

Film for thought – Marvellous.

In John 10:10 Jesus said: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Marvellous is part biopic, part musical, part fantasy.

It tells the moving and funny true story of Neil Baldwin who when he left the film premiere said: “It is great to be a film star and it is something I never thought would happen.”

This sentence could sum up his whole life...

In it you see his real community choir and other real life friends like Gary Lineker, Tony Benn and Lou Macari. There is a clever interweaving of the actors and real life people throughout the film.

Toby Jones, who plays the main role, is a distinguished stage, television and film actor. He starred in two of “The hunger games” films and is in post-production for “Alice in wonderland: Through the looking glass” and will play Captain Manwairing in “Dad’s Army” in 2016.

At 5’5” he is tiny, but in this film he is a giant!

We will all, I’m sure, connect with this film for different reasons. For me it was the football banter. It felt so real from my limited experience of a football changing room where humour is sharp, one-upmanship is prevalent and mistakes are punished swiftly. Neil Baldwin more than holds his own in the Stoke City changing room.

With all the rubbish we read about football: Greed, corruption, cheating... For me it is good to see it painted in a positive, life-giving light.

We’ll hear “Why, why, why Delilah?” throughout the film as it is a Stoke City fan’s anthem.

We’ll see a Testimonial, which is a match given for a player who plays somewhere for ten years.

We see budgies.

We’ll hear the odd rude word.

This film is littered with delicious lines from Neil Baldwin such as:

- “I met a lot of people in my life and I’m glad I did.”
- “I’m nice to people and people are nice to me.”
- “I’m working on an extra verse for the Lord’s Prayer.” This is his excuse to his vicar as to why he can’t join the church choir.
- The Stoke City manager Lou McCarie, who gave several pages of his autobiography over to Neil, tells his mum: “He’s genuine. He doesn’t have an angle.”
- A consultant says: “This man is a force for good.”
- Another vicar who has to pick him up says: “He does view the church as some kind of ecclesiastical AA.” This is something else I noticed; vicars are painted in a good light. They are ordinary people, with a sense of humour who know when they are being taken advantage of.

Neil Baldwin is also a professional circus clown. In the book about football chaplaincy entitled “Footballing lives” we read: “Clowns, like chaplains, are not contributors to the national output, but they are commentators on life.”

Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote “The idiot”, which Akira Kurosawa made into a film. Shusako Endo wrote “Wonderful fool” which has been compared to “The idiot”. Both tell the story of a simple man who infiltrates the lives of the sophisticated and transforms them. There’s a whiff of Neil Baldwin there and a strong scent of Jesus.

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Neil Durling.