

“Who Is A Hero?”

I am a Marvel Universe fan and I am very excited about the latest movie, *Avengers, Endgame*. This movie is the sequel to last year’s movie, *Avengers, Infinity Wars*, in which the evil Thanos wipes out half of the life in the universe, including half of the Avengers. The Avengers are a group of heroes which Marvel has made movies about in the last twelve years and include Ironman, the Incredible Hulk, Black Panther, Thor and Captain America. The latest movie, which opened during the weekend of April 26-28, gives the heroes the ultimate challenge, to save humanity by any means necessary.

I saw the movie last weekend, along with many others. It set records for gross receipts for American and worldwide audiences, taking in more than 1.2 billion dollars. This take exceeded *Star Wars and Titanic*. It is expected to become the highest grossing film of all time. Right behind it in second place was *Captain Marvel*, which has been out for several weeks and stars Brie Larson as Marvel’s first major woman superhero (Wonder Woman is by DC Comics).

Avengers Endgame is a very good movie and is a long three hours. The three hours are needed, though, for plot development. This movie represents the ultimate good versus evil. Like most Marvel movies, it is good. Last year’s *Black Panther*,

which stars Chadwick Bozeman from Anderson, was nominated for an Academy Award best picture.

One might wonder why we need heroes. We are now in a ten year bull stock market. Inflation remains low. Our employment is the best it has been at in years. Yet, the way things are going in our country and the world, we need a hero. Not all are sharing in the goodness of our economy. Hatred continues to fuel shootings of innocent people. The opioid crisis takes many lives. Failure of leadership from our politicians continues to create political and cultural uncertainty. The institution of the United Methodist church faces a crisis over the matter of human sexuality.

We have a message for the world. In our passage from John 21 this week, in which the resurrected Jesus appears, we see a hero who came to save humanity. We don't need to go to the local movie theater and hand over our money to recognize a hero when we see one. A hero is someone who operates with courage and does something out of the ordinary for the sake of others. Heroes consider the welfare of others before their own. And they know that the most important thing is not their fame but their deeds and their intentions.

In our passage today, seven disciples have gone fishing, and they have been out all night trying to catch something so they can earn their living. Despite their best efforts they have caught nothing. We often go through the same problem, in

our personal lives and in our church work. We pour all our energy into a project, a relationship, a job, and still it seems we are no better off than when we started.

But God sends a hero. Heroes, of course, rarely come in a red cape, in a Black Panther suit; they don't usually carry shields or swords or giant hammers. What they do is change lives for the better---sometimes with nothing but a word of advice.

Jesus comes along the shoreline where the disciples are struggling. They do not recognize him at first. He says, "Cast your net on the right side of the boat." That is the *right-hand* side, not the correct one---in sailing terms. They had been casting on the port side all night but Jesus tells them to switch to the starboard. Such a simple change, But often all it takes is a simple change to make a great difference. It takes Jesus to introduce something new into the disciples' routine.

When the disciples listen, they don't just increase their haul and their assets. They realize their savior and hero Jesus is in their midst. Only when they open themselves up to something new do they realize their savior is with them. He is the hero who rescues them from their failed efforts.

What Jesus does in this passage is very symbolic. We are to be fishers of men. We are to bring new converts and disciples into the faith. Today we seek

ideas and ways to do this in a culture which does not want to react to the way we have done things in the past.

We need to ask ourselves: What is it that we need to change? What can we do differently? Are there people whom God sends to help us, but because we do not recognize them, we are not open to them being the heroes in our lives?

Rev. Lisa D. Jenkins, senior pastor of St. Matthew's Baptist Church of Harlem in New York City, has an interesting observation about today's story. This is not the first time Jesus has appeared to these disciples since he rose. He has appeared before to these very disciples. Why didn't they recognize him on the shore? In John 20 the disciples were hiding in fear behind locked doors and suddenly Jesus appeared in their midst. Just like that---that's some superhero stuff! Were the disciples so consumed with what they lacked---the much needed fish---that they still could not see what they had in Jesus? They have a risen savior, an all powerful one, a hero.

Let us ask ourselves. Do we become too consumed with our own efforts, our own desires, that we take our eyes off Jesus and cannot heed his advice? We have seen God's awesome and heroic works before. Let's remember God's ability to show up in every situation. Let's not miss God's next move in our lives.