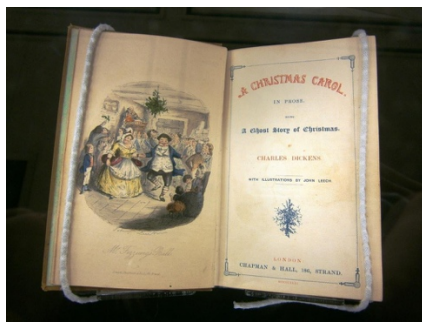


**"Bah, Humbug No More:
The Redemption of Ebenezer Scrooge"**
Ghosts of Christmas - Messages Series for Advent/Christmas 2017
December 24, 2017/Christmas Eve
North East United Methodist Church
Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Charles Dickens wrote his famous Christmas Carol in 1843...



...and from the very first, it sparked changes in the people who read it, momentous and generous changes.

- Robert Louis Stevenson, author of Treasure Island, wrote a friend, *"I want to go out and comfort someone; I shall never listen to the nonsense they tell one about not giving money—I shall give money; not that I haven't done so always, but I shall do it with a high hand now."*
- Years later, after the queen of Norway read A Christmas Carol, she sent gifts to disabled children in London, signed *"With Tiny Tim's love."*
- An American industrialist, Mr. Fairbanks of Massachusetts, having heard Dickens' own reading of the book one Christmas Eve, was so inspired he closed his factory the very next day for Christmas, managing to get a turkey to every worker and their family.

In the spring after A Christmas Carol was published, one English magazine noted that charitable giving was up across the whole country, the result of this one little book.

What is the power of Dicken's fable? Why does such a little book, not even 100 pages, continue to impact so many people? Why would I choose to preach from it on the "Night of Nights" over 150 years later?

It is because the story of Ebenezer Scrooge is OUR STORY.

Ebenezer Scrooge...



...is described as "*a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!*" He is constantly focused on his work. He is filled with greed; it is money that drives him. He has disconnected himself from people...Dickens describes him as "*self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.*" Scrooge does not allow himself to get close to people...to be vulnerable...to feel. Scrooge carries the hurts from his past with him; he allows his past to define him. His eyes are closed to the plight of human needs around him because he is so focused on himself. The Spirit of Christmas, the Spirit of the Christ-child, is not in him. Like many in this world he has so much, yet is still miserable because he is missing the one thing that matters.

His Story is Our Story...

There was a time for all of us...perhaps some of us are there now...when the Spirit of the Christ-child...was not in us. A time when the things of this world drove us...the need for money, success, to be loved...times when we refused to open ourselves up to others, to feel...times when our priorities were skewed...when as men we did not fulfill our role as the spiritual head of our families...when church and the Bible and relationships were not given the time they deserve...times when we would not face the truth about ourselves, would not look in the mirror and deal with those areas of our

lives that were not where they should be...times we ignored the hurting and poor...We have been, or perhaps even now, are, in many ways like Ebenezer Scrooge...

God's Word tells us this...it should come as no surprise...Romans 3:23 - ***"For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard."***

J. Ellsworth Kalas explains, *"When we live below our best potential, when we're mediocre when we ought to be fine, cheap when we ought to be noble, shoddy when we should be upright - this is sin. When we are anything less than godly, it's because we are involved in this scandal called sin."*

And like Scrooge, who has no mercy, is shown mercy through the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future...you and I have been shown mercy and grace...not through ghosts appearing in the night but in the form of a child...born in a manger...

Luke 2: 7, 8, 10-11 (NASB)

And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

In the same region, there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

...The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

God's gift...John 3:16 - ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."***

This child...this gift...changed the world. This child...this gift...has gone on to change countless lives...leading to greater transformations than even that of Ebenezer Scrooge...



- After being visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past and shown the woman he left for his love of money...shown what he might have had...a family...



