

Moravian Women's Association

Devotional Paper – June 2020

“Wonder Women – Then and Now”

One of my favourite television programmes in the late 1970's was Wonder Woman. The star of the show was an American actress called Lynda Carter. Carter was my maiden name and in my naivety I assumed everyone with that surname was probably distantly related to me, so I thought she was pretty special! The series was based on the DC Comic character which first appeared back in 1941 when heroes were generally men. The TV series ran from 1975-1979. Nearly 40 years later In 2017 a new film was released with the Israeli actress Gal Gadot playing Wonder Woman. It was set during the First World War. Gadot plays Diana, the princess of the Amazon women warriors, daughter of Zeus and Hippolyte. Growing up in the hidden, women-only, paradise of mythical Themyscira, Diana is trained for her life mission – war! Not against men, but against the only Greek god left alive – the god of war, Ares, her half-brother.

Diana's mother, Queen Hippolyte, had taught her that men could not be trusted. She is unique, special and men do not deserve her. Diana learns from Steve Trevor, the American/British war spy she saves from drowning, that although human untrustworthiness is an obvious fact, life is not about what people deserve. One acts in accordance with “what you believe.”

Diana believed that by finding and killing Ares, she could end all wars. She did kill the god, but the wars continued. Diana sensed that the problem was more complicated; that something was wrong with humankind. The film is a modern-day attempt to work out the deeply philosophical and theological problem; what is evil? Why does God, or the cosmic order, allow it?

(Spoiler alert) Towards the end, Diana (Wonder Woman) is fighting Ares, the god of war. He has her trapped and she feels like giving up. She has already struggled with discouragement when she realized that all men are not good, and she wonders if men are worth fighting for. She remembers the last words of her love interest, Steve Trevor. He has just sacrificed his life to save others from the terrible poison gas weapon that was loaded onto a plane headed for London - he gave himself to save others. His final words to Diana, whom he loved, were “I can save today, you can save the world.” Could this be a metaphor for Jesus? Jesus gave himself to save us and to show us that love is the answer. Steve's love and sacrifice strengthens Diana and gives her the will to fight and destroy her enemy. Decades later (she appears to be immortal) she still fights for others, though now she knows, and says, “It's love that saves them.” If Steve hadn't sacrificed himself she wouldn't have known love like that. It's his sacrifice that makes her the hero she becomes.

In Wonder Woman, as in the Bible, people with little or no power are agents of divine justice: the Biblical God chooses and uses people who are on the fringes of empire. The team that Diana and Steve assemble are outlaws, lowly and dishonourable by society's standards. In the Bible there are numerous examples of similar unlikely heroes: Jesus himself chooses ordinary men to be his disciples. Throughout the film, we the audience are rooting for Diana, whom we assume will defeat Ares, Hollywood style, bringing perfect peace to the world. But what we learn by the end of the film is that evil cannot be isolated to a single demigod, villain, or agent. In theological terms we'd say that God's intervention does not necessarily end human war or the destruction that human beings wreak upon one another. She discovers saving them is not so simple as destroying one evil being; the evil in the hearts of humanity must also be destroyed.

Wonder Woman inspires the people around her (and us) to become better humans and to choose light over darkness. Her example causes people to sacrifice for one another. She has become a symbol of feminine strength, but not because of her violent retribution, but because she is compassionate and cares for the good of humanity and seeks justice. We can do the same and be the wonder women God wants us to be by seeking truth and showing love for humanity (and we don't have to wear Lycra to do it!).

For Discussion:

1. Do you believe that doing the right thing sometimes requires sacrifice?
2. Can love really save the world?



Lynda Carter Gal Gadot Chris Pine