

December 20, 2015

“Humbug to Humble: The Salvation of Scrooge”

1 Thessalonians 5:9

For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us.

(THE MESSAGE)

God didn't set us up for an angry rejection but for salvation by our Master, Jesus Christ.

God's plan is not to condemn us, reject us or pour out His anger on us, God's plan is not for us to suffer eternally; God's plan is to save us through Jesus Christ. This salvation is the forgiveness of sin and the hope of heaven or eternal life.

We want salvation so much that we look for it everywhere. Like Scrooge we look for it in money or in power, but it can't be found in money or power. It can't be found in education or knowledge. It can't be found in things like our talents or possessions. We cannot save ourselves, this is why we are so fortunate that God's plan is not for us to be condemned but to be saved. And God accomplished this by sending His only Son, Jesus so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life – through Jesus Christ alone. God loves you that much. This is Christmas and the greatest gift of Christmas. God became human to be our Savior from death by sin to the salvation that leads to eternal life.

Red and green are the color of Christmas—not because Santa's suit is red, or holly is green with red berries, or mistletoe and pine trees are green. Not because we wrap packages and decorate our homes in red and green. Red is the color of Christmas because of the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed as a sacrifice for our sin; and green is the color of Christmas because of new life, abundant life, eternal life through that sacrifice of Christ.

There are many movies and stories that have been written with a Christmas theme, but there is no greater story than the Biblical story of the birth of Christ. However, perhaps the most famous story written other than the true story of Christmas is “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens. We are using this story as a parable this Advent.

For us, the word “Scrooge” is synonymous with “cranky, selfish miser.” The character of Scrooge is so familiar that if you were to refer to someone as a “Scrooge,” just about everybody would know what you mean. They'd understand that you were not offering a compliment!

But do you know Scrooge's first name? It's not mentioned a lot in the story, we do see it on his tomb stone when the “Ghost of Christmas yet to come” points to it.

His first name was Ebenezer. I believe that Charles Dickens chose the name “Ebenezer” intentionally. In 1 Samuel 7:12, Samuel sets up a stone as a monument in remembrance of God's special help.

## 1 Samuel 7:12

Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Je-sha-nah (Juh-SHAY-nuh). He named it Ebenezer (which means "the stone of help"), for he said, "Up to this point the LORD has helped us!"

Scrooge means "squeezing" and Dickens used it to describe his selfish, greedy character. Ebenezer Scrooge was not only a man with a "squeezing, grasping" character. He was also to serve as a monument for readers of *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens intended Ebenezer Scrooge to remind us of things we ought not forget, lest we end up like Jacob Marley and the other spirits who walked the earth in sorrow, dragging the heavy chains they forged in life.

Scrooge was a selfish man, his dead ex-partner, Jacob Marley, who was just as selfish and greedy died on Christmas eve, he died before Christmas and therefore, symbolically Marley never knew Christ. In death Marley is in agony. Scrooge tells his old friend, "Speak comfort to me, Jacob!" Jacob's reply is, "I have none to give, it comes from other regions," mean comfort comes from heaven and that is not what Marley was experiencing. Of his chain Marley says, "I wear the chain I forged in life, I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own fee will I wore it."

Scrooge says, "But you were always a good man of business, Jacob."

"Business!" cried Marley, "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all, my business." Then he holds up his chains and says, "At this time of... year (meaning Christmas), I suffer most."

There is no hope for Marley, but he tells his friend Scrooge that there is still a chance of hope for him to escape the same fate as his old friend. This chance would be given to Scrooge through the visit of three spirits.

We have seen in the messages of Advent that the first spirit cause Scrooge to feel regret for his past life. Pastor John preached on that. Regret or as the Bible calls it, godly sorrow leads to repentance. Pastor Nick explained that quite well last week. Scrooge began to repent with the visit of the second spirit.

With the appearance of the third and final spirit, Scrooge faced the darkness of damnation before he saw the light of salvation. To a doomed man like Scrooge, the Ghost of Christmas Future seemed an Angel of Death. And indeed, the Ghost showed him two deaths – one of an unloved man, the second of the peaceful death of a child – Tiny Tim Cratchit - a death illuminated by grace.

Of course the first death Ebenezer Scrooge facing was his own; and only after facing his death, is he reborn into a new life and everyone is in awe of the salvation of Scrooge.

[Movie clip: 1hr-23min-9sec to 1hr-26min-30sec]

Salvation is for sinners who will admit they are sinners, who have regret for their past and will repent in the present, and put faith in Jesus for their future. Salvation is a gift of God – grace, through faith in Jesus. And the worst sinner is not beyond repenting and receiving God's salvation.

1 Timothy 1:15

This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all.

Salvation can even save a wasted life. While we are here on earth it is never too late to turn to Jesus for salvation.

John 3:17-18 NIV

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Scrooge feared his death more than he feared his wasted life because he knew that death meant a loss of a second chance. Facing his darkest moment drove him to seek the light.

When we accept Christ we receive His Holy Spirit. His Spirit gives us power over the temptation to sin. However, just as important as what we should not do, is what we should do. We know that our Salvation is real not only by not willfully sinning, but actively living for God, loving others as He loves us. It is doing the things Marley said should be our business: charity, mercy, forbearance (patience), and benevolence (kindness). Here's how the Bible puts it - There are requirements for those who are saved:

Micah 6:8

O people, the LORD has told you what is good,  
and this is what he requires of you:  
to do what is right, to love mercy,  
and to walk humbly with your God.

How did Scrooge live out his salvation? How did his actions show he had changed? He became a humble man. He celebrated his life with profound appreciation. He gave to those less fortunate. He embraced his family. All these actions showed that he was no longer living for himself.

Salvation is now.

2 Corinthians 6:2

Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.

We are saved the moment we accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. He comes into our lives and we receive God's forgiveness of sins. Although many people object to the idea that salvation comes through Christ alone, that is the plain teaching of the Bible.

Acts 4:8

There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

Scrooge realized that there was no comparison between a temporary prize like money and the everlasting privilege of eternal life.

What must you do to be saved? Someone asked same question in...

Acts 16:30-31

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved..."

In this way salvation is offered to all people. You can't earn salvation, you can't work for it – the way many material things are received – rather you receive salvation as God's gift. That's THE GIFT of Christmas. Nevertheless, in the pursuit of worldly comfort, many delay coming to Christ – and in doing so, some miss their chance entirely. While sin separates you from God now, unrepentant people who die separate themselves from God for eternity.

If you are not saved, nothing should keep you from accepting salvation through Christ Jesus immediately. "Today is the day of salvation." If you are saved, live like it and thereby lead others to salvation in Christ.