

A Past of Regret

Opening: The sailors and the Admiral

Psalm 51:10 -12, 17 NLT

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Renew a loyal spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not banish me from your presence,
and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

¹⁷ The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

2nd Week of Advent - using Charles Dickens Christmas Carol for the back drop

⇒ first page of The Carol ... "Marley was dead to begin with ...

Jeremiah 17:9-10 (MSG)

⁹⁻¹⁰ "The heart is hopelessly dark and deceitful,
a puzzle that no one can figure out.

But I, GOD, search the heart
and examine the mind.

I get to the heart of the human.

I get to the root of things.

I treat them as they really are,
not as they pretend to be."

Marley was dead as a door nail, Dickens writes – Because this is a ghost story

But what Dickens doesn't tell us is that Scrooge was dead too ... not physically and not emotionally ... he was filled with anger and hate ... but his spirit – **Scrooge's heart was dead**

Proverbs 4:23 (NLT)

²³ Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

But the wonderful thing about this story is that God cared about Scrooge – reaching to out to him at while he was odious, and hateful and detestable

The meaning of Ebenezer Scrooge's name

Scrooge is from an obscure English verb: "to scrouge" is to squeeze or to press.

Ebenezer is a Hebrew name, composed of two Hebrew words. In 1 Samuel 4:1 the Israelites camped at a place called Ebenezer. This name is a combination of the Hebrew words for stone (*eben*) and helper (*'ezer*). A stone of help

The Old Testament contains the New Testament concealed – the New Testament the Old Testament revealed

Who is our stone of help? ... Who is the rock of our salvation? Jesus

Scrooge's first name, **Ebenezer** isn't mentioned until Marley's ghost explains the purpose of his visit:

"I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. This is the first instance of *grace* being offered to Scrooge

Regret

So many songs have been written about it –

Regret is a fearful thing to cope with especially when it's carried over the course of a life time

- We regret what we should have done but didn't
- We regret the things we did wishing we could undo them
- Regret can take the form of self loathing – we see ourselves as failures
- Regret can be a wake call you up at 3:30am causing you absolute turmoil
- Regret is always personal – we might blame others – but soon deep we know we are the source of the problem

The Good News: God can use our regret to make things right with Him and others

In *A Christmas Carol*, the ghost of Jacob Marley is a messenger with a warning for him. The message begins with Marley's own regrets of lost opportunity!

For Scrooge The invisible world becomes visible ... and he's terrified

Marley is chained ... "I wear the chain I forged in life I made it link by link, yard by yard; of my own free will I girded it on and of my own free will I wore it."

His greatest regret/remorse ... was that he had lost the power to intervene for good, to help others ... it was too late!

But Marley's warning doesn't change Scrooge – which echoes Jesus' parable of Lazarus and the rich man

Luke 16:27 - 31 The Message *Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man*

²⁷⁻²⁸ “The rich man said, ‘Then let me ask you, Father: Send him to the house of my father where I have five brothers, so he can tell them the score and warn them so they won’t end up here in this place of torment.’

²⁹ “Abraham answered, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets to tell them the score. Let them listen to them.’

³⁰ “‘I know, Father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but they’re not listening. If someone came back to them from the dead, they would change their ways.’

³¹ “Abraham replied, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the Prophets, they’re not going to be convinced by someone who rises from the dead.’”

On a scale of 1-10 1 being a great human being 10 being a absolute dirt bag Scrooge would have rated a 20

Is it possible that Regret and Remorse are a spiritual essence that a person can disconnect from?

Scrooge was frightened by Marley’s Ghost but unmoved

It’s not until the first Spirit of Christmas appears ... The Ghost of **Christmas Past** is a flickering flame- shining light into the darkness – Interesting that the 2nd Chapter of Acts that the Holy Spirit made His grand appearance as tongues of fire above the heads of each person in that upper room

With the help of the Spirit; Ebenezer begins the process of understanding his regret begins to lead him to repentance and real change.

Pastor Jerry – at Angela’s memorial service ... a glimmer of light of God’s grace and promise in a ceremony that up to that point had been cold and distant

Psalm 34:18

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

☆ Regret isn’t just about past things we did – it’s often about missed opportunities

Reading: Rabbi Harold Kushner *Living a Life That Matters* The people that had the most with death...

God works with hearts that are honest before him – a broken humble heart is where God can do His best work!

God has a call on person’s life – a service, a ministry that he designed specifically for your life and to miss out on that call because of fear might be the greatest regret of all.

Andy Stanley writes; *When people describe their first experiences they use phrases like “I felt so unprepared.” “I hoped they didn’t ask me any hard questions.” “I’ve never been so dependent on God.”*

And then they talk about the rush that followed when they realized God had used them; given them the words to say; allowed them to leverage their pasts to help someone move forward. Few things stretch and thus grow our faith stepping into a ministry environment for which we feel unprepared.

God has more for you than you have been willing to trust Him with up to this point. No matter your age or experience – God wants you to make a difference for this time that you are living in.

Don’t let your spirit be kept from His because of fear ...

Put regret in the box where it belongs and let God be God in your life.

Let’s Pray