**HACKSAW RIDGE SCRIPT**

Welcome to At the Movies. Today we’re going to watching scenes from a Mel Gibson film based on a true story about a named Desmond Doss, who enlists in the US Army during World War Two. What makes this story unique though is that Doss joined the army even though his personal convictions didn’t allow him to kill, nor even handle a weapon. Which as you saw in that last scene was a conviction that had been formed, in part at least, at very early age. In other words, it was deeply held conviction. But, it was also one that about to be deeply tested. Which brings to light an interesting question – one that is both timely and relevant to our society today and one that, I would think, we all have to wrestle with at various times throughout our own lives – and that is – what do we do when the convictions we personally hold are different from the convictions of those around us?

*[Pause to switch scenes in editing]*

It would be nice to think that we could live in a world where everyone respects everyone else’s convictions, wouldn’t it? I mean, it would certainly make the world more peaceful. It would make life a lot easier. A lot less violent and divisive. Which is why, even here at *[Church Name]*, we talk about things like unity in the essentials and freedom in the non-essentials. It’s our way of saying, let’s practice mutual respect within the church, because truth is – even within the church there are just going to be times we hold different convictions. And – if you’re wondering, where we picked up that idea – well, it was from the Apostle Paul, because Paul once wrote a letter to a church in Rome – where he painted this picture of being able to reach a mutual understanding where we can agree to disagree. Which, at that time, for the church in Rome, the issue on the table – the thing they were disagreeing over was what’s acceptable to eat. Because you had Jewish followers of Christ who were opposed to eating meat, but then you had non-Jewish followers of Christ who were all about it. Which, as you could imagine caused ALL KINDS OF ISSUES when it came time to order pizza at small group. I mean, do we limit our toppings to mushrooms and peppers or is God ok if we order up a few meat-lovers pizzas? To which Paul responds to that by saying this in Romans Fourteen – Don’t argue with others about what they think is right or wrong. For instance, one person believes it’s all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. Solution? Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don’t. And the vegetarians among us well, you must not condemn those who eat whatever they want, for God has accepted them, as well as you. Agree, in other words, to disagree. But, today, I want us to take that advice a step further. Because, let’s be honest, this isn’t just something we experience within the church, this is something we experience on a larger scale everyday out there, in the world. As in, it’s one thing to agree to disagree on non-essentials, but how do we agree to disagree with those who hold a different set of essential convictions?

*[Pause to switch scenes in editing]*

Something to consider as you interact with people who don’t see eye to eye with your beliefs. They may reject you. Yeah, the world may reject you. In fact, Jesus actually said as much during the Last Supper. As he was with his disciples, discussing with them what life would be like after his death – he tells them in John Fifteen: Eighteen – If the world hates you, remember… it hated me first. Why did the world hate Jesus, why would the world hate us? Because they see things one way and we see things another way and while some people can accept that, OTHERS can’t and so those that can’t might reject you. But, the interesting thing about that to me is what we do in response. Because when the position of the other side isn’t to just go their own way, but instead push their convictions on us… the temptation, is to push back. Which can show up in a number of ways. For example, one way we push back is that we protest their convictions whenever they protest ours. In essence, we do to them what they do to us. Another way this can show up though is that we try to convince them that what WE believe is RIGHT. But, I would imagine if you’ve ever attempted to do that you know how difficult that can be because chances are they hold their convictions as deeply as you hold yours, because as we noted earlier in the story of Desmond Doss – most people’s convictions take root at a very early age. And so that really doesn’t work either. And so, the question becomes is there another way? Is there a better way? Is there a more effective way of handling those moments we feel the convictions of others are being forced on us?

