

For me there is no redemption, no penance great enough' says Mendoza – a former slave trader and mercenary who is chained and fixated by depression and the guilt of his past. Through bold cinematography and a skilfully composed musical score, *The Mission* (1986) takes us on a journey of emotional and spiritual battles, and allows us to grapple with the fundamental conflicts and tensions of Christian mission.

Set in the eighteenth century, this film follows a group of Jesuit brothers as they set up mission projects in Paraguay in the hope of converting the local Guarani people to Christianity.

Mendoza the former slave trader and mercenary is persuaded by the Jesuits to join the mission. In a beautiful scene between Mendoza and the Guarani we are able to understand the sweetness, joy and power of redemption as Mendoza is freed from the guilt of his former ways. This excellently composed scene will stay with you long after watching this film – and serves as a useful reminder that God's 'grace is sufficient for you' and his 'power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Whilst the type of mission depicted here might seem a far cry from mission today, this film raises many relevant questions. What is the core purpose of mission? What should we expect from a life of mission? Do we ever do more harm than good?

During their time on the mission the Jesuit brothers focus not only on sharing God's word,



but also on building honest relationships with the Guarani and serving practically by building shelters and teaching new skills. In one particularly moving scene, two Jesuit brothers play 'rock the boat' with the Guarani children, to which they are all laughing and falling in the river. This scene, with its garden of eden imagery, is both simple and profound as it presents the development of loving relationships and care at the heart of Christian mission. Perhaps this is something we can apply to mission today?

This film is definitely not an easy watch. It shows death, strife and loss in a way that is both brutally honest and honestly beautiful. It is this honesty and willingness to tackle such difficult and painful topics that allows it to illustrate many biblical truths so well. For example, I used to

consider mission to be something you achieved in your life, but this film has made me reconsider this belief. I can now see that our lives are part of a cosmic spiritual battle and the true beauty of *The Mission* is that it is achieved despite our death. Truly, 'the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it' (John 1:5).

In conclusion, this film is not one to watch if you are after a little feel good factor. But if you are willing to mull over and reflect on the challenging issues *The Mission* presents, it will be a rewarding and deeply enriching experience. ■

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