



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

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Are we all just lost in the stars?

Gospel According to “Lost in the Stars”
Scripture: Luke 15

Lost in the Stars lost something important when it went from being a musical to film. Based on Alan Paton’s book *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the original story is tragic, but still has grace, redemption, and hope to cling to. The movie however, strips the story of these things and leaves it as a tragic tale of death, despair, and loss of faith.

The song “Lost in the Stars,” from which the musical takes its name, closes Act I. It comes as a moment of gripping drama as one man struggles with his faith. The protagonist is Rev. Stephen Komolo, a South African man who is an Anglican Priest living in the few years before apartheid officially grips the nation.

From the neighboring countryside, he goes to Johannesburg to look for his son and sister. He finds out that his sister is “gone,” but has left behind a son, whom he takes in. He also learns that his son Absalom is lost in the desperate cycle of poverty known as the gold mines.

Absalom also has a son coming, and he is desperate to make a better life for his new family. Hoping to gain enough money to open his own shop, he and two friends decide to rob the home of a wealthy white man when they believe he will be out of town. The robbery goes wrong however, and Absalom ends up killing the home owner (who was a friend of Rev. Stephen, was an opponent of racial segregation, and whose less-progressive father owns land near Stephen’s village).

During the ensuing trial, Absalom is faced with a dilemma. His friends have already lied, presented false alibis, and not vouched for Absalom. When it is his turn to testify, he could lie as well and have a hope for acquittal, or he could tell the truth, and surely face the hangman’s rope.

Stephen’s song “Lost in the Stars” comes when he is faced with the terrible truth that his son’s repentance and integrity will ultimately cost him his life.

He spent his life believing in Luke 15, that God searched for the lost. He was a man of faith, and to him that meant that choices we make for good matter. He had faith that while we all may make mistakes, ultimately God’s grace would overcome the evil of man. Yet his son’s integrity was going to get him killed. He knew he would die of a hangman’s noose for confessing and telling the truth. The emotional conclusion of the song comes with these words:

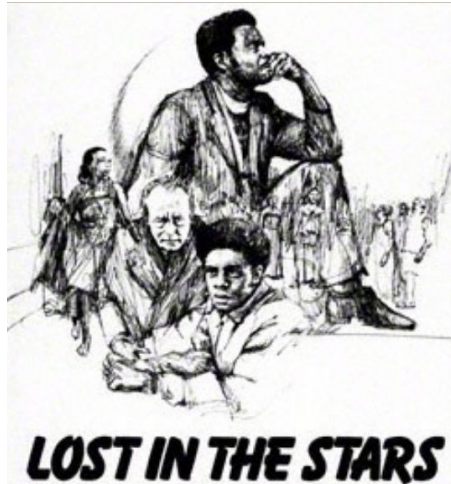
*“But I’ve been walking through the night, and the day.
Till my eyes get weary and my head turns gray
And sometimes it seems maybe God’s gone away
Forgetting the promise that we’ve heard him say
And we’re lost out here in the stars”*

And the movie ends with Stephen leaving his pulpit and his faith shattered. It is a tragic story, but one that author Alan Paton did not approve.

The musical, however, ends with an important scene, the two fathers are able to have an exchange. They recognize the brutality of the system that is going to leave two sons dead. They recognize that the mines were as much to blame for Absalom’s despair as Absalom was to blame for the death of the homeowner.

The two fathers, torn by tragedy, decide to become friends. And two more sons—the son that Stephen found and the son of the slain man—have a chance to write a new future.

The answer to Stephen’s questions do not come in a happy ending, but in hopeful future. The hope is found in forgiveness. Like the lost coin and lost sheep, the musical (more influenced by Christian Alan Paton’s book) ends with God finding Stephen in his moment of despair. He is found through the forgiveness of a fellow father sharing grief. We are not all lost in the stars as long as we can find forgiveness, redemption, and hope.



Lost in the Stars (1949) may be the least well-known musical we have examined. It is based on the 1948 book *Cry, the Beloved Country*. It was made into a film in 1974, shortly after its Broadway revival. The song of the same name has been recorded many times by stars such as Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr, and Judy Garland.

**Next Week: The Gospel According to Broadway:
RENT; 1 Corinthians 13**