen, and the crude disciples, all to change the world!

Another true story: one time a farmer in Scotland named Flemming saw a boy sinking in the bog. He rescued him from a slow and terrible death. The next day, the boy’s father, a rich nobleman, tried to repay the farmer, but the farmer refused. When the nobleman saw the farmer’s son, the nobleman struck a deal: he would give the farmer’s boy the same education as he would his own son. “There must be some great potential in any son of yours,” the nobleman said.

Well, the farmer’s son eventually graduated from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in London, and, sure enough, went on to become known throughout the world as Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin!

Ironically, years later, the man who had been stuck in the bog as a boy became deathly sick with pneumonia, and was saved by penicillin. Twice saved by the Felmming family! The boy's name? Sir Winston Churchill.

His father saw something of potential in the farmer's son, and encouraged it.

**PP#6: Diamond in the Rough**

1. God sees something amazing in you

There's the first of my three main points. We are Aladdin. We are all diamonds in the rough. God sees you not as you have been, or even what you look like right now. God sees you for what you could be. He sees you as His workmanship. God wants to use you to do amazing things. You are a gem, and like an ore evaluator, God sees your cut and polished value.

OK, time for some plot. One day Aladdin sees a beautiful girl roaming the streets, and immediately falls in love. But, he doesn't know it's the princess!

**Video Clip:** Aladdan sees Jasmine in the marketplace and is in love.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_diULTMmY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_diULTMmY) 2:00 minutes

Aladdin and Jasmin spend the day together. And Jasmine begins to have feelings for him, too. But there's a problem. Jasmine has to marry a prince. Aladdin needs to become a prince.

Now, side plot. The sultan's advisor, Jafar, is bad news. He's conspiring to take over the kingdom. He manipulates Aladdin to go into the Cave of Wonders to get the magic lamp. At the last second, Jafar tricks Aladdin, but Aladdin gets the lamp back. He rubs the lamp, and ka-pow!, out comes the genie. The genie offers him three wishes, anything he wants. The genie is played by Robin Williams, who recently passed away. This scene is classic Robin Williams.

**Video Clip:** Song "You Never Had a Friend Like Me"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8rnMc22AG8> 2:20 minutes

Aladdin can have whatever he wants. What does he want most? Jasmine. To be able to marry her, he needs to be a prince. So, he uses a wish to make him a prince.

Now, Aladdin isn't a prince by birth, but the genie gives him all the stuff to look like a prince: wardrobe, riches, servants, you name it.

But it doesn't work! Jasmine isn't attracted to the stuff. She already has it. She wants a person who sees her for whom she is. When they were together in the street, she fell in love with him the way he was. He still thinks, however, it is in all the stuff that he never had. He's trying to impress her with externals. She's looking at the internals.

So, Aladdin goes to Genie to ask his opinion. What should he do?

**Video Clip:** Aladdan goes to Genie and asks what to do.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=la2QkOVchyY> 1:00 minutes

Genie says to level with her...to tell her the truth. But Aladdin tries for the impression. Here's our second lesson: How do we do this? How do we try to impress others?

**PP#7:** *Image for someone trying to impress someone else (perhaps a teen boy impressing girls?)*

This past week I was invited to go give a motivational talk to the senior high varsity football team. Now, I have never been a jock...just the opposite, actually. So standing in front of 60 junior and senior athletes made me very nervous. I asked my wife how I could look cool, perhaps wear a jersey, or a baseball cap backwards, or something. Reese just rolled her eyes and said, "They'll spot you as a nerd before you say a word. Don't try to impress them. Just be yourself. You still have good things to say!"

How about you? How do you try to impress people...with what you wear, what you drive, your house, toys, weekend exploits, position at work?

**PP#8:** "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before others, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by people. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." -Matthew 6:1-2

"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." -Matthew 5:16

In the Bible, do you know what Jesus calls people to try to impress others? Hypocrites! The word hypocrite means pretender, or play actor. They don't do it for the act itself, but as a means to impress others.

But then, in Matthew 5, Jesus talks about letting our lights shine, letting other see your good deeds. What's the difference? The difference is your motivation...*why* you are doing them. Jesus says to do good deeds so others see them...and give God the glory! You do them not to have them see *you*, but to have them see *God*. This slight nuance makes all the difference. And it is a slippery slope between the two!

