

## ***“Encanto: Blessed to Be a Blessing”***

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden  
for FUMC Grand Junction, Sunday, June 1, 2025

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ website: <https://www.fumcgj.org/> Scroll down on the homepage to CHURCH ONLINE and click the button, “Digital Worship Archive”.

Scripture for the day: Gen 12:1-3 [NLT]

And the **Disney•Pixar** classic, *Encanto* (2021).

CVLI Reference: <https://www.screenvue.com/movie/encanto>

### OPENING

We continue today with our Easter worship series:  
***Easter Through the Eyes of a Child.***

This series emphasizes what I find to be a central teaching of Easter: We need not be stuck in patterns of thought and behavior that have the power to rob us of life and entomb us.

Jesus’ passing from death to life through His resurrection, accompanied by His invitation to follow Him and become a new creation in Him (2 Cor. 5:17), means that we can pass from death to life, too. That is, we can be transformed in our inner being through relationship with Christ, into all that God dreams of us becoming. But we have to have eyes to see and ears to hear, along with a willingness to respond, to what the Spirit of God is showing us.

As I’ve said in opening of each of the sermons this

season, the driving illustrations for this series are five classic **Disney•Pixar** movies that put some very grown up themes in playful terms that children AND adults can understand and benefit from.

The movie for today is *Encanto* from 2021.



### ***Encanto***

It is set in a fanciful village high in the mountains of Columbia and tells the story of the family Madrigal.

Early in the movie the family patriarch, Señor Pedro, is killed in a guerilla attack as the family is fleeing their little home village, but not before his young wife, Señora Alma, has triplets.

At the scene of Señor Pedro’s murder, an enchanted candle – “enchanted” being an English translation of the Spanish *encanto* – gives the young, traumatized widow, Señora Alma, hope for herself and her family.

It transforms the mountainous hills and landscape into a beautiful, enchanted casita.



***La Casita Encanta***

And it bestows special, magical gifts upon all of the children and grandchildren of Pedro and Alma on their 5<sup>th</sup> birthdays – all of them except granddaughter, Mirabel.



**Mirabel  
Madrigal**



Against all odds, Mirabel does not grow up feeling sorry for herself or somehow not a part of her family – despite being alienated and treated harshly by her Abuela Alma.



**Abuela Alma  
Madrigal**



But, Mirabel isn't the only Madrigal to experience the judgment of her family.



**Bruno  
Madrigal**



Her Uncle Bruno, whose gift is that of being able to see into the future, is also isolated from the family. His visions sometimes have negative outcomes, and the family and the village that has come to depend upon the Madrigal family's gifts for their wellbeing, become fearful of what he sometimes sees and they cause him to withdraw into hiding within the walls of the enchanted casita.



In one of the famous songs from the musical, the cast and the village sing, “We don’t talk about Bruno-no-no-no!” as if denying him and not mentioning him would somehow protect them from his mysterious power and troubling visions.

At this point, Bruno becomes a “wayward son”: alienated, misunderstood even by himself, and confused by his strange visions. Though he could see, he still seemed a blind man. Though he could think, he still seemed a madman. Hence our choice of special music for today, “Carry On Wayward Son”.

Gradually, the story reveals that Mirabel is the subject of one of Bruno’s troubling and puzzling visions. She is standing in front of the casita whose magic is deteriorating, evidenced by cracks forming throughout its walls. But it isn’t clear whether Mirabel is causing the deterioration of the casita or is working against the devastation and trying to protect and restore it.

It is clear all along to the audience that Mirabel is working to protect the casita, but, nevertheless, it suffers devastating collapse and lies in ruins before the unbelieving and traumatized family and village.



### **The Casita in Ruins**

As all she has cherished comes crashing down around her, Abuela Alma realizes how out-of-balance and idolatrous her sense of the “specialness” of her family had become, so much so that she could ostracize her own flesh and blood in her desperation to protect the enchantment. She realizes that the candle’s enchantments and gifts were never intended to create a special, privileged class of citizens of the Family Madrigal but were intended to be shared, so that all might be recipients of their blessings. And she is as devastated as her beloved casita.

And, as you might guess, the conflicts work out in the end, and Bruno – the wayward son – and his niece, Mirabel – another wayward “one” – become reconciled to Abuela Alma. And together, the three of them work with the village to restore the casita, this time as a product of the magic of everyone working together.



