

**At The Movies 2018
When Evil Comes to Call**

A Quiet Place
July 15, 2018

**Worship Songs – Whom Shall I Fear
Worship Song – It Is Well / T&G**

Video Clip - 01 EVIL LURKS

(Begin) “Day 89” on screen

(End) Beau picks up batteries and
walks out

And *you just know* that’s going to
turn out to be a really, really bad
decision. After all, that’s how
horror movies work, right?

- “No, don’t go in there!”

- “No, don’t take the batteries!”

Good morning everyone.

And welcome to week number one of our annual *At the Movies* series.

I’m curious:

- How many of you have seen today’s movie, *A Quiet Place*?
- How many of you liked it?
- Anyone have nightmares about deadly extra-terrestrials?

I don’t blame you if you did because this was a pretty intense movie. However, in spite of that, *A Quiet Place* was also one of the best-

reviewed movies of 2018, earning a “95% fresh” score according to Rotten Tomatoes.ⁱ

It’s also currently at number six on the list of earnings among all modern “thrillers” – putting it in the same class with movies like *It*, *The Sixth Sense*, *Jaws*, *The Exorcist*, and *Signs*.ⁱⁱ

Now, I have to tell you that I’m not a big fan of horror movies or movies about space invaders but I absolutely loved this one.

And I think you’ll see why as we go through this but, first, let me explain why we do this series every

year. (For some of you, this may be the first time you've experienced this kind of thing in church).

So ... two reasons ...

1. *Movies are one of the most universally-enjoyed forms of entertainment in our culture.*

Pretty much everyone loves a good story that's well-told and well-presented. That's why Hollywood keeps making movies!

2. *The founder of the Christian faith, Jesus of Nazareth, was also great at telling stories.*

In fact, those who followed Him during his ministry wrote that Jesus frequently attracted huge audiences to hear what He had to say *because He was quite entertaining* (which made Him very different from the other religious leaders of His day).

Of course, Jesus was more than just “entertaining” because the unique thing He would do in His storytelling was to use the familiar things of this world like ...

- a farmer
- or a coin
- or a lamp

- or a seed
- or a banquet
- or a traveler
- or a family

... as metaphors for what He called “The Kingdom of God” (which is a shorthand phrase for “what life is like when God is in charge.”)

He would often say “the Kingdom of God is like” and then go on to tell a story that illustrated a unique and surprising (and occasionally disturbing) truth about God or people or the world in which we live.

In fact, a few of the stories Jesus

told left people feeling uncomfortable and nervous and even scared ... kind of like today's movie.

... which is why I think if Jesus walked among us today, He might say something like “did you see *A Quiet Place*? The Kingdom of God is kind of like that ...” and then go on to tell the story and draw the analogies ... which is my goal not just today but in every week of this series.

Cast of Characters

So, with all that said, let's get into

it.

And let's begin by introducing the cast of characters, most of whom we've already met in that first clip.

<pic> First is Lee Abbott, who is played by John Krasinski who also directed the movie and rewrote the original script.

I'm sure you recognize him from the long-running TV show *The Office*.

<pic> Anyway, Lee is married to Evelyn ...

... played by Emily Blunt who also happens to be married to Krasinski in real life ... which is not only

interesting but is also an indication of the passion they both felt about this movie and the importance of family.

Blunt had just given birth to their second daughter and Krasinski said that he was “already in a state of terror about whether or not [he] was a good enough father”ⁱⁱⁱ which is part of what motivated him to take on the project.

<pic> Anyway ... Lee and Evelyn have three children with Regan being the oldest.

She is also deaf ... which is why, whenever the movie shows us things from her perspective, there

is no sound or it's extremely muffled.

And, by the way, the actress who plays Regan is also deaf in real life.

<pic> Then there is Marcus, who is a year or so younger than Regan.

<pic> And, finally, there is Beau, the youngest of the three.

And, if you saw the movie, you know that Beau's decision to take the batteries ends up costing him his life later that day when one of the other main characters of the movie ...

<pic> ... the alien invaders ...

... hears the noise made by the toy spaceship and attacks and kills him – as has happened to many others in the previous 89 days.

As the tagline of the movie puts it: “if they hear you they hunt you” and (what’s not in the tag line) “if they find you they kill you” ... which is what makes this such a tense and scary movie. In the world of the Abbott family, to risk making any kind of sound is *literally* to risk losing your life to an invader.

By the way, the name of this family – Abbott – as well the names of each of its members provides a good clue

to what the movie is about – at least, to what the filmmakers intend it to be about.^{iv} (Whenever you try to analyze a story you should always investigate the names of the characters. In this case it’s a little more challenging because they are only named in the script and not in the dialogue).

