

Old Testament: Isaiah 64: 1 - 9

New Testament: Hebrews 6: 13 - 20

Please join me in prayer. And now Lord God may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

A movie like “It’s a Wonderful Life” gives us pause to reflect on why people need a movie like it. The movie premiered on December 20, 1946 just 15 months after WWII had officially ended. This means that the movie likely went into production even closer to the end of WWII. Why? What were people feeling at the end of WWII? (Give space to respond)

My suspicion is that, even despite the victory, people were not feeling overly optimistic regarding the state of the world. The German nation had just run roughshod over an unprepared European continent and exterminated millions of a single race of people. The United States had just finished fighting a two front war after being attacked without warning by the Japanese Empire. Humanity, as a collective whole, was not providing a great many reasons to believe in its continued evolution and advancement unabated. What hope was there when two nations, Germany and the United States, willingly committed mass murder against innocents with the Holocaust and the use of the atomic bombs?

Into this cultural milieu steps Jimmy Stewart wonderfully and beautifully proclaiming to his beloved Mary, whatever you want, I will do everything in my power to get it for you. The moon? I’ll throw a lasso around it and pull it down for you. And his vision is so powerful and so compelling that it’s not just Mary who is changed by it, but an entire town. As he does everything in his power to keep the evil, corrupt Mr. Potter at bay, he shows an entire town that he will do everything in his power to fight for the people; to give the people their own homes and lives. And so, it is Mary who purchases, and works tirelessly with unbridled optimism to restore, what becomes the Bailey home. It is the entire community who shows up to care for George after Mr. Potter seemingly finally has him dead to rights after stealing his deposit. George Bailey casts a vision of hope and optimism into a world darkened by the clouds of war and human atrocity.

Is this not exactly what God does for the nation of Israel and the entire world? Does not God cast a vision of hope and optimism into a world darkened by the clouds of war and human atrocity? Isaiah is under no false pretensions that the world is a darkened place and attributes that to God having turned away to let humanity continue to be its own worst enemy. But Isaiah remembers that the story does not

end there. God has not abandoned nor forsaken us to our own worse inclinations and tendencies. Isaiah remembers that we are clay and God is the potter. We are formable and re-formable. We are moldable and re-moldable. We can be made new. And that, my friends, is the abiding hope. Even despite our worst inclinations and actions, we are perpetually full of potential. Like that old Bailey house and the people of the entire town, with God as our maker, our potter, and Savior, we all have the potential to be more than we are. And this hopeful potential is realized, is brought to fulfillment, in a baby, born in a stable, and laid in a manger. The hope of salvation. Amen.