

The Gospel in Disney: #3 - *Pocahontas*

Using Adam Hamilton, COR

Scriptures: Jeremiah 6:16

Matthew 25:37-40

Matthew 5:43-44

**Offering Video Clip:** Pocahontas Colors of the Wind (during the offering)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvvZ1TEQRB8>

3:15 minutes

**PP#1:** The Gospel in Disney: #3 - *Pocahontas*

“Do Not Fear”

“Do not fear, I am with you” -Isaiah 43:5a

This fall we’re using some of Disney’s animated classics to help understand the human condition that we all share. Then we’re hearing the biblical truths of the Gospel that is God’s response to our human condition.

**PP#2:** *Disney’s cover for the movie Pocahontas.*

This time our Gospel in Disney story is based on a true story, and real people. Of course, Disney took liberal licenses, however, in the story! But Pocahontas was a person who really lived. She was born in 1596. Her mother had died, and so she sought out a spiritual mother. In Disney this is represented in a talking tree she calls Grandmother Willow. Pocahontas saw her first white person in 1607, at the age of 11. That’s when she met John Smith. Now, in real life, she only lived until the age of 22. But in those 11 years of relationships with the white man, she made a huge impact.

**PP#3:** Painting of Pocahontas’ baptism, located at our nation’s capital.

We don’t see it until Disney’s sequel, but in real life she went to England, got married, and became a Christian. This is the painting of her baptism that hangs at our nation’s capital. A very influential life, although tragically very short.

One of her greatest legacies was confronting your fears. She lived a life of pulling fear back, and looking directly at what seems at first to be so scary, and seeing beauty there. She taught us all that what may initially cause great fear, when embraced, trusted, given the benefit of the doubt, can become the beginning of an amazing blessing. And this is where the biblical principles come into play.

I invite you to take out your GPS, your Grow.Pray.Study bulletin insert. There’s a space for you to write down some key takeaways, and some reflections for you to use during the week.

**PP#4:** *Scene of Pocahontas, her father, and Kokoum.*

The movie starts with Pocahontas struggling with her life’s path. Her father wants her to marry a fine warrior. But he is so stern and serious. She wants adventure and new things. He is set in his ways. She just can’t imagine a life with him - so dull and stale. She needs to make a decision.

**Video Clip:** Pocahontas “Just around the River Bend”

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

3:00 minutes

**PP#5:** *Image of a crossroads / splitting path*

Pocahontas has to decide: choose safe and steady, or choose something unknown, new, exciting, around the river bend. Not an easy decision, for at different times, each can be the right choice. That's why it's so hard.

**PP#6:** Do Not Fear

1. When standing at the crossroads

Jeremiah 6:16a "This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'"

We all have crossroads. Some are small and everyday: What am I going to wear, or have for breakfast? Some hold a little more weight, like, am I going to confront that person who hurt me, or am I going to go to my friend's concert? Others are more life-impacting: should I switch jobs, or buy that car or home? Some carry so much weight they can be paralyzing: What should I choose for my career path? Should I marry her? Get a divorce? Should we move away? Should I take treatment for my life-threatening illness?

We all are at crossroads all the time. How do we know what is right and good?

Pocahontas seeks out Grandmother Willow, who tells her to follow her heart. Well, that's right some of the time. But some of the time, I can't trust my heart. Sometimes I have to conform my heart to something other than what it wants.

We Christians have a compass. We have a way to discern. Jeremiah 6:16 "This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'"

We are to ask what the tried and tested way is. We are to ask where the good way is. Not easiest, not the one I would like the most, but the good way.

We ask God to show us, to help us discern, to show us the good way. We can go to Scripture, that ancient way. It doesn't give the answer to each decision, but it points out the values and core frames that will guide each decision we need to make. We can go ask wise Christians, who have made so many of these choices before. That's why I ask for mentors to walk with our confirmation youth. They need to hear the stories of what their mentors have discovered it means to live as a Christian. We can ask God directly, praying about it. But don't just ask what you should do, ask what God thinks is good. And when you have to make important decisions, use all of these, and over a period of time. You see, we need time to listen. We need to allow time for God to sway our hearts. As we keep asking our God, we will get a feeling, a sense, deep in our souls. It will be a pulling, a weight, a sense of right or good. Then, venture out in that direction. Take small steps, and keep asking. We experience a sense of rightness, a peace, if we are going the right way. This is God's leading. No, it rarely comes in the form of an email or road sign. But if we keep listening, we will have a peace about it. This is the good path, the path we are meant to take.

Sometimes it takes patience, other times tenacity. But the right way will eventually open up. And God will help you live into it, even if it is not the easiest way! And there is no bad path. You see, our God promises to bring good out of everything, and He can bring us through anything. So don't be so afraid. God will help you.

Today, if you are making a sizeable decision, I want you to ask for prayer. We have a place after worship where members of the prayer team will be waiting to pray with you for discernment. And, everyone, your assignment this week: ask someone else to intentionally pray for you for

discernment around a fork in your road, a decision you have to make. Access the prayer support around you! And relax. Don't be afraid. God will get you through it. Remember, there is nothing God can't get you out of!

**PP#7:** *Scene of where Pocahontas sees the ship sailing in.*

Well, Kokoum is not the man of her dreams. Her dreams are so much bigger. She wants to embrace something new. Well, that dream was sailing into the bay!

The Disney movie is about two worlds colliding. One is the original American culture of Pocahontas. The other is the European culture, invading from the outside. They discover a pristine new world. It has so much beauty that they cannot readily see. They are looking only for the beauty of gold. The Native Americans can see the settlers as a threat or as potential new friends.

As these two cultures collide, both sides struggle with fear: fear of the unknown, fear of the different, fear of change, fear of the worst in the other.