- After being visited by the Ghost of Christmas Present and being shown Bob Cratchitt, his employee's, meager home and surroundings...the sick, Tiny Tim...after being shown the Spirit of Christmas being lifted up in song and action by men and women who had little when it comes to worldly standards...



- After being visited by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come and being shown how his death would bring no one sadness...his life would have impacted no one for the better...

Scrooge falls down before the third ghost and cries, *"Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life? I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."* And at that moment Scrooge finds himself back in his bedroom.

"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoon of himself with his stockings.



"I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel. I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

Scrooge's transformation is beautiful and amazing as his frozen heart melts and he acts with generosity, gives to the poor, cares for Bob Cratchitt and his family...



...embraces his nephew, and genuinely cares for his neighbors...as joy...the Spirit of Christmas...the Spirit of the Christ-child...enters his heart...

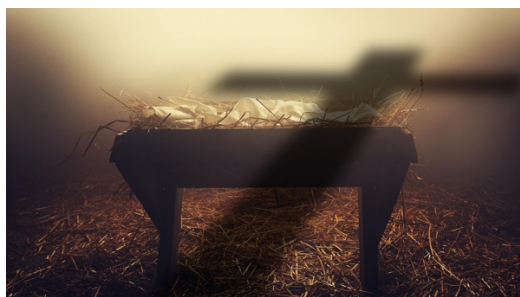
And it all starts with Scrooge crying out for mercy...recognizing his need...desiring his heart changed...***"'Spirit,' he cried, tightly clutching at [the Spirit's] robe, 'hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been...Good Spirit...intercede for me and pity me...'"***

This is Scrooge's moment of repentance. Repentance is a "*decisive turning*," a "*changing of the mind*." It means turning around and going in the opposite direction.

- Can you identify at least one obstacle, one road block, that would keep Christ from coming more fully into your life in the year ahead?
- Can you identify where your life has become cluttered, pushing Christ out?
- Can you identify perhaps one area where you might be a bit more like Ebenezer Scrooge than you care to admit? An area of your heart that has grown cold?

For Scrooge, three ghosts came and opened his eyes to the truth...

For you and I...three ghosts did not visit...for us...



...a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths came...grew to be a man...was crucified between two thieves...rose again, conquering death...

This child...this Christ...came to offer us grace and mercy...forgiveness...

Christmas is about God's light coming into our darkness. The prophet Isaiah predicted that when the messiah came into the world, then "*the people who walked in darkness*" would see "*a great light.*"

God coming in human skin, to be the Christ child born in a manger, is God's mysterious, unique way of saying to all of humanity, "I love you." Romans 5:8 - "*But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*"

Dickens' three ghosts are God's love—frightening, transforming, nurturing, and forgiving...the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future...

Each of us, in striving to choose a new future—a future of God's light and love...we must ask God in the present, today, to forgive us for the mistakes, injuries and sins of the past, in order to create a new and better future...

When the Spirit-of-Christmas-Yet-to-Come shows Scrooge his eventual grave, and the possible reality that he will die lonely and fettered to his shadows and darkness, Scrooge begs for another chance. "*I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I have been.*"

Christmas means allowing the light of God to lead you and I to say those very words. 2 Corinthians 5:17 - "***Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.***"

Revelation 3:20 - "***Jesus says, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me.'***"

- May God's grace...this Christmas...wake us up from the world in which we have grown so comfortable...the life we have

created...wake us up from our own plans exchanging those plans for the life God has for us...

- May God's grace lead us all, like Ebenezer Scrooge, to say, *"I am not the person I was. I will not be the person I have been"..."Bah Humbug, No More"...*
- May it be said of us...like it was of Ebenezer Scrooge...that we *"knew how to keep Christmas well [all the year], if any man possessed the knowledge"...*

With God...so much more awaits us...so many more lives will be touched through us...and with God...when we get to the end of this life...there will be no regret but we will find ourselves overflowing with gratitude and hope...the hope that came down that first Christmas Eve...



In the same region, there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."