

**Christmas at the Movies 2019**

***Home Alone***

**December 15, 2019**

Good morning everyone. Thanks for showing up or watching online on this snowy day as we continue in our series, *Christmas at the Movies*.

Today's movie (obviously) is *Home Alone*, which is the top grossing Christmas movie of all-time in terms of box office ticket sales.

- I'm curious, how many of you have seen it?
- Anyone seen it more than once?
- Anyone seen it more than 10 times?

I don't know if I've seen it *that* many times but I do know that it's a great story that illustrates some great truths that go far beyond the story itself, which is why we're using it in this series.

For the two of you who haven't seen it, I'm going to take the first few minutes of this message to give you the basic plotline. So here goes ...

Through a series of comical coincidences including:

- A power outage
- A reassignment of sleeping arrangements to accommodate extended family
- And a pesky neighbor kid who is the same age and size as Kevin ...

... 8-year old Kevin McCallister's parents accidentally leave him asleep at the house on the morning when their extended family leaves for a Christmas vacation in Paris, France.

And it's not until they're halfway across the Atlantic Ocean that they realize he is missing.

By the way – quick time out – did you know that the original “home alone” story is actually in the Bible?

Luke, one of many who, back in the first century, investigated the life of Jesus and wrote down the high points of the story, tells us that, when Jesus was 12 years old, he and Mary and Joseph and a bunch of their relatives made a five-day journey to Jerusalem for the Passover Celebration.

When it was over and it was time to go back to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph made the same mistake that Kevin McCallister's parents did. Somehow, in the hustle and bustle of all the activity and all the relatives, they left without him!

And it wasn't until four days later that they finally found him in Jerusalem, safe and sound.<sup>i</sup>

Anyway ... in *this* version of "Home Alone" ... when Kevin finally wakes up, he discovers that everyone is gone. He's home alone which, as we'll see, has its upside and its downside.

Here's the downside ...

(Begin) Kevin: "Hellooooo ..."

(End) Kevin runs up stairs, grate slams shut

Unfortunately, the imaginary furnace monster and all the weird noises that go along with a big empty house aren't the only scary things Kevin has to face.

He also has to deal with two petty thieves who have been casing the neighborhood for homes to rob while families are away on vacation, and the MacCallister home is their prime target.

And what gives the story much of its humor is how often they're outwitted by a second-grader who takes it on himself to singlehandedly defend his homestead.

For example, after Kevin realizes who they are and what they are trying to do, he puts together an elaborate scheme to convince them that he is *not* home alone.

Let's watch.

That scene repeats itself in one form or another until the bad guys are finally defeated and arrested by the police.

And, at the end of the movie, when his family finally returns, they find that not only did Kevin survive being left home alone, the crisis actually helped him to grow and mature. He's not the same kid that they left behind.

## **Possible Lessons**

And that's one of the possible lessons or takeaways from this movie:

Hard times, even though they're not a whole lot of fun and sometimes scary, can be defining moments that build character. It all depends on your attitude and how you emotionally respond to your circumstances.

And that's what we see in this movie. Kevin repeatedly chooses a positive attitude in his situation and, in the end, the situation helps him become a stronger person.

There are some other really good takeaways from this movie, too.

### **1. One is that “things are never as bad as they may seem.”**

One of the great temptations we all face is the tendency to overemphasize the negative in our lives. It's so easy for our attention to be drawn towards what's *unpleasant* about a person or a situation.

That's exactly where Kevin starts out in this movie. As we'll see in a minute, he's actually *glad* to be home alone because he's been so focused on what's wrong about his family.

But, by the end of the movie, he discovers that living without them, in reality, is much less desirable than *learning to live with them*.

What he thought was “unbearable” at the beginning, really wasn't.

### **2. Another possible lesson is to “be thankful for what you have.”**

In the same way that we're easily drawn to focus on the downside, a lot of us tend to overlook the *positive* and, as a result, we're ungrateful for what we have.

And, again, that's where Kevin is emotionally at the beginning, which is why one of the most touching moments in the story happens on Christmas Eve when he finally begins to appreciate what he had in his family.

Let's watch.

And everybody said, “awwww ...”

But let's move on.

### **3. One more possible lesson from the movie is that “you are valuable, no matter what others think.”**

Everything Kevin hears and experiences at the beginning of the movie serves to convince him otherwise.

- He's the youngest, so he gets a lot of abuse and ridicule from his older siblings
- His parents still treat him like a baby
- And the bad guys think that they can take advantage of him.

The message comes in loud and clear to him: “you’re at the bottom of the food chain.”

