

Homer and Wilma

The 1946 film "The Best Years of Our Lives" was about 3 WWII veterans returning home and discovering their lives had been forever changed. Harold Russell played the role of veteran and former star athlete Homer Parish. Russell had himself lost both his hands during the war and very accurately played the role of a double amputee serviceman coming home to face the harsh reality of living life, with hooks, where his hands once were. For Russell this role was obviously not just another role but one that paralleled his life story. For his performance Russell received 2 Oscars, for Best Supporting Actor and a special Oscar for being an inspiration to all returning veterans. He is the first and, so far, the only actor ever to receive 2 Oscars for the same role.

The most touching scene in the movie was when Homer invited his fiancé Wilma come up to his bedroom to show her what life would be like if they married. Thinking that their pre-war plans to be married were doomed by his disability, Homer wanted to show Wilma the stumps where his hands had formerly been. He wanted her to see how completely vulnerable and utterly helpless he was once his mechanical hands were removed. He couldn't even button his pajamas or even open his door if it was accidentally shut. He was sure that she would not want him anymore after she saw his horrible disfigurement and its implications. But Wilma looked into his eyes and with wonderful unconditional love, helped him remove his prosthetic hands, buttoned his pajamas and lovingly tucked him into bed. Homer laid his head on the pillow that night, his eyes moist with tears and drifted off to sleep, knowing he was loved.

Wilma's love is but a small earthly shadow of what God's unconditional love is like. If we think we can't come to Him because we have made a mess out of our lives or are somehow unusable by Him or undesirable to Him, we are mistaken. He waits patiently for us to invite Him into the most private parts of our lives where we are disabled, vulnerable and flawed. He loves us with an unconditional love and, like Homer, we can lay our heads down on our pillows at night knowing that we are loved. As King David said so well in Psalm 23

“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters,
He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

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