John Smith and Pocahontas meet, and they begin to talk. John stumbles over his words, revealing that he has a deep-seated bias, a belief that only his way is right. He cannot see things any other way, at least, at first. Seeing things differently is one of the great gifts Pocahontas gives.

**Video Clip:** Pocahontas and John Smith ["What you mean is, not like you!"]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS1L3Hp23r8>

2:45 minutes

What you mean by savage...is...that...I'm not like you!

**PP#8:** Do Not Fear

1. When standing at the crossroads
2. When meeting others not like you

Matthew 26:37-40 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

We do that. We label people not like us. We meet someone who seems so different, and we immediately label them. It's not that we have a good reason for it. We do it before we know them.

What we need to do is allow ourselves to see them for who they really are, and then make up our minds about them...based not on appearance, but on character.

Now, this movie tackles this issue through race. And racism is a very important fear we must identify within ourselves. Now, I pride myself in being fairly nonracist. I've done my share of traveling and encountering people who look and act very differently. But if I'm honest, I have to admit, there are times when I catch myself experiencing a hyper-vigilance, or a diss-ease, when I notice someone with a different skin color. Some people immediately jump to less-than-favorable conclusions, without ever getting to know that person personally. It's something I have to notice myself doing, and coach myself to re-frame my thoughts.

But this isn't only about skin color. We do this in so many different ways. We cast judgements based on something observably different about the other, without knowing if it is true about them personally.

The Bible is all over this. It talks about how God loves variety, about how to God made things and people different, about how in value, to God there is no difference between Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female.

In the movie, this clip introduces the song, “paint with all the colors of the wind.”

God made a great, big, crazy world with a plethora of variety. It is only when we experience more and more of it that we can break out of our tendency to judge. When you talk with people who are not like you, “you will discover things you never knew you never knew!”

The fear of the different is disarmed by taking the time to relate to them personally. Hold out good things. Expect good things in return. Overlook some initial offence. Offer good things. Pocahontas did this, in real life. John Smith’s diaries say how she brought them food, and taught them that the real gold of America was...corn!

And above all of this, Jesus tells this amazing parable of separating the sheep and the goats. The sheep ask, when did we see you and help you? We don’t remember seeing you at all? The King replies, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.”

So, be careful! The person you tend to judge, is actually Jesus!

Homework: This week, make a point to extend God’s love to someone new to you. Make friends with strangers around you. Reach out to that person you don’t know. Will you church?

Well, both sides think the worst of each other, and the two cultures are heading to a huge conflict. John Smith and Pocahontas need to stop it. But they don’t think they can. In the movie, it is Grandmother Willow who tries to get them to see the power of the one.

#### **Video Clip:** Pocahontas “ripple effect”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdBWz6qcFOQ>

1 minute

Disney uses this to show the power of one. One person can make a difference. But how? How can we have that kind of courage, especially when facing such large enemies?

#### **PP#9:** Do Not Fear

1. When standing at the crossroads
2. When meeting others not like you
3. When facing your enemies

Matthew 5:43-44 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

As Christians, we have this kind of power living within us. The Holy Spirit lives in each of us, and He will guide us into the good path, and then also embolden us to live it out. In Isaiah 43, over and over again, it says, “Do not fear, for I am with you.” See? God can form and transform you!

Who is your Grandmother Willow, the person who speaks life to you, who helps you to see things...people...differently? Who is your godly mentor? You need one. Get one if you don’t.

Love your enemy. This can change you, and change our world. Replace hate with love.

Grandmother Willow tells them that the right thing is not always the easy thing.

Ah, back to the river bend. Take the easy or the right path? This takes courage. This takes God’s help. This takes love. The right thing is not necessarily easy.

#### **Video Clips:** (play the second one immediately after the first)

Pocahontas- Savages part two and Pocahontas' Sacrifice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5UcpNPLTDk>

2:20 minutes

Ratcliffe shoots John Smith

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LiMHwHgtFA>

0:55 minute

We have the power to make a difference. The power of one is a biblical principle. Pocahontas lived out the golden rule. John Smith took a bullet. Jesus says in Matthew 5, “love your enemy.”

When we live in the power of the Holy Spirit within us, God can use us to make a difference. Assignment for this week: love your enemy. Pray for seven days in a row for someone you are tempted to label as your enemy. Pray for them, for their blessing and for God to help you love them.

Now, unlike the last two movies we looked at, this one doesn’t end the usual way. The boy and the girl don’t get married or live happily ever after. Actually, it allows room for how things happened in the real story! The wounded John Smith is taken back to England to be treated. And that’s how it ends. Well, if you ask me, it was a pretty good set up for a sequel!

**PP#10: Do Not Fear**

1. When standing at the crossroads
2. When meeting others not like you
3. When facing your enemies

Isaiah 43:5a “Do not fear, I am with you”

Well, as we end, let’s go back to the Gospel response to the human condition we see in this movie. One: We all face forks in the road. When we do, actively listen for God’s voice guiding the way. Two: When you see someone who is different than you, extend your hand. Build a personal relationship. It will change you and change the world. And three: do not be afraid of your enemies. Extend yourselves to them. Love your neighbors (those like us), yes. But also love those who are not like us. Love like Jesus!

**PP#11: The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,

For ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus modeled this for us. He taught it to us. He also taught us to pray for it. These Gospel truths are all in the prayer Jesus taught all His followers to pray.

Jesus gave His followers the way and the power to change the world in God’s name. Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we are praying for a new reality. We are praying against fear, and praying in boldness for a new world. As Jesus followers, we pray it. As people filled by the Holy Spirit, we live into it.

Will you, as God’s people, pray for this new world with me?

Let’s pray!

“Our Father....Amen.”