

# Mercifully for us, there is hope of an 'Endgame'

If you don't follow superhero movies, you might not know why *Avengers: Endgame* is such a big deal right now, earning more than \$1.2 billion on its opening weekend.

*Endgame* is the sequel to last spring's blockbuster *Avengers: Infinity War*, and the culmination of 22 movies released by Marvel studios since 2008.

The most important thing you need to know is that the ending to *Infinity War* was tragic. The *Avengers* – Earth's mightiest heroes – failed in their attempt to stop the villain, Thanos, from ending half of all life in the universe with a snap of his fingers.

This event was known the "decimation," and included the loss of several beloved *Avengers* heroes. Many of us left theatres last spring saddened and frustrated with the dark note on which *Infinity War* had ended.

But I was certain of one thing: in some way, at some point, Thanos would be defeated, and the suffering and death he wrought would be reversed.

This is, after all, a series of superhero movies – no matter how bad things look, the good guys always win. And, without spoiling the new movie, this is precisely what happens – although it all unfolds in a rather unexpected way.

There are many parallels to be made between the *Avengers* story and the story of our salvation.

Much like the fallout of Thanos' "decimation", sin is the root cause of suffering and death in our lives. Sin ruined things in ways no comic book movie – or many of us – are truly able to understand. One of the greatest clues is found in the sense of shame that drives Adam and Eve to sew fig leaves together (Genesis 3:7) and to hide from God (Genesis 3:8).

Because of sin, things were different between Adam and Eve. Where God had designed man and woman to be a total gift to one another – making it possible for them to be naked yet not ashamed (Genesis 2:25) – now something else had crept in to their relationship.

Our first parents found the need to hide not only from God, but by covering up, to hide and hold something back from each another. Jesus references this change when the Pharisees question Him on divorce, and He answers: "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, **but from the beginning it was not so**" (Matthew 19:8). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* spells out just how bad a state we find ourselves in since that first sin:

“...the Church has always taught that the overwhelming misery which oppresses men and their inclination towards evil and death cannot be understood apart from their connection with Adam’s sin and the fact that he has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted, a sin which is the “death of the soul”. (CCC 403)

Things look bleak, and when you couple that with the consequences God gave the man and the woman for their sin (see Genesis 3:16-19), the whole story seems pretty depressing. And much like *Infinity War*, it would be a sad, sorry way for things to have ended – in a sense of loss, hopelessness, and failure.

Mercifully for us, the story doesn’t end there. In both cases, there is the hope of an *Endgame*. In the *Avengers* movie, it’s not just wishful thinking that has us expecting a resolution. At the climax of *Infinity War* – just before the decimation – Dr. Stephen Strange gives a glimmer of hope that things are unfolding in the single way that will allow the Avengers to defeat Thanos.

In the Genesis story, God puts a glimmer of hope amidst the darkness: Genesis 3:15 is called the “proto-evangelium” (first Gospel), which tells of a coming conflict between the woman, her seed, and the serpent that will ultimately lead to the defeat of sin’s power over us.

This is the first of many such prophecies that are woven throughout the Old Testament that act like a flashing neon sign pointing towards the coming of a Messiah who will make things right again.

It is this anticipated redemption that makes the clearest parallel between the story of Jesus and the blockbuster *Avengers* story: God’s plan to make things right doesn’t play out in the way most people expected it.

Many who lived at the time of Jesus seemed to have forgotten that God’s promises weren’t just about the injustices of the world around them (the Roman occupation), but rather His promise to restore us from our fallen state. It might have seemed simpler to just start over again with people who don’t sin, or to come down to earth as a mighty warrior in the same vein as King David.

But God’s plan was far more wondrous than we could ever have imagined. To come into the world as an infant, to live most of his life in simplicity, his proclamation of the Kingdom of God throughout the Gospels, and ultimately what we’ve just celebrated: Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection – all of it leads us to proclaim with great joy at the Easter Vigil: “O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!”

It’s a bigger blockbuster than any movie, with a reward for us worth more than any box office receipt.

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