

## At The Movies

By: Caroline Friday

### Precious

Set in the year 1987, *Precious* tells the powerful tale of an obese, illiterate, 16-year-old African American girl named Claireece "Precious" Jones who lives in a constant state of horrific mental and emotional abuse from her mother (wonderfully played by Mo'Nique). Based on the novel Push, by Sapphire, the story opens with Precious living in a Section 8 apartment in Harlem, having been raped and impregnated for the second time by her father. When the junior high where she is attending discovers her situation, she is removed to an alternative school taught by the nurturing and encouraging Ms. Blue Rain. Despite her mother's insistence that she is "stupid, dumb, no good and 'ought a get on welfare,'" Precious finally finds the love she needs from Ms. Rain and her fellow classmates and begins to have hope for a better life.

This is not a film I would recommend to any person, Christian or nonbeliever alike, who is looking for an hour and forty-seven minutes of Hollywood entertainment. The story is raw, violent in language and deed, gut-wrenching, and the images stay in the mind for days to come, hence the R rating. However, it deals with an important issue that plagues many young girls (and boys, as the statistic reveal) and affects the lives of every member of the victim's family—from the abusive parent, to the complacent parent, to the offspring born from this sin, to the grandparents who look on and silently turn the other way. It is a heavy dose of reality that opened the eyes of this middle class, wonder-bread eating, Brady-Bunch-lovin' reviewer who had absolutely no clue that the horrors of this sin even existed, other than in the mind of some twisted, perverted novelist/screenwriter.

Fortunately for me, I was privileged to attend the movie with two incest survivors who attested to the story's authenticity and power. One felt that she had been violated all over again, and both admitted that it dug up deep memories from the past. But there were mixed emotions as to whether sexual abuse survivors should even see this movie. I can't begin to answer that, but I do know that it opened a door of truth that had been closed to me. Who then should see it, I asked myself? It has made \$50 million at the box office so far and is the toast of the Hollywood awards galas, so obviously there are enough people in the world who consider it worthy to be seen—and one cannot argue that it hasn't touched a nerve in our society. My answer would be this: any member of the body of Christ who has love and compassion for hurting people in this world, **and** who desires to help set those people free through the blood and power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, should make it a point to see this movie.

All that being said, there were some uplifting, lighter moments in the film that actually made me laugh, even if I felt guilty doing so. There was a rally of nice banter between Precious and her schoolmates, as well as Nurse John (played by Lenny Kravitz sans sunglasses)—never mind some of the expletives. Also, there were several tender moments between Precious and Ms. Rain and then Precious and her newborn baby, Abdul. I also liked the way Precious's imaginative mind was lived out through fantasies of she and her mom starring in an overly-dramatic black

and white Italian film, of her Caucasian male math teacher speaking words of love from a photo album picture, and of Precious as a glamorous pop star with gorgeous men fawning all over her. But the funniest, and yet most heart-wrenching, was when Precious looked in the mirror and saw a beautiful, thin, blonde white girl staring back, wearing an innocent expression and no sense of shame.

Despite the grit and horror, the one scene that is burned most vividly in my consciousness is a poignant portrayal of the established church who claims to be a safe haven for girls like Precious. There she stood in the New York cold with her three-day-old baby in her arms, no place to run or hide, peering through the narrow cross-shaped door windows of the *Thy Will Be Done* church, wanting more than anything to enter, but not daring. Inside were men and women in blue robes, singing with joy to the Lord, oblivious to the hurting girl standing on the other side. Why didn't she press her face against the glass or even tap gently against the closed doors? Could it be that she knew no one would answer? Could it be that she knew the singing would continue without a single blip or interruption? Sound familiar, anyone?

Go see *Precious*, but don't go to feel sorry for the victims of this crime—go so that you may have eyes to see the “precious ones” in your sphere of influence who need to know about the One who died and rose again to set him or her free. For where sin abounds, the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ does that much more abound! Hallelujah and Amen to that!