

“Everytime a Bell Rings...”

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It may seem a bit of an odd combination to place this beautiful ending to a classic movie up against one of the most deeply profound theological passages in all of scripture, it seems like we have a lesson in contrasts here, but hang with me for just a minute—there is a method to my madness. This is one of the most beloved holiday movies, and I think one of the reasons for that, is where it ends. Amidst all the terrible stuff that happens to George Bailey, it is a reminder about how much the little stuff matters. Notice how he rejoiced when he realized he had a bloody lip, or how he danced when he realized he had wrecked his car, or how he gave the bank examiner who was about to arrest him a hug, and of course who could forget, little SueSue saying “Everytime a Bell rings an angel gets his wings.” By the end of the movie, George is living the way we all wish that we could live. George is rejoicing in every moment of life, the good and the bad, the important and the inconsequential, because he knows what it is to not have that life. George recognizes that all of that human stuff, the troubles, the inconveniences, and ultimately—the people around him, are what make life real, and what make life worth living.

In the same grain, this passage from John is a profound theological reminder about what is truly important—God is, and we are. Let me back up a second...

We don't always celebrate Christmas as well as other church traditions do. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, Christmas is the very most important thing that everything

else, all theology, all church tradition, EVERYTHING rests upon. In the western traditions, we think the most important things are Christ's death and resurrection. Those are the saving moments for us. But in the East, it is the birth of Christ that is the most important saving moment of history, because that is the moment where the human and the divine meet, mingle, and ultimately become one and the same. What God does by becoming human is to make the divine, human, but at the same time, to make the human...divine. God sanctifies everything, and shows us what is truly important by making everything we are divine. God is born in the most lowly of circumstances to remind us that everything we experience, has been lived out by God too, and that everything we experience—even the hum drum, brutish nasty realities of the world, can point us back to God. The blood on George's lip, the car wreck, the bank examiners, the money on the table, and even the bell ringing can point us in the direction of the divine. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Both of these are a reminder that God is in every moment of our lives...**IF** we are ready to look for God there—for George Bailey it took an angel and viewing the world without him in it to remind him that God is in every moment. What does it take for you?

And perhaps the coming together of the human and the divine are summed up in those immortal words, “Look Daddy, teacher says, every time a bell rings an angel gets its wings.” The divine and the

human are forevermore completely intertwined. In this movie we see that in the way that Clarence's wings depend on George, just as George's life depends on Clarence the angel. And in the end, something as simple and childish as a bell ringing, is the symbol of that divine and human connection. We are dependent on God, just as the choirs of angels and God are dependent on us. From the day of Christ's birth—it's all one and the same.

So the next time you flip on this movie, let it be a reminder to you about

just how important every little part of life is—its all divine. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." It's all a gift from God. For this day...Christmas day...is where we celebrate that God has become like us, so that we might become a little more like God.

Thanks Be to God,
Thanks Be to God,
Thanks Be to God,
And All God's people say...AMEN.