Be that as it may, Vocabulary.com says that “an *abbot* is the head of a monastery. Just as businesses have bosses and teams have coaches, the monastery has an abbot. The word abbot comes from the Greek *abbas*, which means ‘father.’

“So, an abbot is the superior of a

monastery, the father of the fathers. Other monks must obey the abbot, and the abbot should lead and inspire all the monks.”^v

So, Lee Abbott is the head of the sacred little monastery that is his family but, more than that, Lee is also meant to be an inspiration and example to the fathers of our culture. One of the clear messages of this movie is to men and to dads in particular: “this is your role; this is what you should aspire to” and, after seeing the movie, I totally agree.

We’ll talk about some of the other names as we go along but let’s get

to what happens in the story.

On the Surface

As we saw in the first clip, the story picks up 89 days after the aliens invade. We don't know much about how or why they are there, only that they are extremely sensitive to sound and whenever they hear human noise, they attack.

Only a few survivors are left in the area. And part of the reason *the Abbotts have survived* is that ...

<pic> Lee has created an elaborate system of protection that allows the family to go about life as normally as possible without sound ...

... a task which is helped immensely by the fact that they already know sign language because of Regan's deafness – a condition that has quite surprisingly turned out to be key to their survival.

<pic> Evelyn homeschools the children during the day.

<pic> In the evening they play games together – quietly, of course.

<pic> Occasionally, they take trips to town to forage for what's left in the shops and stores which, as we saw ...

<pic> ... is what precipitates the crisis that takes place at the beginning of the story: the death of their youngest son, Beau.

By the way, Beau is the French word for “beautiful” which tells us that this boy is the pride and joy of his family, which makes his loss all the more painful. It’s just a gut-punch of the worst kind; a grief that has the power to make you give up ... which, we discover, is what some choose to do.

After the opening tragedy, the story fast forwards to about a year or so after Beau’s death. One day, Lee and Marcus are walking through the woods when they encounter an elderly man whose wife has recently been killed by an alien. Clearly in grief and agony, he screams for the express purpose of

attracting the alien's attention. As Lee and Marcus watch in horror, he is successful and is soon devoured.

Now, the movie passes no judgement on this his decision. Instead, his choice serves as a stark contrast to the choice the Abbotts make.

Instead of giving up and ending it all, they keep on living just like before.

- Evelyn continues to teach the children during the day.
- In the evening they continue to play games together.
- They continue to go into the

town.

And Lee continues to work on a project that will make life better for Regan as we see in this scene where she's about to break a rule: going into his "man cave."

Not really - she's going into the basement where he creates all of the technology they use, as well as where the surveillance equipment is located.

Enjoy the little jump-scare at the beginning. 😊

Video Clip - 02 WE'LL KEEP TRYING

(Begin) Regan at top of stairs

(End) Regan begins to cry

Lee has created yet another hearing aid which, as Regan predicts, doesn't work – at least (as we'll see) not in the way they expect.

But the point of the scene is “we'll keep trying. We are not giving up on anything.”

One other scene which so clearly illustrates the attitude and mindset of this family living with so much grief in the middle of this terrifying reality takes place one evening at dinner.

As we watch, see if you can figure

out the strange thing the family is doing.

Here we go.

Video Clip - 03 GIVING THANKS

(Begin) Evelyn dishing out food

(End) Fades with everyone eating

So, what was the family doing?

We can't know for sure since no words are uttered and there is no signing but, to me, it looks a lot like prayer; it looks a lot like expressing gratitude to God for what they are about to receive.

That doesn't mean that they aren't

still grieving and mourning the loss of Beau and the world as it was. However, in spite of that, they are deliberately and daily choosing to express their gratefulness for what they do have.

And if those two thoughts are all you get out of this movie ...

- To keep on trying and
- To be grateful regardless of how terrible your circumstances are

... to say nothing of ...

- The reminder of the importance of family and

- The encouragement for men to be good fathers ...

... I'd say you got your money's worth!

A Deeper Meaning

But, if we dig a little deeper, there's actually a lot more going on here (at least to my eyes and ears) because not only are the Abbotts *not* giving up on life, *they are actually creating another life.*

<pic> Turns out that Evelyn is, at this point in the story, eight months pregnant.

Oh, by the way, it's probably worth

noting that “Evelyn” is the long-form name of a very famous biblical character: *Eve*, who according to *that* story, is the mother of all human life.

Hold onto that thought while you ponder this question: besides sleeping, eating and pooping, what is *the one thing* that babies are guaranteed to do?