I think a lot of us can relate to that because we live in a world that constantly tells us that we don’t measure up in some way or another and constantly calls into question our value and worth.

But, as Kevin discovers by the end of the story, the world and its assessment is not accurate. He is *not* a loser. He *does* matter. He *is* important. He *is* valuable.

## Looking Deeper

And that brings me to what I really want to talk to you about this morning.

One of the reasons I love this movie is that, in addition to being a lot of fun, it offers what I think is a pretty good analogy of what Christianity teaches about the complicated relationship between human beings – you and me – and the God who declares ...

- Everyone matters to Him.
- Everyone is important to Him.
- Everyone is valuable to Him.
- No one is a loser.

And, if you’re *not* a Christian, I hope that by looking a little more deeply at this goofy movie you’ll be able to understand what God has done for you (and for me) in a way that is clearer to you than ever before.

And if you *are* a Christian; if you’re a believer in and follower of Jesus, I hope you’ll have a greater appreciation for God’s grace and mercy than ever before.

Now, before we begin, I should tell you that even though this movie is a comedy, I’m going to take a pretty serious approach to it because the analogy is pretty serious. So just be ready for that.

The way the movie starts out is with Kevin questioning not only his own value and worth but also the value of being in his family.

And, again, for good reason: *he’s at the bottom of the food chain ...* and almost literally, as this next scene shows.

It’s the night before the big trip and everyone is eating their favorite pizza ... except for Kevin.

Check it out.

(Begin) Kevin: “Did anyone order me a plain cheese?”

(End) Kevin: "why do I always get treated like scum?"

<BEGIN SLIDE SET 3>

"Why do I always get treated like scum?"

And that question reveals the depth of Kevin's doubts about his family, specifically ...

- Whether or not they truly love him.
- Whether or not they have his best interests at heart
- Whether or not they are "good."

And that's where the analogy begins.

The way Kevin feels about his family is similar to the way almost all of us, at some point, feel about God.

### **1. Every human being, at some point or another, questions God's love.**

We hear that God loves us, we sing "Jesus loves me this I know" from the time we're kids (sang about it just a few minutes ago) ... but then we experience the hard side of life, the unfair side of life.

And we begin to wonder ...

"If God is loving and God is powerful then ...

- Why is my life so hard?
- Why am I treated unfairly?
- Why doesn't my body heal?
- Why did my spouse die?,
- Why did I lose my job?
- Why doesn't God step in and do something to make my world better?

Why do I always get treated like scum?"

Ever have thoughts like that?

I'm sure you have – and maybe even this morning you showed up with that thought – because every human being has those thoughts at times.

- People who believe in God and are committed to Jesus – Christians – have thoughts like that.
- And people who say they *don't* believe also have thoughts like that.

No matter where we are on the spectrum of belief and commitment, every single one of us, at some point, is like Kevin in this movie. We question the value of having anything to do with God, because we doubt His love and goodness towards us.

Now, what happens in the movie at this point is that Kevin takes his doubts about his family to the next logical step. Because he believes his family is not loving and good, he decides he would be better off without them.

Let's watch.

And that's what happens. They all *do* disappear.

But that's not the main thing that happens. The main thing that happens from this point on in the story is that *Kevin* is in charge.

You see, "I wish they would all just disappear" really means, "They don't love me. I can't trust them. Therefore, everything would be better if *I* was in charge instead of them."

And that's exactly what every human concludes at some point concerning God. We doubt that He loves us, we doubt that He is good.

## **2. Therefore (we think) things would be better if we were in charge instead of *Him*.**

After all, God doesn't appear to have our best interests at heart. If He did, life wouldn't be as hard. We wouldn't feel as much pain.

Besides, we're not *stupid*. We can figure things out.

So we conclude, like Kevin, that the wisest course of action is to take control of our own lives and do what we think is best.

I don't care what God says ...

- I'm not going to tell the truth when it might cause problems for me.
- Love my enemies instead of trying to get revenge? Seriously?

- Give a percentage of my income to church and charity when I have my own financial challenges and goals?
- Live according to a high moral code when it would be so much easier to do whatever feels good?
- Address conflict instead of pretending it's not there (or gossiping)?
- Honor my body instead of doing whatever I want?
- Actually take time daily and weekly to worship a Being I can't see, hear or touch?

"Look, if God was keeping His end of the deal ... if I wasn't being treated like scum ... If God was really good and loving to me ... if He was trustworthy ... I might consider it.