*[Pause to switch scenes in editing]*

I gotta be honest with you, if that were me – I think I might have taken the out. No harm, no foul, go home, heal up, and live out my convictions in private – away from those who disagree. I mean, surely, that’s a better way to handle the convictions of others when they oppose your convictions, right? To which the answer may be yes… At least for a season or on occasion. But, here’s the problem with passivity. At some point, you’re going to face opposition to what you believe somewhere else. Yeah, like this is going to come up again. Which means – at some point you’re likely going to have to confront this. But, this is what I love about Desmond Doss. He seems to have found another way to handle the confrontation. Because he doesn’t come across as intolerant, I’ll oppose you as much as you oppose me, or arrogant, my way is better than your way. Or even in a way that’s non-confrontational, I’ll just live my life in the shadows away from the rest of society. No. He does something different… he chooses to hold firm to his convictions while at the same time showing… love. Love. Love… Which incidentally lines up very well with the bible he believed so deeply in. In fact, if you were to look further at what both Jesus and Paul have to say about this topic, you’d find BOTH connecting our convictions with love. So, Paul, for example. In another letter to another church concerning another food issue – says this: Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. I know “we all have knowledge” about this issue, or – I know we all hold a certain position that we’ve reasoned out as the right way. But here’s what you need to keep in mind while knowledge makes us feel important, it is LOVE that strengthens the church.” In other words, great… you hold a conviction about a topic you’re well versed on. Great, you believe you hold knowledge that others apparently lack. Wonderful. But, your knowledge, your convictions will do little to help anyone if it’s not matched with love. // What about Jesus? What does he say? Well, let’s go back to the Last Supper. Two chapters before Jesus tells the disciples they can expect to be hated, he says this: “Love one another. Love one another, because only love will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” To which some may say, well… hold on. Jesus isn’t telling his disciples to love everyone, just each other. Just the people they already agree with. To which, I would say – perhaps. Perhaps HERE he is, but we also see in other places where Jesus tells us to love our enemies. So, it seems to be a universal call to love. In fact, if you were to look at how the early church lived after Jesus, you’d find historical documentation even outside the confines of the bible where they cared for outsiders. Where they’ve loved those they disagreed with. So, in both word and in practice, what we are being told is that while our walk with God requires us to believe certain things. Our witness FOR God requires us to act in certain ways. We believe certain things, but we act certain ways. And those ways should always involve love. Because according to the bible HOW you believe is just as important as WHAT you believe. Because people aren’t drawn to Jesus when we stand against them in opposition. And no one will come to him if we simply walk away. Which is why OUR call is to walk among them and let our resolve to LOVE them carry just as much weight as our resolve to adhere to what we believe. And in this movie, this is exactly the approach Doss takes after his unit gets called up to assist at the Battle of Okinawa with one task ahead of them. Secure what became known as Hacksaw Ridge, so named because of how many men were slaughtered in the fight.

*[Pause to switch scenes in editing]*

You want to earn the respect of those you disagree with? You want to honor God in how you handle opposition? Let your actions speak louder than your words. In other words, love loud. Because you can do that and still hold onto what you believe. In fact, I love the way Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Orange County, California puts it, he says: You don’t have to compromise convictions to be compassionate. You don’t have to compromise convictions to be compassionate. In other words, you can be a Christian and still be human. // Which, again, is what we see in Desmond Doss, because on that day at Hacksaw Ridge Doss ended up saving the lives of 75 men over a 12-hour period of time. That’s 1 man every 10 minutes for 12 straight hours. 75 men. 75 men who disagreed with him. 75 men, some of whom had ridiculed him for his convictions. In fact, beyond the 75 American soldiers he helped, there’s actually a scene within this film that’s accurate the original story, where gives aid to a Japanese soldier. So, he aided the enemy. He aided someone who held a deep conviction on an essential issue that opposed his own position. // What do we do when the convictions we personally hold are different from the convictions of those around us? We love.

*[Pause to switch scenes in editing]*

As we close today, I want to add one final thought to all that’s been said already. Because, here’s what I realize. I realize there may be some of us here today, who have watched this entire message and yet you’re still struggling to accept that you need love the other side. And so, to that – let me give you what for me has always been the game changer. Like, any time I find myself saying, no! No! Unacceptable. They’re wrong, I am right. And I refuse to give in. Here it is? You ready? John 15:12 – Love one another as I have loved you. In other words, if for no other reason. If nothing else makes sense. If it seems that love will somehow weaken your position. Do it for the sheer fact that that is exactly how God loved you. Because he loves you even when you don’t agree with him. He loves you even when you’re on the other side. He loves you even when you don’t hold to your own convictions. And so that is the example we need to follow every time. Where in life are your convictions in opposition to the convictions of others – At home? In the workplace? At school? At church? Where? And, furthermore, what are you going to do about those differences? How are you going to choose to disagree? What will it look like for you to love as much as you believe? Which, I would imagine is a question that will take beyond today to answer and live out. And so, all I ask you to do with today *[as we sing together],* is pray – pray that God would give you all the strength you need to one day hear the words by Captain Glover in that last scene ring true in your own life – that others would say about you… I may not believe what you believe, but I believe so much in how you believe it. Love loud. Honor Christ in both your convictions AND your how you treat those with whom you disagree. God bless you, today, as you live out the life God is calling you to live.