

“The Christmas Carol”

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Christmas Eve!!

Advent is about to culminate into Christmas! Here we are in this magnificent sanctuary – in from the cold, warm, imbibing this beautiful space, relishing this inspiring music!

You are sitting next to loved ones, friends, fellow travelers. There is a spirit of calm and stillness in the air. So my friends, release the worries, anxieties, the rush of the season – take a few deep breaths – and allow yourself to experience this spiritual moment in your life. Even if you have a few more gifts to wrap when you get home – set that aside right now and “be here” in this sacred time.

You know the Christmas story. You have heard it more times than you can remember.

- The birth of a baby.
- The concern of God for His creation.
- The fulfillment of hope
- The opportunity for redemption, for new life, for novelty, for changed lives!
- The witness that we live in a meaningful universe, that we have purpose! It’s all in this Christmas story, The Christmas Carol.

Christmas – a reminder that life, your life is more than the daily doldrums of just getting through the day. Life is more, much more than just existing.

Christmas – declares you are a part of transcendence! You are not just a cog in the ever-churning mechanism of a sterile, unfeeling, uncaring universe. No! Rather- creation is pregnant with life! With novelty, with meaning and purpose!

Immanuel! God with us!

You are not alone!

Not merely an animal that makes tools and guttural noises! But, a precious child of a God who cares, who loves passionately – his children!

Christmas witnesses to Immanuel - God with us – in our past, present and future!

I do not go to the movies as much as I used to. But this week I went to see the newest rendition of Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol”. This time it was animated, and in 3D, although I missed out on the 3D. I highly recommend the film, although caution is needed regarding young children. Some of the ghosts could be too scary. Jim Carey is a great Scrooge, although I can’t help thinking about Bill Murray’s depiction of Scrooge in what I deem a classic - “Scrooged”. I love it when the ominous ghost of Christmas future gets too close to Bill and he tells him to “back off.”

Of course the 1951 version is truly the classic film of “A Christmas Carol”. Dickens caught so much of the Christian, Christmas story in his short classic. Primary – is redemption – people can change, you can change!

God offers you within your life – your past, present and future. Freedom to build your life, freedom to change your life! From “bah-humbug” to “God bless us everyone” – new life is available!

Scrooge recovers his humanity. He is redeemed!

The Christmas Carol!

The Christmas Story

The Christian Story!

For these few minutes – muse on your life; consider your past and how you find yourself sitting here this evening. Who offered you “The Christmas Carol” of love, hope and meaning?

My mother and grandmother Nora greatly influenced me and my view of the world – from my earliest childhood. I always felt safe and loved.

I can vividly recall as a child preparing for Christmas Eve dinner. This was a very special event for our family. The dinner originally took place at my grandmother’s home, but after her death we began meeting at my aunt’s home. The whole Zanicky clan would gather at Aunt Mary’s home for our traditional Christmas Eve dinner. Each family would provide some part of the meal. My mother baked the bread. Another aunt would bring my favorite “pierogies” (A Ukrainian dish). It was a feast!

We lived next to my Aunt Mary. The children, including me, couldn’t wait to get to Aunt Mary’s. I can visualize that short walk – really sort run – through the backyard and the snow to get to Aunt Mary’s. She always had Christmas music playing outside. Fro a Child – it was beautiful. I’m sure each of you can recall certain experiences of Christmas past. The Christmas story is a story of light coming into darkness. The light dispels the darkness.

That story and thousands of others, many, most of which I can’t recall – have brought me here this evening. What events led you?

The present.

Hopefully, all of your gifts are bought and wrapped. Although there have been years when Shawn and I have wrapped gifts ‘til 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning of Christmas. I’ll confess, she did most of the wrapping. This is now a time to get go of the pressures and tensions of the holiday season and to collect your thoughts and focus on the Christmas story, the Christmas Carol.

This evening, now, the present, experience God through the Christchild. Bring your past, good and bad, and allow God to forgive and to accept you once again as God’s child.

Rekindle the spirit of love in your heart this evening. There is no hurt, no pain that God cannot help you with. The present is our passageway into the future.

The future.

The Christmas Story – is a story of reality that promises a future – a meaningful future.

I heard a story about a Presbyterian Pastor who took his family to a Christmas tree farm to search for a tree. As you might expect, they were searching for the perfect tree – not too tall, not too thin, just the right shape, and of course, a straight trunk.

As they were looking they came upon a family from their church, the Marshes. The pastor remarked, “This place is filled with beautiful trees! It is going to be hard to pick one.” Jeanine Marsh replied, “Not for me. I never look for the perfect trees! I’m looking for a tree that needs me! Then I’ll make it beautiful!”

As we experience another Christmas, as we go into a New Year, God is not looking for perfect people, God is looking for people who will accept God’s Grace and meaning in life.

As the future impinges on the present, God’s love, The Christmas Carol, wants us to be the people we were meant to be. And in bringing our past, our present and our future into God, through Jesus the Christ – each of us will become more beautiful in the eyes of our Lord.

In A Christmas Carol – Scrooge is redeemed. In our lives each of us needs this redemption, this fulfillment of who we are to be and to become.

Past, present and future. A given in our reality. The future is open to you. Allow God to transform what you have been, into what you need to be.

As you leave this place this evening – take the gift of the Christchild with you. Take this love and share it with your families, friends and neighbors. The Christmas Carol – Immanuel – God with us! God Bless us, everyone!

Amen.