

The Apostle

Written by Robert Duvall

Sequence 1

New Boston, Texas. 1939. A young boy is taken to an African-American church, where a man preaches.

Sequence 2

A car accident on a highway. Sonny and his mother drive up. He stops the car and walks over to one of the crashed cars. Inside are an injured man and woman. Sonny prays. He talks to the man, on behalf of God. He walks back to his car, still in prayer. "We made news in heaven," he tells his mother, and drives away.

Sequence 3

Sonny at home with his mother, two children and ex-wife Jessie. He plays the piano and sings about Jesus. His ex-wife looks on uncomfortably. She takes the children outside.

Sonny's mother is cold and asks for a blanket. Flashback. Sonny as a young boy, preaching to an African-American church. Sonny finds his mother on the floor. He talks to her and covers her with a blanket. "I can't take you with me now. Hug St. Peter's neck for me, would you." His mother gets up.

Sonny goes outside, where his family is in a car with youth minister Horace. They drive away.

Sequence 4

Sonny preaches to a large group in a tent, then in a church, then to a small group of Mexicans in a small tent.

Sequence 5

Sonny wakes in the middle of night. He and his friend Joe drive to his home, where Sonny expects to find Jessie. At home he finds the house empty. He takes a gun from a drawer and drives to a house where Jessie is in bed with Horace. Sonny throws a baseball through the window.

Sonny and Jessie meet. She wants the marriage over. Sonny wants her to pray with him one last time. Jessie refuses.

Sonny drives home. Some of his congregants are there. They explain that Jessie is removing Sonny from his position in the church.

Night. Sonny is talking to God. A neighbour phones to complain he is making too much noise. Sonny's mother ignores them.

Sonny and Joe visit the church. Jessie is on keyboards. Sonny preaches to the crowd, then says goodbye to a group of congregants.

Sequence 6

A baseball game. Sonny gets into a fight with Horace and hits him in the face with a baseball bat. Sonny flees. He says goodbye to Joe, then drives off.

Sonny intentionally drives his car into a lake, jumping out at the last moment. He sets off by foot, disposing of any identification he has.

Sonny befriends a man fishing by a lake. The man offers him shelter for a night.

The next morning Sonny dwells on his life. Various flashbacks.

Sonny baptises himself.

A fisherman tells Sonny about a pastor friend, Charles Blackwell, in Louisiana.

Sequence 7

Sonny goes to Louisiana by bus.

Sonny gets a job as a mechanic in a garage.

He finds Charles Blackwell. They talk about starting a church.

Sonny begins preaching on the local radio.

He moves in with Sam, who works at the garage.

Sequence 8

Blackwell shows Sonny an abandoned church on land he owns. Sonny makes plans to re-open it.

Sonny gets another job, in a food stall, to pay for the church.

He calls Joe, who says that Horace is in a coma and the police are looking for Sonny. Joe also says that Sonny's mother is in hospital.

Sequence 9

Sonny and Blackwell fix up a bus, and talk about the church.

Sonny preaches on the radio. He befriends Toosie, who works there.

Local children help fix up the church.

He has dinner with Toosie, who is divorced with children. Sonny calls Jessie but hangs up before talking to her.

Nighttime. He visits his new church.

Sequence 10

Sonny drives his bus around town, picking up congregants for his new church. Inside the church, only a tiny handful of people listen to Sonny preach.

Sonny continues preaching on the radio. He and Sam deliver food around town.

Sonny baptises locals.

Toosie visits the church.

A man also arrives, intent on causing trouble. He spouts racial epithets.

Sonny beats him up behind the church.

Sonny drives Toosie home.

He calls Joe, who tells Sonny his mother is not well. Joe cannot bring himself to tell Sonny that she is actually already dead.

Sequence 11

A flat tire on the way to a garden party at the church.

The racist appears at the party, driving a digger, accompanied by other men. He threatens to demolish the church. Sonny places a Bible under the digger. Sonny talks to the man, who relents. Sonny welcomes him into the fold.

Sequence 12

Sonny quits the restaurant where he works.

Evening. At the church, Sonny talks with Blackwell. He explains that “when they come, I want you to take my gold, my watch, my jewelry. Hock ’em. Get every penny you can to help this ministry. Stay alive.”

Jessie hears Sonny on the radio and calls the police.

The police arrive at the church while Sonny is preaching. Sam accepts Jesus into his life.

Sonny is arrested for murder as he leaves the church.