

The death of Robin Williams has dominated much of the news this week. For many of us, his death has caused us to reflect over the many varied movies and television shows in which he starred. I am interested to hear anyone tell about a favorite scene or role or act that Robin Williams played.

Invite responses.

As a teenager I remember his introduction on network television. The show was called “Mork and Mindy” and Robin played an innocent alien from the world of Ork who was introduced to the cultural norms of people in Boulder, CO. He arrived on earth in an egg shaped spacecraft and was found by the young adult Mindy who became his constant companion on earth. I think they eventually married if my memory is correct.

To this day, every time I reach for an egg to cook I want to throw it up in the air and recreate the scene where Robin Williams says to the egg which looks like his spacecraft “fly, be free” only to watch as the egg comes crashing down all over the counter.

Like many of us, I have found myself thinking back over the many roles that Robin Williams has played and thinking about the impact of those movies and his incredible talent. For me, I recall his role in “Good Morning Vietnam” where he played a disc jockey that brought joy to the US soldiers facing the inhumanity of a war which few could understand. It was a role where Robin Williams was able to be himself on the air which brought laughter to the audience.

But the character that Robin Williams played was forced to leave Vietnam because he began to honestly report to his audience what was really happening in the war. His superior officers only wanted him to report a slanted view of the war that accentuated the positives and ignored the negatives.

Another role which impacted me was the character he played in the movie “Dead Poets Society.” Robin Williams played a teacher in an all boys boarding school. He was an English teacher who wanted his boys to discover the poet that existed inside of each of them.

I recall the scene in that movie when he had the boys stand on the desks in the classroom. William’s in his role was trying to teach the boys to view life from a different perspective. By standing on their desks, rather than sitting behind their desks, they were challenged to see things differently. This is also a movie in which William’s character was fired for not conforming to the dogma of the institution. Interesting that I would recall those two movies.

I saw Williams being interviewed a few months ago on one of the late night talk shows. And I remember thinking at the time that he looked like he was physically present with the host but that he wasn’t emotionally present. I could tell that there was something that seemed dark about him and I was not surprised when soon after that it was announced that he was entering into rehabilitation.

And then this week we all received the tragic news that he ended his life. He ended his life and his wife of 3 years reports that he was battling depression and the beginning stages of Parkinson’s Disease. The death of Robin Williams is such a tragedy.

I think that today’s text out of 2nd Corinthians has something to say to this tragedy. We have been reading through selected passages from 1st and 2nd Corinthians over these past few weeks. Last week I shared that it is believed that Paul actually wrote at least 5 letters to the church in Corinth.

We don’t have them all but it is assumed that the letter we call 2nd Corinthians is actually a couple of letters that have been put together. That is why it doesn’t always seem to flow very well.

Today we are going to be reading from the 4th chapter. The 4th chapter begins with Paul defending himself. Paul had an up and down relationship with the church in Corinth. He started the church but he also had several folks in the church that seemed to distrust Paul.

In the first part of the 4th chapter we see Paul trying to defend himself. He claims that he will not lie to them and he will not try to falsify God's word. He also calls his detractors blind to what is truth. So let us begin by reading these first 6 verses. Pay attention to how Paul is trying to defend himself against his naysayers.

Read 2nd Corinthians 4:1-6

So we see where Paul says that it is God who is working through them to give them light to share.

The next part of the reading is read sometimes at funerals. As we read this text, think about Robin Williams and think about your own struggles to understand God and what God is doing in your life.

Read 2nd Corinthians 4:7 - 5:5

Paul compares our bodies to being clay jars. Clay jars are ordinary jars that hold liquids like water or wine. But Paul says that our bodies hold something very precious. He says that within these ordinary bodies of ours resides something very powerful. Inside our ordinary bodies rests the power of God.

This power inside of us is the same power that created the universe and this world out of nothing and this power inside of us is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. That is some pretty powerful stuff inside of us.

But the problem for many of us is that we live in a world which doesn't encourage that power of God within you to come out. Instead, for many of us, we come to believe the negativity which is directed toward us. For people like Robin Williams and others who battle depression, those voices may eventually overwhelm them. But for many of us, we may have come into worship feeling pretty beaten down by the world around us.

I want to read Eugene Petterson's translation of this passage from the Message. Listen to these words.

2nd Corinthians 4:7-12 in The Message

Like Jesus, we too have some very negative images thrown our way. We may have come into worship feeling beaten down in some way. Beaten down by those creditors who are telling you that you are nothing because you don't have enough money to pay them what they are telling you that you owe. You may be feeling beaten down by parents who are giving you a message that you are less than for some reason.

You may be feeling beaten down by children who are constantly demanding from you and you feel as though you have nothing left to give them. You may be feeling beaten down by issues at work. You may look to the life of someone else and feel like they are such a saint compared to you.

I recently came across a quote that says a "saint is someone whose life has not been properly researched." No one is as "saintly" as they are made out to be. So many of us are feeling beaten down by one thing or another.

And it is easy to look at our lives and begin to believe those negative images about ourselves. But then look at Robin Williams. Successful comedian. Successful actor. Emmy winner.

Think about his career that spanned over a couple of decades and yet he ended up taking his life because of an illness that led him to believe those voices of negativity. But those voices do not come from God, according to Paul.

Remember, we are ordinary clay pots. We are ordinary clay pots no matter what we do to our bodies to make them look good. No matter how much surgery we have. No matter how much we work out. No matter how much make up we wear. None of that is what makes us truly powerful and acceptable.

Our bodies are merely clay pots. But what is inside of us is the same Spirit that turned nothingness into the universe and what is inside of us is the same Spirit that raised a dead man to life.

Inside of you is something beautiful. Inside of you is the Spirit of God. So listen to Paul when he says, do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. Every day we are being renewed. For our afflictions are only temporary. We don't look at what is seen. We look toward what is eternal.

If we believe that the mighty Spirit of God is within us then we will believe that there is nothing we cannot accomplish. Ignore those voices that are trying to bring you down. Listen to the powerful voice of God within you. The powerful voice of God which can do anything through you.

Do you listen to the voices that try to tear you down? Or do you listen to the voice of God which says that with God you can do anything. AMEN.

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-quote on definition of saint found in sermon from Adams, Joanna, "Treasure in Clay Jars" and found at http://day1.org/788-treasure_in_clay_jars

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