

Cinderella Man

Themes which stand out:

Getting batteries recharged: “Cinderella” means someone whose God-given glory is revealed; they get to be who they really were made to be.

Several MMM movies have this theme: man makes the most of a second chance. In the Legend of Bagger Vance, it was a golfer who had been great, but sank into booze and a lack of purpose when his army friends were killed. In Man on Fire, he was jaded after seeing some difficult things as a CIA agent. But his willingness to love someone came back alive when the little girl came into his life, and he exemplified the sacrificial love of Christ for her. The main character in Gladiator went from a great general to a slave, but then rose to greatness again (though he was a slave to the end).

The prevailing theme is that the work of Jesus on the Cross has accomplished so much more than establish eternal life (as important as that might be). His defeat of the enemy made it possible for us to have victory in those very areas of life that it seems the enemy has won. We get a second chance to let God have His way with us. To be who he has made us to be.

However, in the cases of all these stories, the second chance is only made possible when the man takes a risk. He has to step out of his comfort zone.

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed."

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Wrestling with this faith: at one point, he says he doesn't want to pray; he's all prayed out. The words his wife said right before that was to thank God for God's bounty. I think that stung him, because he's wondering where the bounty is. For us, this should be a reminder that prayer is often telling God how we feel, not pretending that everything is OK. He's our dad. When kids are hurting, they cry to dad.

Did you know that 50 of the Psalms are laments? Since they're songs, it's fair to say that these Psalms are "the blues". David or another psalmist is telling God from the heart that they are hurting. Yet all of them, except Psalm 88, end up being songs of praise by the time they're finished. Perhaps if Braddock had known this kind of prayer is permissible, it would have been helpful for him to see that he could go to God with all this.

The marriage: never is there a doubt about their unity. They take "for better or worse, in sickness and in health, for richer, for poorer" seriously. However, their marriage was tested twice: once, when Mae sent kids away, and secondly, when she demanded that he withdraw from the fight against Baer.

By sending her kids away, she did a brave thing, and he followed. Up till that point, he had some pride issues which prevented him from asking for help. He got the wake-up call when the kids were sent away, and he set aside his pride and was willing to accept help (public assistance) and ask the guys for a handout.

He needs his wife's support: Jim tells Mae: "I know this isn't what you wanted, but I can't win without you behind me."-that really comes back when it's the Baer fight. She makes it clear she's not behind this fight; however, she sees how the entire community is depending on him, and decides to support him. She comes into his dressing room just before the big fight and gives a great speech:

"You just remember who you are:
You're the Bulldog of Burgen
and the Pride of New Jersey.
You're everybody's hope,
and you're your kids' hero.
And you are the champion of my heart."

Wow! Who doesn't want his wife to say something like this to him?

Remembering what he is fighting for: he is about to lose the one fight to Lasky, and, in flashback, he sees his kids; the empty bed when they got sent away; this vision it gave him what it took to keep going. He later says in a press conference that this time, he knows what he's fighting for: milk.

When we remember why we're working, why we're praying, what's at stake when we are considering sin; it gives us strength we didn't know we had.

God uses wounded healers: he really did return that money to the welfare office, and he later worked with a Christian ministry which feeds the poor. He had a heart for the poor because he knew what it was like.

Braddock was a man of Integrity—he made it clear to his son that "we don't steal"; however, when the electricity is cut off, the whole family is stealing wood.

A real friend: Joe showed real friendship by putting himself on the line to get Braddock back to boxing. We all have people we call friends, but how many of us would sell all our furniture to help a friend?

A strong work ethic: When he won the one fight, the next day, he's back on the dock; it's often tempting to rest on our accomplishments, but he knew he still had kids who needed to eat.

Women being women: Mae doesn't want him fighting because she likes stability, doesn't like risks.

Joe's wife says "we have to wait for them to fix everything, and every day, they feel like they're failing us, when it's really just the world that's failed."

God built women a certain way for good reason. They aren't wrong when they act feminine, and we're not wrong when we act masculine. Their need for stability is a compliment to our tendency to take risks. These are not conflicting things.

Having a purpose, having vision: when he went against most of the fighters that he was supposed to lose to, he didn't just go in hoping to survive. He looked confidently at each one; he never saw an enemy he didn't think he could defeat. This is like their marriage. They had an attitude that there wasn't anything they couldn't face down, together.

For a time, his work life was just about surviving. In the ring, he was hoping just to survive.