

## “**BRAVE: Mend the Bond Torn by Pride**”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden  
for FUMC Grand Junction, Sunday, May 11, 2025

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ website: <https://www.fumcgj.org/>

Scripture for the day: Ephesians 4:31-32 [NLT]

And the **Disney•Pixar** classic, *BRAVE* (2012).

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

### 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.

And as I said last week in introducing this series, the driving illustrations 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 remarkable connections between the themes in these movies and the central teachings of Jesus may surprise you! Once observed, however, they are impossible to miss.

Given that today is Mother’s Day, I decided on a movie that explores aspects of the complicated relationship between mother and child, especially – in today’s movie, anyway – between mother and daughter. The movie is BRAVE. It is set in the

Scottish Highlands in medieval times when good relations among neighboring clans meant not just prosperity but often, even survival. BRAVE tells the story of Princess Merida and her mother, Queen Elinor, and the clash that happens when traditional ways meet with nontraditional personalities and dreams.

The movie’s opening scene provides a glimpse into Queen Elinor’s tender, loving relationship with her 3-year old princess daughter, Merida – not unlike most mother-daughter relationships at that stage of life.

(\*Opening scene, 00:00-00:54 –  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_qxGUY-gIg\\*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_qxGUY-gIg*))

So, if THIS:



**Mom and Merida as a Child**

depicted mother and daughter’s relationship early on,

THIS:



**Mom and Merida as a Teenager**

is what it had turned into a few years later when Merida had grown into an independent-minded teen. You see, Mom's dreams for Merida were as a perfect princess cast in her own image,



**An Image of Perfection:  
Queen Elinor**

and a betrothed-to-be with one of these “eligible” suitors!



**Merida's Field of Suitors**

But this clashed with Merida's self-image and dreams of a life of independence and adventure:



**The “Real”  
Princess Merida**

And she would stop at nothing, including making a very dangerous deal with THIS character:



**A Dangerous Decoy**

to thwart her mom's well-meaning but traditional, oppressive plans.

But something goes terribly wrong, as it often does when unscrupulous methods are used to achieve an outcome one desires at all costs: Merida's mother is turned into a she-bear, but one which retains the personality and self-identity of Queen Elinor – for two days.



**Merida and Her Mom as a Bear**

You see, if by the light of the second sunrise, Merida has not “mended the bond torn by pride” – a condition put on the spell made by the witch – her mother will become a real, ferocious bear with no connection to the human Queen she once was.

And when Merida realizes the danger she has put her mother in, she is broken by her pride and now will do anything to protect and restore her mom.

(\*Protection scene, 00:00 – 00:31

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8ZPIuWCvPI>\*)

(\*Reconciliation scene, 00:00 – 02:46

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMo0VgII02I>\*)



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

1. The notion of destiny / fate. Princess Merida wrestled mightily with what she saw as an unjust, patriarchal, and outmoded way of aligning the clans: through betrothal and marriage, with her not

as a partner but as a prize to be won by the victorious suitor. She felt her destiny involved a future with much greater significance and much more impact than that.

2. Pride manifested by using any means – even wicked, evil means – to get what one wants. Such pride not only reveals the darker, selfish interior of the one seeking her own way, but it often puts others in danger, as well.
3. Humility / forgiveness – on both sides, which we saw in the clip: Merida's and her mom's. If there is to be reconciliation in any relationship following a tear, there must be a willingness on the parts of all involved to do some real soul-searching, listening, confession of failure, the offering of grace to the other, and repentance: The turning from the attitudes and behaviors that brought about the tear in the fabric of the relationship, to continue with the metaphor of the tapestry in BRAVE. Apology is not enough; a change in behavior must accompany it for healthy reconciliation to take place.

