

“Groundhog Day”

A “Reel to Real” Conversation as Morning Message
United Congregational Church, UCC, Pawcatuck, CT
Sunday, February 2, 2020
Text: Matthew 6:25-34

Happy Groundhog Day!!!! And welcome to our second “Reel to Real” Sunday, a different kind of approach to the morning message. Today our “Reel to Real” focus is a movie which is celebrating its 25th anniversary of being released to much acclaim – *Groundhog Day* starring Bill Murray. Being a Pennsylvania girl, this movie has a soft spot in my heart, I confess. It references a non-existent television station in Pittsburgh where Bill Murray is the “Weather Man.” In that capacity he and a small production crew consisting of a producer and a cameraman are sent, as they usually are, to Punxsutawney, PA to cover the famed groundhog’s weather forecast on February 2nd and he is not happy about it. Phil Connors, Murray’s character, feels this assignment is beneath him as he makes clear to his crew and everyone he encounters.

So, who has seen the movie – either recently or anytime over the last 25 years???? What do you remember about the plot-line? Let’s review the plot-line for the other folks who haven’t seen it.

- What is the main plot point of the movie? *That Phil Connors is stuck in a time loop, experiencing the same day over and over again.*
- How does he react to this? *First, he is confused, then angry, then frustrated, then depressed to the point of*

being suicidal, then he realizes he can't escape the situation no matter what he does so he decides to make the most of it.

- What key thing does Phil figure out that enables him to function, often inappropriately, within his new reality? *That he is trapped but everyone else he encounters is experiencing the day for the first time. This means he can choose how he will interact with the people he encounters. The place and the people are real, but the only fixed part of the time loop is that he can't escape the time loop.*
- What kinds of things does Phil do as he comes to grips with being stuck in time? *[pause for responses]*
- What happens when Phil finally realizes he has to make his peace with the situation? How does this come about? *He starts recognizing opportunities when he can make a real, positive difference in people's lives. Thus, he develops real relationships with the people in town, even though to them they are all meeting him for the first time.*
- What kinds of things does Phil do to help others? *[pause for responses]*
- At one point, Phil's response to the situation is to decide that since he can't die, he must be a god. How does he break free of this notion? *[pause]*

- This movie was released in the early 1990's and is very reflective of that time period. What are some aspects of this movie that would be problematic for today's audiences? [*“Me Too” moments, cavalier attitude toward suicide*]
- How does Phil finally break free of the time loop? How has he changed that enables him to reclaim his freedom? [*pause for responses*]

When I announced last week that this was the plan for this morning's message, I asked you to watch the movie and then consider this question: In the movie, who is redeemed and from what? How would you answer that question now? [*pause for responses*] Is anyone besides Phil “redeemed” or transformed in the movie?? Is there anyone Phil is not able to help as he is learning to make the best of his new reality? How does this affect him? What is the single biggest change in Phil?

As I was thinking about this morning's message, I needed to find a Scripture passage as the anchor point for our conversation along with the movie. Why do you think I chose this text from Matthew? [*pause*] Is there another text you can think of that might also work as a biblical framework for talking about *Groundhog Day*? [*pause*]

Any final comments or thoughts? Well, Happy Groundhog Day to each of you and may you always hold on to the simple joy

of every day life, being your best self as God created you to be.
And remember Phil's most valuable lesson – what you do every
moment of every day really does make a difference in your life and
the lives of everyone around you. Amen.