

The Company Men

“What shall it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life.” Matt. 16:26

This was a verse of Scripture that screamed out to me as I watched last week’s offering of the Launceston Film Society, a 2011 American film called “The Company Men.” A morality tale, it tells the story of the effects that losing your job has on individuals and families in a culture that measures your worth by how much you can consume.

In the opening scenes the camera pans to show pictures of luxury homes, inside and out, that have the latest in conspicuous consumption goods. From the kitchen to the bedroom, elegantly manicured lawns, to plush multi-million dollar golf courses, all seems idyllic in a consumer’s paradise. But there is a serpent in Eden in the form of the GFC! And people are ruthlessly laid off after years of loyal service to a ship building company, whose executives feel that making money and satisfying shareholders are their sole concerns, and who are interested in meeting legal imperatives exclusive of ethical ones.

Here we have a vignette of what is happening not just in the US but throughout the developed world, including Australia, as developed economies attempt to deal with the collapse of their global economic system. It accurately depicts the small financial elite profiting at the expense of the ordinary worker.

But of deeper concern for me is what our economic system is doing to our very souls. The publicity poster for the film says: ***“In America, we give our lives to our jobs. It’s time to take them back.”***

Despite all the gloom in the film, it is not without hope. The hope comes from a sacked aspiring executive whose life and family are transformed by learning that there are more important things than making money. The absent father is gradually present. The family learns to live more simply and relationships that were previously shrivelled burst into bloom. Here’s a family that loses one materially rich life only to gain a far more fulfilling one.

As I See It, a person’s worth should never be measured by what we do or what we earn. Indeed preoccupation with making money always distracts us from the main event of living and that is to become whole human beings, human beings that value relationships, who reach out to the other, who know how to love and be loved. And all of this takes time and effort. And when our jobs take up all our time and effort, what do we have left? How do we cope with life’s tragedies if all we are, are our jobs?

Our world is crying out for something more than economic security, which can only ever be a fleeting security. In chasing economic security we always want more, it never satisfies. Spiritual security, time spent with God, brings hope, peace, joy and most of all love. It’s the only security that lasts, and in the lead up to Christmas these are the gifts that matter, **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**. So take the time to give and receive these gifts this Christmas.

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article.

*Rev Tony Duncan
4 December 2011
pilgrim.tony@tassie.net.au*