

Relating it to the Bible

The Christmas Story

At the heart of the film is the way a young man finds his humanity and rekindles a love which has been buried deep within him for so long. The trigger for this journey of redemption is an encounter with a baby. At Christmas, we, too, encounter a baby and, as a result, our lives will never be the same again either. Just as with Tsotsi, there is that incessant call to which we must respond, there is the responsibility God gives us and the trust he places in us, there is the way we begin to see things differently when we share time with Jesus, and there is the wonder of that shared love which transforms our lives and which is the most precious gift imaginable.

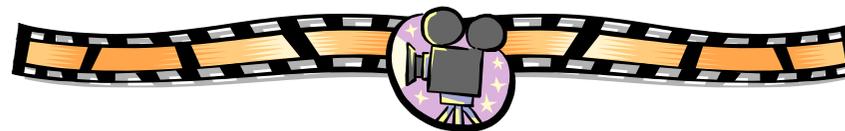
Luke 23: 39—43

The thief on the cross, like Tsotsi, has caught a glimpse of another world. No one is beyond redemption, and all can ultimately make it into paradise.

Some facts about the film

- The film was awarded the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2006.
- The language used in the film is Tsotsi-Ttaal or Isicamtho, a patois spoken in African townships, that draws on Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana and Sotho.
- The word "Tsotsi" itself is slang for "thug".
- A lot of the music is "kwaito", a punchy contemporary township style with touches of hip-hop. It is mostly performed by Zola, a South African kwaito star, who also plays the part of Fela (the leader of a local car-jacking syndicate) in the film.
- The film is based on a novel by the prolific South African playwright, Athol Fugard. It is his only novel and was originally written in the 1960s, set in the 1950s, and wasn't published until 1980.
- The part of the baby is played by twins, a boy and a girl, and most of the shots including the baby had to be done in very short takes, which were then edited back into the main action.
- Respect is shown in African society by making yourself lower than the other person. Thus, people will seek to sit as soon as they enter a room so that they are lower than their host (as opposed to Britain where people wait to be invited to sit). Note how Tsotsi lowers himself in order to pay respect to the beggar man he had previously insulted when they meet again towards the end of the film.

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**A chance to watch films together.
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

2nd Sep	The Wind That Shakes The Barley
7th Oct	I, Robot
4th Nov	The Terminal
2nd Dec	<u>Tsotsi</u>
6th Jan	Star Wars
3rd Feb	Into Great Silence

**Films start at 5:30pm
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

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Tsotsi

Made in 2005, *Tsotsi* tells the story of a young gangster living in a South African township. He leads a small gang which thinks nothing of robbing, and even killing, in order to get enough money to live on. Buried deep is a past he doesn't want to talk about, or even think about. No one even knows his real name. Then, one night, after a violent argument, Tsotsi ends up stealing a car at gunpoint only to find that there is a three month old baby on the back seat. He thinks about leaving it, but the baby's cries cannot be ignored and he takes it with him back to the township. The film goes on to tell his emotional journey as he tries to care for this vulnerable baby. In the process, he begins to rediscover his humanity and see the world in a new way.

Responding to the vagaries of life

The film begins with the gang members playing dice and throughout the film we are reminded that life can sometimes be like a game of chance. All sorts of things can happen to us which are outside our control—things which can, in an instant, change our life. The challenge is how we then respond, and the choices we make given the situations we find ourselves in. We can't necessarily change what has happened—a five and a four will always be nine however much we might like it to be eleven—but we do have a choice as to how we respond.

The way we see the world

Both Tsotsi and Miriam have had bitter experiences in life. Both have lost loved ones. Tsotsi's only outlet for pain is violence. Miriam, however, uses pain to create rather than destroy and thus manages to see hope beyond the pain.

Redemption

The whole film is a journey of redemption as Tsotsi rediscovers his humanity. Slowly, his priorities change and he begins to see things in a completely new way. We are all on that journey. For Tsotsi, it begins with a baby and suddenly finding himself responsible for another vulnerable human being. What have been the trigger points for you?

Admitting our failures

We are all often disappointed in ourselves. We don't quite achieve what we set out to achieve. Boston initially tells everyone he is a teacher. Only later does he admit to the truth. How honest are we in how we portray ourselves to others? Are we open about who we really are? Or do we portray ourselves as we would like to be? And who are we trying to fool? Others? Or ourselves?

Living in the moment

Aap very much lives in the moment. His philosophy can be summed up as "Here we are together—and s'good. And then we will be somewhere else." Although Aap is

Memorable quotes

- Butcher: Why are we sitting here?
Aap: We're sitting here S'good.
- Mother: You find him. You tell him if he has hurt my child in any way I will kill him with my own hands.
- Miriam: Where's its mother?
Tsotsi: It's mine.
- Tsotsi: You made this?
Miriam: Yes.
Tsotsi: Why is it rusted?
Miriam: I was sad.
Tsotsi: And this one? You were happy?
Miriam: Yes.
- Miriam: You only see broken glass. I see shapes and colours.
- Aap: When is it my turn?
Tsotsi: For what?
Aap: First Boston. Now Butcher. When is it my turn? ... You're right. We're finished. It's over. Like Butcher. Finished and done, boy.

clearly not very bright (and, at one point, Tsotsi tries to encourage him to grow up and think for himself), such a philosophy can have an appealing simplicity. There is a danger that we get so caught up in our past and in our future that we fail to appreciate the present and to enjoy the good things about the current moment.

The future

What did you think of the way the story ended? Is there a danger we make Tsotsi into too much of a hero as opposed to simply someone who, like all of us, has begun to find redemption? What alternative ways of ending could there be? If you were one of the parents, what would you have wanted to happen to Tsotsi?

"There's a part of every living thing that wants to become itself: the tadpole into the frog, the chrysalis into the butterfly, a damaged human being into a whole one. That is spirituality."

Ellen Bass