

February 5, 2023

Loving as God Loves

Ruth 4:9-10; 1 John 4:7-21

A friend told me recently that *Paddington 2* is the best movie ever made. I've seen *Citizen Kane* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, so this news came as a shock to me. I have nothing against Paddington. The little chap in the iconic red hat and blue overcoat has delighted generations of children. I only doubt that his movie sequel rivals Hollywood's best. I decided to investigate. For background, in the first movie, Paddington moves from the jungles of Peru to London, where he is adopted by the Brown family. Hijinks and a happy ending ensue. The sequel finds Paddington convicted of a crime he did not commit and tossed into jail.

Throughout both movies, Paddington is a hopeless optimist. He believes that people are good, and "if we're kind and polite, the world will be right."¹ In *Paddington 2*, he begins to lose faith as his adoptive family seems to forget him. What Paddington doesn't know, however, is that his family loves him as fiercely as ever, and they are working night and day to clear his name. No matter what separates the little bear from his family, the love they have for each other is strong. They will fight for each other, and nothing can come between them.

I think that's why my friend thinks *Paddington 2* is the best movie ever made. The theme is the wonderful power of love. It feels good to love and be loved. The student book author writes, "We need to experience love in order to be emotionally healthy and to know how to love others. First John tells us that the source of love is God. . . . Love is rooted in God because love begins in God. We know how to love because of God's love within the world."² We can believe in the power of love because we are products of God's love. Knowing that there is nothing on earth that can separate us from that love enables us to give it to others. "We love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

1. What is your favorite movie? Is there something special about the way the movie makes you feel?
2. Think of a time you have been separated from those you love. How did the knowledge of their love for you help you through it?
3. How can you use God's love for you to reach out to others in love this week?

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¹From imdb.com/title/tt4468740/characters/nm0924210.

²From *Adult Bible Studies*, Winter 2022-2023, by Sue Mink (Cokesbury, 2022); page 99.