"But, given the reality of the situation, I'll just figure out my own way. I don't need God or some book to tell me what's right or wrong. In fact, I don't need Him, period. I think I'd rather be alone."

Ever been there? I know I have and I am sure you have, too.

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Now, here's the thing (and this is the next part of the analogy).

### **3. Like Kevin, almost all of us believe this approach will lead us to freedom.**

We believe that living without God – without God's authority and God's "rules" (whatever they might be) is the way to be free.

In fact, watch Kevin's reaction when he thinks that his wish for his family to disappear has *literally* come true.

"Wow! Now I can do anything I want! I am in charge of my life! I'm free!" – which is what Kevin literally exclaims as he runs around the house.

So what will he do now that he is free – now that he is in charge with no one to tell him what to do or not do?

And as we watch this next clip, pay close attention to Kevin's attitude towards his parents and his older brother, Buzz.

Now, that's pretty funny – and, again, this movie *is* a comedy – but, in reality, almost all of those things are stupid, destructive and dangerous. In reality, what we have here is an 8-year-old in full-on "rebel" mode.

And did you notice his attitude towards his brother and his parents? It was cute and everything but he literally mocked them.

And maybe I'm pushing the analogy here but that kind of reminds me of how a lot of *us* approach God when we're in rebel mode. "I'm being really bad, God. Better come out and pound me. Better come out and stop me."

And then when nothing appears to happen, we conclude once again that God either isn't there or God doesn't care.

I say that nothing "appears" to happen because it only *seems* that nothing is happening. But there *is* something happening.

And to understand what that is, we need to look at something the Apostle Paul wrote in a letter to a bunch of Christians living in Rome in the first century.

Now, for those of you who don't know, Paul was the guy who spent the first half of his life trying to destroy Christianity and the church. Then he met the risen Jesus face-to-face and spent the second half spreading Christianity and starting churches all over the Roman world.

In the beginning of his letter, Paul is writing about people who rebel against God and what happens to them ...

#### **People who ...**

*... knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks.  
Romans 1:21 (NLT)*

People who said "I don't need You. I'm better off without You. I can run my life all by myself, thank you."

#### **Paul writes that, instead of finding more freedom ...**

*The result was that their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools.  
Romans 1:21-22 (NLT)*

By the way, don't let the force of this passage escape you. When Paul writes, "they" he's talking about *you and me*. This is what happens to *us* in our rebellion against God.

We *think* we're going to find freedom ... we *think* we're smarter than God ... but, in the end, darkness and confusion overtakes our thinking. We become fools who do stupid, destructive and dangerous things.

And what does God do in response? What happens – even when we mock Him?



Paul tells us.

**He writes:**

*Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God ... Romans 1:28 (NLT)*

In other words, because they decided to do life their own way, without Him ...

*[God] abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. Romans 1:28 (NLT)*

Some translations say that "God gave them over" to their foolish thinking.

God's response is "If this is the kind of life you want, you may have it. If you want to eat junk and watch rubbish (so to speak), I will let you."

This is why God doesn't "strike us dead" when we disobey Him and even mock Him. You and I have been created as free moral agents and God simply allows us to choose our own direction and thus our destiny.

And we do choose our destiny.

- When we don't tell the truth, people stop trusting us.
- When we hate our enemies, we become angry and bitter people.
- When we hoard our money, we become threatened and anxious about our future and anything that might disrupt the cash flow.
- When we settle for the lowest common moral denominator, we forfeit the glory of being fully human and become animal-like in our behavior.
- When we refuse to deal with conflict, we never give or receive grace and forgiveness.
- When we dishonor our bodies, we sin against ourselves.
- When we don't take time to worship, we become prideful or anxious because "it's all up to us."

**4. Point being: when we exclude God, the result is *not* freedom. It's stupidity, destruction and, more importantly, danger.**

... which is something Kevin discovers pretty quickly.

- Yes, his family disappeared just as he wished.

- Yes, he's in charge of his own life.
- And yes, he's having a good time.

But those two thieves who were outwitted by Kevin's fake Christmas party? They finally figure out what's really going on.

Check it out.

"He's home alone."

And in the next part of the movie, we see the two bad guys try to take advantage of that.

Of course, they're not the sharpest knives in the drawer so, even though they do actually "capture" Kevin at one point, in the end, he prevails – which is what makes the movie so funny. (Again, this movie is a comedy).

But it's much different in real life because separating ourselves from God through our rebellion not only turns us into fools, it also puts us directly into the crosshairs of the enemy of our soul, Satan, for whom we are no match.