Cry. Babies make noise and it’s impossible to stop them.

And that means *the aliens will be coming for Evelyn’s baby* ... which is the focus of the second half of the movie: all the measures that she

and Lee take to protect that baby from meeting the same fate as Beau and, of course, the terror they go through along the way.

That's where the real horror is in this movie and, for those who enjoy those kinds of things, it's plenty tense and scary.

But what I want to focus on in the time that remains is the metaphor associated with that which, to me, is just begging to be unpacked. So here goes ...

The thing about the aliens is that we never learn where they're from or why they're here – they just *are*.

They're not setting up colonies and they're not taking over the world. They have no apparent agenda other than to destroy human life.

<Pic> In fact, one of the notes on Lee's whiteboard is the question: "why don't they eat their kill?"

They're not even doing it for food!

So, question (and this brings us to the metaphor):

- What experience has for thousands of years led men and women to ask (often through tears of grief and agony) "why is this happening to me? What did I do to deserve this? What's

the point?”

- What force in our world has no apparent agenda other than to ruin and destroy human life?

The force ... the experience ... is random, irrational, unexplainable *evil* that seems to come out of nowhere – like the alien creatures in this movie – and savagely attacks us and our loved ones.

- The seemingly benign symptom that turns into a terminal diagnosis.
- The unexplainable illness or pain that never goes away.
- The unexpected death of a

family member or friend.

- The random accident that permanently changes a life.
- The birth defect that makes every day a struggle.
- Simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time when something terrible happens.

Those kinds of things happen all the time in our world and it's no exaggeration to say that more than a few of us *have* suffered and *will* suffer from this kind of evil.

It's just part of the human experience. It's just what happens to the sons and daughters of Evelyn ... Eve.

But unlike the origin of the aliens in the movie, we know where this evil comes from.

One of the most insightful early followers of Jesus explained it like this:

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

*Ephesians 6:12
(NIV)*

In other words, the earth is a

spiritual war zone between cosmic forces of good and evil, and you and I are caught in the crossfire.

Now, as to how it got that way, that's a story for another day. And just to be complete, not every form of evil we experience comes from that source because ...

- Some of the evil we suffer is self-inflicted. We do it to ourselves through our sinfulness or foolishness.
- Some we suffer at the hands of truly evil people.
- Some comes from systems and

institutions that are unjust.

- Some comes from otherwise decent people who we love and care about.

And we're going to look at each of those over the next four weeks because each movie in our series illustrates one of those types.

But this one today - random, irrational, unexplainable evil - is probably the hardest of all to deal with.

And it almost always raises difficult questions in our minds that the others do not - questions about

God; whether God exists and, if so, the nature of that God.

And one of the coolest things about this movie is that two of those questions are actually raised and answered; one through Marcus and the other through Regan.

As we watch this clip, see if you can figure out the question that is in Marcus' mind concerning his father.

Video Clip - 04 AM I SAFE?

(Begin) Lee signals "Time to go"

(End) Evelyn looks at Lee

The question that's in Marcus' mind

concerning his father is “will I be safe if I trust myself to you?” which is a reasonable concern when you live in a world like his and after what happened to your little brother.

Now, Marcus *is* safe – at least in the short term. He goes with his dad to the river to fish and he’s terrified every step of the way.

But Lee demonstrates that, because of the noise of the river and a nearby waterfall, they actually can actually talk and even yell if they want. In that moment, there is nothing to fear.

But the truth of the matter is that the monsters are still out there. Until they're destroyed once and for all, Marcus *is* in danger ... which means that trusting his dad, in reality, is not enough to keep him safe.

And this is what's so hard when it comes to God.

In a world like ours, we ask the same question of Him: "will I be safe if I trust You?" thinking that the answer ought to be "yes" ...

... because, after all, He's all-knowing and all-powerful, right?

But that's *not* the answer which is

not only what our experience reveals but also what Jesus himself told those who followed Him: “In this world you will have trouble” because evil is still present and active.

And this is also why one of His friends, the Apostle Peter

... once advised those who looked up to him to ...

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil [the leader of that cosmic system of evil] prowls around like [an alien predator] a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1

Peter 5:8 (NIV)

In other words, the monster is still on the loose. And until he is destroyed once and for all, we are *not safe* regardless of how much we trust God ...

... which serves to increase the significance of *the second question about God* that the movie raises through Regan.

We saw a hint of it at the end of the previous scene when she pushes her dad away and walks off.

In this next scene (which takes place as Lee and Marcus sit near the

waterfall), Marcus gives voice to the question in her mind.

Let's watch.

Video Clip - 05 AM I LOVED?