**PP#9:** Diamond in the Rough

1. God sees something amazing in you
2. Influence people to praise God

The Bible's question to us is, are we trying to *impress* people or *influence* them. Impressing others makes them focus on us. Influencing them for Jesus means having them focus on Him. Do what you do so people give glory to God.

Aladdin pretends to be someone he is not, in order to impress Jasmine. It doesn't work. We need to be about influencing people and not impress them, and to praise God.

**PP#10:** *Underwater scene when Genie rescues the unconscious Aladdin*

As Aladdin is trying to figure out how to win Jasmine's hand, he gets caught in Jafar's takeover plot, and so he has to use his second wish to save himself. Now Aladdin only has one wish left. And, he had promised to use his third wish to free the genie from the lamp. You see, the genie is trapped. He is a slave to the lamp and its masters. The only way he would ever be free was if someone would use one of their wishes to free him. Of course, no one ever had. But Aladdin had promised to. But things are still in a mess: Jafar had taken over the world, Aladdin didn't have Jasmine's hand in marriage: he needed the third wish for himself.

What do you do with your third wish? What I mean by that is, what do you do with the extra you have for yourself? You have an amount of income after taxes. How do you spend it? Do you

spend it all on yourself, or do you give some of it to others? Or time. How do you spend your extra? Your education, abilities, talents. Do you use all your wishes—all the resources you have—all for yourself, or do you spend some of it on others?

**PP#11:** *Aladdin fighting powerful Jafar*

Aladdin sticks to his word. He takes grave risks and uses his resourcefulness to defeat Jafar. And even then, when he knows it means he can't marry Jasmine, he still chooses to free the genie.

The Bible calls this real love, agape love. Agape love is selfless and sacrificial love, setting someone else free, even when it comes at cost to you. And the Bible says, this is actually what it means to be human - agape, to love as God loves. To be human does not mean to err, or sin, or be selfish. This is all a result of sin. When we are selfish, it is because we are fallen, not human. When ISIS beheaded the last journalist yesterday, that is not human. That is inhuman. God made us human, to love as He loves. Every time we sacrifice ourselves for others, we are truly human.

**PP#12:** Philippians 2:3-9

[3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. [4] Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others....

[8] And being found in appearance as a man, [Jesus] humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

[9] Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name!

Jesus shows us what sacrificial love—agape—looks like. He was a prince. He could have had everything for Himself. Yet he chose to give it all up to free others...you and me! And then, Jesus calls us to follow His example.

Do you live only for yourself? Is it all about you? Or do you give up what you have for others?

If you use all your wishes for yourself, you are not happy. You are not human. When you give some away, then you find inner satisfaction.

**Video Clip:** Sultan sees Aladdan give wish away, and then allows Aladdin to marry Jasmine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7acucktFqxo>

3:12 minutes

Ahhh, isn't that nice? It all works out in the end. Aladdin, although not a prince, acts like one. He gives sacrificially out of true love. And the sultan sees this and decides that the image of a prince is not really what is important. And so he changes the law and lets Jasmine pick whomever she sees worthy.

God always does this...makes things work out. He rewards us. Perhaps not always like in this movie, but in God's way. Our lives are blessed not necessarily in worldly blessings, but always in the ways we are truly human. And these are the ones that really matter...they give us real meaning and abundant life. The blessings we have from God last forever!

**PP#13:** Diamond in the Rough

1. God sees something amazing in you
2. Influence people to praise God
3. Give yourself away

So, spend your third wish on others. Give yourself away. Be truly human! This is what God sees in you!

God is making a whole new world, and it includes you. God has a role for you in His is plan. God sees you not for what you were, or are, but for what you could be. He is calling upon us to stop trying to impress others, and start influencing others to glorify Him. And He is calling us to live into our humanity.

A whole new world!

Let's do it! Let's offer ourselves to God. We're going to pray, and as we do, let's offer ourselves to God. As you close your eyes, turn your hands up to God. Let that be your sing to give yourself to Him. Let's pray.

- Prayer:
- 1) Offer life to you.
  - 2) Make me the person you see I could be
  - 3) Forgive me for trying to impress others.
  - 4) Help me to impress them.
  - 5) Help me to practice agape.
  - 6) Give to others, and set captive free.