

*The Stories We Tell: Film & Literature*

*Class 4, May 13 - What are the stories our culture is telling?*

*As humans, we love stories, and they effect the way we see our world. As Christians, true story of scripture is a metanarrative that reflects the “one big story” of God’s love woven through many smaller stories and characters. Our world offers other narratives –some adding to the cacophony of our modern culture and some echoing the divine author. Stories have incredible power. They can help bring order and context to our lives, pointing us to God as the source of life. Our own stories also have power, so we seek to share stories of God’s work in our lives.*

*God’s Story, the stories of our culture, and our stories. These are the the stories we tell.*

**What are myths?**

Roger Scruton says, myths are “parables that contain concealed truth, a truth about people’s aspirations and the way in which they realize them.”

Myths can be based in historical fact, or they may not. Regardless, they contain something that’s true.

**Examples:** George Washington and the cherry tree (When George received a hatchet when he was six..) This myth communicates that fidelity to the truth through personal integrity was very important to the American founders – therefore, personal integrity has become a bedrock principle of our country and a trait we would like to share with our children.

*Purposes of sharing myths:*

- Define the common goals of a group
- How we obtain those goals
- To create a shared identity
- To define who has membership in a group and who does not

**Movies and literature are myths. Not just entertainment.**

Each time you watch a movie or read a book, whether you realize or not, you’re consuming a myth.

The main categories of myths in our culture:

- **Secular humanism** – good intentions, wrong target
  - o Movie example: Interstellar, Disney movies
- **Postmodernism** – given up on finding a target
  - o Movie example: Moonrise Kingdom
- **Christian** – good intentions, right target
  - o Movie example: Lord of the Rings, Les Miserables



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Any myth, even ones not specifically “Christian,” communicate truth, however. Ultimately, as Christians, we have the confidence to know that ours is the true story. Therefore, we can still realize that any story/myth ultimately communicates something that is true.

Within secular humanism, what they get right is that creation is good. It just does not acknowledge creation’s author.

Within postmodernism, they understand that the world has experienced a fall. It just does not acknowledge that the world is being saved.

The Christian category follows the narrative of God’s story – creation, fall, redemption. It echoes the full narrative, it does not take pieces out.

#### **Why consume and share myths?**

- Remind yourself of truth -- liturgical practice
- Learn what others see true in the world – engage in critical thinking

The most important myth is Scripture – we must consume it by reading the Word and engaging in Church tradition often to remind ourselves of the story that we are ourselves are a part. We can also celebrate the myth of Scripture by sharing our testimonies – not just our testimonies about our salvation, but testimonies about God’s nature seen in everyday life.

#### **What happens if individuals within our society hold to different myths?**

**T.S. Eliot’s *Idea of a Christian Culture*:** “The Liberal notion that religion was a matter of private belief and of conduct in private life, and that there is no reason why Christians should not be able to accommodate themselves to any world which treats them good-naturedly, is becoming less and less tenable. This notion would seem to have become accepted gradually, as a false inference from the subdivision of English Christianity into sects, and the happy results of universal toleration. **The reason why members of different communions have been able to rub along together is that in the greater part of the ordinary business of life they have shared the same assumptions about behaviour. . . .**

The problem of leading a Christian life in a non-Christian society is now very present to us, and it is a very different problem from that of the accommodation between an Established Church and dissenters. It is not merely the problem of a minority in a society of *individuals* holding an alien belief. It is the problem constituted by our implication in a network of institutions from which we cannot dissociate ourselves: institutions the operation of which appears no longer neutral, but non-Christian. And as for the Christian who is not conscious of his dilemma — and he is in the majority — he is becoming more and more de-Christianised by all sorts of unconscious pressure: paganism holds all the most valuable advertising space. Anything like Christian traditions transmitted from generation to generation within the family must disappear, and the small body of Christians will consist entirely of adult recruits. . . .”