### The Restored Casita

#### SERMON THOUGHTS: Not-so-childish Themes Running through the Movie

- Wayward son (Bruno) / Wayward one (Mirabel)
  - Bruno: Driven away by “the family” and the village because of their fear of his gift that no one understood, even himself at times
  - Mirabel: She also becomes isolated because she couldn’t live up to the expectations of her Abuela, expectations the rest of the family come to share (except for Mirabel’s parents). Which leads to the next not-so-childish theme...
- Expectations of perfection (ours or others’): They can’t be met! And they are deadly!
- Blessings: To be hoarded or to be shared? Blessed for my own sake because “I’m special” or blessed to be a blessing?

The Family Madrigal had it all wrong: Their blessings became markers of their being “special”

and drove them to conceit, evoking envy in the community around them.

And Mirabel’s experience of NOT being blessed – of NOT being special in some way, of NOT receiving “a gift” like the other members of the family – threatened everything on which their value system and community was based.

#### RESURRECTION / TRANSFORMATION:

- None of us is a “wayward one” beyond redemption! There is nothing we can do that can put us outside the unconditional love / grace of God, and Jesus’ resurrection / the Easter event provides the inspiration for our hope-filled confidence. We still have to respond to it, i.e., God will not force Himself on us and drag us kicking and screaming into the Kingdom if we won’t accept it on God’s terms, but that doesn’t mean we’ve caused God to turn His back on us.

The unconditional love, grace, forgiveness, promised redemption / new life, you name it, can never be something we wind up outside of because it’s the nature of God to love like this – and we are powerless to change God’s nature. It’s what the author of the letter to the Hebrews was pointing to at 13:8 – “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*”

The chorus of the song captures this – unintentionally, as it was not written from a Christian perspective back in 1976. And given

Mirabel's personal story in the movie, the song is easily broadened to include anyone who feels estranged from life and beyond the reach of God because of their wandering. One hears the Gospel in the words:

*Carry on my wayward...[one]  
There'll be peace when you are done  
Lay your weary head to rest  
Don't you cry no more...*

- Expectations of perfection (ours or others') are deadly! And they are not of God. They have their source in insecurity: our own or others'.

With one exception, if perfection is an aspiration, it is because we have not embraced at the core of our being the truth that we are worthy of acceptance and belonging not because of any attribute, ability, talent, skill, etc. that we may have but solely because we are loved by God. It is only God's opinion of us that matters! My favorite Scripture verse says it all, Romans 8:31, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?!*"

When we finally live into that, our souls are set free from all the striving we have been conditioned to hold ourselves to. It's as Jesus says in the Gospel of John, "...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Once again, Jesus' resurrection / the Easter event provides the basis for our hope-filled confidence here.

I said a minute ago that there was one exception to this and that is the aspiration to love as Christ loved. We are commanded to do that in a couple of places in Scripture, but that is not the same as striving for perfection in our actions, judgements, knowledge, conduct, or our meeting others' demands. Loving self and others well is a behavior that God alone has the right to call forth from us and judge, and we can trust that God's judgements of us are based on redemptive love, not the threat of exclusion.

- Finally, the question of Blessings: Are they to be hoarded or to be shared? Am I blessed for my own gratification because "I'm special" in some way or am I blessed to be a blessing? Blessings are for us to enjoy, for sure, but not to be selfishly, inwardly, idolatrously hoarded.

Here again, the example of Jesus is what guides us, and I know of no better Scripture passage to bring this out than something called the kenosis passage, or "emptying passage" because of how it begins. This is Philippians 2:4-11, here again grounded in Jesus' death and resurrection / the Easter event –

*<sup>4</sup> Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*

*<sup>5</sup> You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. <sup>6</sup> Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.*

*<sup>7</sup> Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;  
he took the humble position of a slave  
and was born as a human being.*

*When he appeared in human form,  
<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself in obedience to God  
and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

*<sup>9</sup> Therefore, God elevated him to the place of  
highest honor and gave him the name above all  
other names, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every  
knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and  
under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue declare  
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God  
the Father.” [NLT]*

Your blessings: Are they to be hoarded or to be shared? Only you can answer that question.