

Lord of the Rings - What's in a name? Golum? Smeagol?

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1. INTRODUCTION - start with a brief setup of the story and character of Golum... How he was originally a hobbit like the other hobbits... how he came into possession of the ring for hundred's of years... how it corrupted his soul... corrupted by power... Pride... selfishness... and how it fragmented his identity... Leaving him a pathetically neurotic and wizened creature.

SEGUE - "Early in the film Frodo confronts Golum with his past... a past that, at first, Golum wants to ignore and forget... but then something quite interesting happens... and instead of running from his past, Golum discovers something he'd rather run toward... he hears a word that he has longed, for many years, to embrace..."

2. CLIP #1 - 38:34 - 39:31

SEGUE - "The word that Golum heard was his own name!"

Did you see the epiphany that just played out? ...That numinous moment where he was able to regain the memory of a better time and place... a long forgotten time and place? It's like, in the hearing, Golum found a bit of wholeness... in the remembering he found some hope... he remembered who he was! And for just a second he finds some peace, we see this decrepit creature close his eyes and smile (which will be the image that is frozen on the screen at the end of the clip).

There was something about be reminded of that 'better' name - that connected Golum to a 'better' definition of himself... A preferred reality that he once lived out... There was something about hearing the word, Smeagol, that allowed him to become Smeagol again! A recognition occurred... a former reality was appropriated... even if for just a moment.

There's something about hearing your name that does that... Especially when that name is connected to a better time/ a better person!

3. CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH EPIPHANY HAPPENS

SEGUE - "Golum had forgotten who he really was... forgotten his name. Life had taken so many bad turns leaving him twisted. As a tragic result of a history of bad choices he life became a mess." Rather than face that mess... he'd fallen into a rather dark place... and empty kind of existence.

One that he was evidently content to live out... up until someone reminded him of his real name! Until someone spoke that word.

4. GOLUM TAKES A NEW PATH

As a result of his encounter with Frodo, Golum changes. He ends up helping them with their journey, becoming Frodo and Sam's guide, and he even saves Frodo's life at one point... Instead of living out of the name Golum, he lives out of 'Smeagol' instead (at least for a while)

But not everyone is willing to let go of Golum's past... especially the hobbit Sam...

5. CLIP #2 - 1:11:50 - 1:13:30

SEGUE - "Sam was right... Frodo was starting to sound a lot like Golum... becoming more and more fractured, dis-integrating right before his eyes, forgetting who he was... Its no wonder Frodo said what he said..."

"I have to believe that he can come back..." - he had to believe for himself.... Frodo's fallenness necessitated this hope! If a messed up Golum can't recover from the destructive allure and power of the ring, how can he? If Gollum couldn't change for the better than would he be able to? Golum had to set a precedent of hope... Frodo's very life depended on it!

But change is a tough thing to count on isn't it? Can one bring it about in oneself? Does anyone ever really change? Have the power to do so?

I don't know about you but every time I've tried.... I've run into a lot of resistance... truth is, I've run into a part of myself!

6. ROMANS 7 - another character, from another old story once summarized the conundrum with these words...

"What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary. But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't

have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up."

7. CLIP #3 - 1:13:38 - 1:16:02 "Smeagol is free"

I remember sitting in the theatre when I first saw this scene... the moment was quite electric and people were drawn to the screen, keenly focused on this back and forth debate that Golum had with

himself...

Why? Because there's a little Golum in each of us? -- exegete this reality a bit... Old nature... how it battles with new (exp for Xn's)... Like golum we fall short of our ideals again and again... Duplicity... two fadedness...

Gal 5:17 "For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are antithetical, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day."

Connect to congregation... struggle with this?... 1. Or have given in to the Golum in you?... 2. Or gone into denial re: that old name/good name/Smeagol name? 3. Have you forgotten that first name? --- maybe we could connect with people on each of these fronts...

Not sure if this section is right yet... let's discuss at next meeting ...

SEGUE OUT - "And so we live in this confusing reality, the good in us battling the evil. We long to live out our good and better names, but we continue falling short... The struggle continue for Golum right up until the end of this film... We see him fall back to his old self in one closing scene..."

8. CLIP #4 - 2:49:05 - 2:50:51

Did you notice that Golum was called by both his names in that scene? Obviously he continues to struggle with which one he will choose to go by...

I guess we'll have to wait until next week, when the final episode of this story comes out to find how he faired, which way he ended up choosing...

I guess Golum's position is analogous of all of our lives... Which name will we live up to?

Its an especially important question as it relates to our faith...

God has a lot to say about the names we've been given

SEGUE into bible passages

Who's voice are you going to listen to?

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