## RESURRECTION / TRANSFORMATION:

### The Easter Message(s)

1. Destiny / fate doesn't happen *to you* from outside forces; it comes *from within you* when you live into the fullness of the person God created you to be. Sometimes that aligns with societal norms; often, it does not. This was Jesus' experience. A commonly held view of atonement: It was a

vicarious substitution for you and me. This is destiny happening *to* Jesus. Phrases like “He was born to die” and “It was God's plan that Jesus suffer a horrible death, illegally and unjustly imposed by the religious and civil authorities, to atone for the sin of the world” reflect vicarious, substitutionary thinking – and destiny happening *to* Jesus.

Another equally valid – and Biblical – point of view has been called the moral influence understanding of atonement: This is destiny coming *from within* Jesus – His refusal to back down from what He knew God *to be* and what He knew God *to be for* – despite what He knew of the consequences. This is Jesus *participating fully in His destiny*, not acting His part in a play. This is most evident in Jesus' agony in the Garden (of Gethsemane) before His arrest. He pleaded with God multiple times that the bitter cup of crucifixion pass Him by, BUT He chose to drink of it realizing that the will of God was that God's love for the world be made undeniably evident in Him. And this was manifested in Jesus' *willingness* to go to the cross rather than betray His destiny: not to die a horrible, unjust death but to live out the fullness of God in a human life. This is Jesus living fully into the person He knew Himself to be.

2. How about pride? Where is the Easter message in that? Earlier in the movie, in anger at her mom, Merida slashed with a sword the tapestry she



would later attempt to mend with needle and thread to fulfill the witch's condition to "mend the bond torn by pride" within two sunrises.

What Merida didn't realize was that the bond torn by pride wasn't the tapestry, it was the relationship, the bond, with her mom. And all indications were that Merida's pride had rendered that tear permanent.

3. But this is the Easter Season we're talking about! Sin and death do not have the last word!

Merida was finally broken when she saw that the mended tapestry didn't restore her mom to her former self. It was her emptying of herself and confessing her wrongdoing that restored her mom, that "mended the bond torn by pride". And we witness the humility that is necessary to mend such tears being manifested not just by Merida, but by her mom, as well.

Merida: "Mom! You're back; you've changed!";  
Elinor: "Oh, Darlin', we both have."

God does His best work in the hearts and souls of those – NOT who are "perfect", as Queen Elinor required wrongly of the young Princess Merida – but in those who are Christlike in how they deal with their failures and the failures of others and who can be reconciled in safe and healthy ways.

### SPEAKING TO OUR WORLD TODAY

All kinds of emotions, feelings, and memories surface on a holiday like Mother's Day. Depending upon the relational dynamics, those can be life-giving

emotions, feelings, and memories or they can be very painful, upsetting, and disturbing. And they may or may not have *anything* to do with our moms.

While the movie BRAVE offers a nice, tidy, characteristically *Disney•Pixar* wrap-up to the story, we all know that real life is a lot messier and much less predictable than that. But the beauty in these movies is that –



### **"Possibility Thinking"**

- They offer a *vision* of what resolution of conflict can look like;
- They hold up "*possibility thinking*", something I've been saying a lot lately in the context of our pastoral transition; that is "What *might* life look like with different responses to challenge?" And...
- They often hold up a mirror to society. Sometimes what is seen in that mirror is the darker, selfish interior of a person or group of persons seeking their own way at any cost; at other times, it is lovely.

If we are to be people of genuine, moldable, world-changing Christian faith, faith that bears a likeness to Christ, we would do well to let these lessons penetrate what can be a defensive, protective shell we build up around ourselves and to be BRAVE enough to allow them to work their Easter transformation in us.

WRAP-UP: Prayer of Confession w/ Words of Assurance

People:

Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Way of peace. Come into the brokenness of our lives and our land with your healing love.

Help us to be willing to bow before You in true repentance, and to bow to one another in real forgiveness.

By the fire of Your Holy Spirit, melt our hard hearts and consume the pride and prejudice which separate us.

Fill us, O Lord, with Your perfect love which casts out our fear and bind us together in that unity which You share with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In the power of Your name and Spirit we pray. Amen.

Pastor:

Hear these words from the book of Romans: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That proves God's love for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

People:

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

All:

Glory to God! Amen!