(Begin) Marcus: "Why didn't you let her come?"

(End) Regan looking at photo on cross

So what is Regan's question? It's not about safety. Because of the guilt and grief she feels, her question is "does my father even love me?"

And in a world like the one in which she lives, the prospect of the

answer being “no” is truly unbearable.

The same thing is true for us in *this* world, which is why so many people wonder “if this kind of evil is happening to me, does God really love me?” thinking that the answer must be “no.”

But it’s not, because God doesn’t show His love for us primarily in the moment-to-moment circumstances of our lives.

Instead, as Jesus Himself once put it (and demonstrated).

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13

(NIV)

... which is exactly what Lee does near the end of the movie.

At this point, Evelyn has given birth through what can only be described as the most traumatic and terrifying labor known to women (I'll spare you the details).

And now Marcus and Regan are trapped outside by the alien in what can only be described as the most traumatic and terrifying *situation* imaginable.

But Lee somehow finds them and tells them to go hide in an old truck

stationed at the top of the hill for just this possibility. The guy has thought of everything.

And for a moment, it looks like everyone will escape but ...

Well, let's watch.

Video Clip - 06 NO GREATER LOVE

(Begin) Regan staring through truck window

(End) Truck rolls to bottom of hill

The only way for Lee to save his kids was to draw the alien to himself and to experience the full extent of its evil to the point of death. And because he loved them

and had *always* loved them, that's what he did.

And did you notice where the alien wounded him in the initial confrontation? He was bleeding from his side.

It reminded me of something that one of Jesus' friends wrote: that while He was on the cross, one of the Roman soldiers stuck a spear in his side and Jesus bled.

And I don't know if it was intentional or not, but in that scene, Lee Abbott looks a lot like Jesus.

And not just because of he was

wounded in similar fashion but because on the cross, Jesus did exactly what Lee Abbott did in that scene. *He drew all the powers of darkness to himself so he could experience the full extent of their evil* and begin the process of destroying them through His resurrection.

As one early Christian writer put it:

Because God's children are human beings--made of flesh and blood--the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who

had the power of death.

Hebrews 2:14 (NLT)

Now, that's some heavy theology and if it's not totally clear don't fret because, really, the most important thing to understand is that God's motivation for taking on human flesh in the person of Jesus and doing what He did on the cross was His love.

“I love you” he was saying. “I have always loved you.”

Which brings me to what I want you to walk out with this morning, this statement:

**Our trust in God's love is confirmed
not by the safety of our circumstances
but the sacrifice of our savior.**

This is why the Apostle Paul could
say with great confidence that ...

*I am convinced that
neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor heavenly
rulers, nor things that
are present, nor things
to come, nor powers,
nor height nor depth,
nor anything else in all
creation, will be able to
separate us from the
love of God in Christ
Jesus our Lord. Romans
8:38-39 (NET)*

So, as you deal with evil in your life

- and some of us are dealing with terrible evil right now ... remember that ...

- God loves you.
- And He has been in your place.
- And because He has, the evil that you suffer now will not last forever. The day is coming when it will be vanquished and you will be victorious over it.

And in the meantime, keep fighting with the weapons your Heavenly Father has given you ... which we'll talk about in each of the next four weeks ... and which is exactly what Lee's family does in the final scene.

At this point, the alien is the basement of the home. Evelyn and Regan are backed into a corner while Marcus and the baby are hiding behind the stairs.

And it dawns on Regan that something odd happened in the truck when the alien was near her hearing aid.

Let's watch.

Video Clip - 07 SECRET WEAPON

(Begin) Regan slowly reaches for her ear

(End) Evelyn cocks the shotgun

with a sly grin

MUSIC STARTS IMMEDIATELY
WHEN CLIP ENDS.

Feature – Good Fight

CLOSING COMMENTS

1. What one thing do you need to do this week to keep fighting the good fight?
2. Golf tourney early bird
3. Offering @door
4. Next week ... Dr. Strange!
5. Stand for blessing –

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make His face to
shine upon you.

And even though you walk
through the valley of the shadow
of death,

May you not fear evil

For you know that He loves you
And that victory is secure.

Amen.

Endnotes

ⁱ https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/a_quiet_place_2018/

ⁱⁱ <https://variety.com/2018/film/box-office/a-quiet-place-worldwide-box-office-1202818824/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.browndailyherald.com/2018/04/05/conversation-john-krasinski-01/>

^{iv} A great observation from Bishop Robert Barron's analysis of this movie. See <https://aleteia.org/2018/04/12/bishop-barron-on-a-quiet-place-the-most-unexpectedly-religious-film-of-the-year/>

^v <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/abbot>