Now, we might be able to play the game for a while, to stay one step ahead of him for a while (like Kevin did in the movie) but, as long as we continue our rebellion, we risk losing *everything* – even our eternity.

### **Jesus once put it this way ...**

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy."*      *John 10:11 (NLT)*

Left unchecked, that's what he will do, which is why being "home alone" – without God – is not only a foolish and destructive place to be. It's also a dangerous one.

## **The Rescue**

Ok, now let's hit pause for just a minute and review what we've learned so far about the relationship between human beings and God.

- We doubt God's love and goodness.
- We think it would be better for us to be in charge instead of Him.

- We believe this approach will lead us to freedom.
- Yet the result is not only foolishness and destruction, we also put ourselves in danger.

Question is ... what now?

Let's let Jesus answer.

After describing the soul-destroying mission of the thief ...

**Jesus adds:**

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

**For ...**

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd [doesn't kill or destroy the sheep. He] lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:10 11 (NIV)*

When Jesus said that, He was foreshadowing what was going to happen; the great lengths to which He was going to go – to the very point of death on a Roman cross – to rescue all of us from the danger we are in.

And what's amazing about that is that Jesus – God – is the one who was rejected in the first place!

Don't miss this.

- Human beings doubt the goodness of God, wish for Him to disappear, and then rebel against Him.
- And God says, "if that's what you want to do, then ok, go ahead."
- And we do, leaving ourselves in grave danger both in this life and in the next.
- And guess who shows up to rescue us? God Himself!

And this is perfectly represented by what happens in the movie.

Even though Kevin's mom was the target of his distrust, anger and rejection, when she realizes that he is alone and in danger, she's the one who goes all out to reach him.

Listen closely to what she says in this scene.

**Video Clip – A0 Whatever It Takes (1.6 min)**

(Begin) Ticket agent: "Everything's full"

(End) Gus: "Polka king of the Midwest?"

As it turns out, she doesn't have to sell her soul.

Instead, all she has to do is hitch a ride with Gus and his band, The Kinoshka Kickers ... in the back of a Budget Rental Truck ... through a raging blizzard.

It was a crazy and bizarre way to reach Kevin. But she did it because she truly does love him.

But God did something even more bizarre in reaching us.

**In another of Paul's letters, he describes it like this:**

*We were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. Galatians 4:3 (NIV)*

In other words, in our rebellion against God, we did not find freedom. Instead, we enslaved. We were in trouble. We were in grave eternal danger.

*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman ... Galatians 4:4 (NIV)*

2,000 years ago, at that "set time" through the birth of a baby in Bethlehem, God went to the extreme to reach and rescue people like you and me – people who question His love and goodness; people who outright reject Him.

And God did so because he loves us and we matter to Him. We matter to Him.

You matter to Him. Regardless of what anyone else says, and regardless of what all you've done, you're important to Him. You're valuable to Him.

And He wants to be reunited with you. He wants to be part of your life and for you to be part of His.

And that brings us to the climax of the movie, when Kevin and his mother are finally reunited. And, again, pay special attention to her reaction in this scene.

Let's watch.

**Video Clip – A1 Reconciled (1.3 min)**

(Begin) Kevin looking at picture of family

(End) Mom and Kevin embrace

**Conclusion**

Did you catch that? Did you hear how her breath was taken away when she saw the son she loved so deeply?  
Did you see the joy in her eyes?

Friends, *that* is how God feels about you.

So what are we to do about this? If you're a Christian, remember and rejoice.

If you're not a Christian, obviously you can ponder this a bit more if you need time. But I suspect that some might be ready to act.

If so, I like to think of it in terms of ABC.

**First of all "A" ... Agree with God.**

Agree with God that you are a rebel and you need a savior. That's the first thing.

**Second, "B" ... Believe that Jesus died for your sins and that He rose again.**

Trust that what He did on your behalf is enough; that you don't need to try to make up for or atone for your sins – which isn't even possible.

**Then, finally, "C" ... Come and follow Him.**

That was Jesus' invitation to whoever would listen; whether that person was a great saint or a great sinner or a great skeptic (which pretty much covers all of us in this room).

So you express your agreement with God and your belief in Jesus and what He did and then you say "yes, I'll come and be part of your movement and your community called 'the church.'"

Agree, Believe and Come – that's how we accept God's invitation. That's how we accept his grace.

And as we close out this service, I want to give you a chance to do just that. Would you pray with me?

Let's pray.

<PRAYER>

1. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer next week
2. Christmas Eve – 3:00 / 4:30
3. Offering at the door

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Luke 2:43