

Sunday, November 29, 2020

Advent Week 1

Bah! Humbug!

Welcome

McMasters and Center Avenue

First Sunday of Advent

Advent series - Redemption of Scrooge

Introduce lighting of the first Advent candle,

reading by Claudia Dias

Written by Julie Krantz

Nov. 29 There is a Christmas song that begins, “Do you know what I know?” Do you know that God promised us a Savior who would offer us salvation through our belief in Him. Just as we anticipate receiving gifts from our families at Christmas, we await the arrival of God's gift. What is it? We just have to wait, watch, and listen! Each Sunday in Advent we will learn clues about the gift.

Our first clue is found in Romans 12:12 which tells us to be joyful in hope, patient in our afflictions, and faithful in prayer. God's people have always been a people of hope. Our days have been getting darker and darker event wise. We need the light of God's gift to inspire our trust in the hope of God's gift.

Light the first candle which symbolizes HOPE!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us not to hide the light under a bushel but share it with everyone.

Hymn #211 “O, Little Town of Bethlehem”

Offertory Prayer

Great God of wonderful surprises: we enter this season of preparation for your Son's coming, looking not for just a memory of past events, but anticipating a return. We strive to get our lives in order and pray that our giving of ourselves to these preparations might reflect the earth-shaking

importance of his coming. Help us to give ourselves generously, for we do not know the day or the hour. We pray in the name of the one who will come. Amen. (Mark 13:24-37)

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. **2** He agreed to pay them a denarius[a] for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

3 “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. **4** He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ **5** So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. **6** About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

7 “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

8 “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

9 “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. **10** So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. **11** When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. **12** ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have

made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

13 "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? **14** Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. **15** Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

16 "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Pastoral Prayer (not in bulletin)

God of hope,
you raised up John the baptizer
as a herald who calls us to conversion.
As we joyfully await the glorious coming of Christ,
we pray to you for the needs of the church and the world.

Prayers of the People, concluding with:

Hear our humble prayer
that we may serve you in holiness and faith
and give voice to your presence among us
until the day of the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Sermon

God's economy is often not the same as the one we embrace, as evidenced in the life of Scrooge.

the values of this world are often different from what God values, as evidenced in Scripture.

But if Scrooge can be redeemed, so can we! How can we learn to love and value what God loves and values?

When you hear the name “Scrooge”, what comes to mind?

A greedy, miserly, mean, miserable person? Charles Dickens’s famous novel, *A Christmas Carol*, made the name, “Scrooge” a synonym for “miser.” A novel written in the nineteenth century England has been the basis for many twentieth century movies. Some are close to the original text, some are modernized in setting, some take artistic license, some are animated. They all have the same central character, whether by name or by characterization, the main character is a “Scrooge”.

Let’s recall some of the early scenes that introduce us to Ebenezer Scrooge.

Dickens describes him with these words: “Oh, but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about him; he iced his coffee in the dog-days and; and didn’t thaw it one degree at Christmas.”

Ebenezer sat in a small office where he could keep an eye on his employee, Bob Cratchet. Each had a small coal fire for heat, but Ebenezer kept the coal bucket in his office to control how much Bob used. When Cratchet asked for a day off, the next day, Christmas Day, Scrooge responded, “you don’t think me ill-used, when I pay a day’s wages for no work.”

He was miserly toward his employee.

Two gentlemen visited the office, politely requesting that Ebenezer make a charitable donation to help poor families over Christmas. Do you remember his response? “Are there no prisons? Union workhouses? The Treadmill and Poor Law? I help support those establishments - they cost enough; those who are badly off must go there.” The gentlemen replied many would rather die. Scrooge showed his disdain for humanity when he said, “they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.”

He was miserly toward the poor people.

Ebenezer’s nephew stopped by to invite him to join him and his wife for Christmas dinner. Ebenezer chastised his nephew for wasting money on Christmas. “What’s Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in ’em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you?”

Ebenezer refused the dinner invitation and showed disdain when his nephew wished him a “Merry Christmas”. That famous line, “Bah, Humbug!”, was his response.

He was miserly with his time for his family.

Ebenezer Scrooge was a sad, pathetic character. No friends. Everything about other people made him angry. Rich in money but poor in spirit. He was rich in his worldly way of thinking, but poor in relationships. Ebenezer was the opposite of his nephew who reflected on Christmas as a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.

Mr. Scrooge thought everybody who ever uttered, “Merry Christmas”, as below him.

Ebenezer Scrooge is then visited by the ghost of his now dead partner, Jacob Marley. The apparition is frightening to Scrooge, but he tries to make sense of it, and to justify his way of life. Marley regails him with his

woes as a wandering spirit, chained by his own wicked deeds that continually haunt him because there is nothing he can do now to accomplish what he should have done in life. His past has condemned him to an afterlife of sadness and woe.

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”

Marley finally tells Ebenezer that he will be visited by 3 spirits that will each bring him an important message about his past, present, and future.

But think about it. What happens to Mr. Scrooge by the end of the story? He is transformed into a new person, a benevolent and kind man. Dickens ends the story with this description of Ebenezer Scrooge: “and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge.

If Ebenezer Scrooge is no longer the miserly grumpy man we met at the beginning of the story, why do we continue to view him that way? As Christians, we should be celebrating the new man, not the old man. The word “Scrooge” should be synonymous with redemption for us.

This sermon series for Advent is titled, *The Redemption of Scrooge*. Ebenezer Scrooge is transformed by the 3 spirits that visit him. The spirits confront him with the truth. The truth of his past, the truth of his present condition, and the truth of his future condition if he continues to live as he has been living.

Sometimes we also get caught up in the busyness of our world and forget the meaning of Christmas like Ebenezer Scrooge. We may not be as

miserable, miserly, or lonely, but we miss out on the hope and joy we should be experiencing.

Scrooge's nephew reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas:

But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that

Without saying his name, nephew's words remind us that our hope is in Jesus Christ. We can't escape that truth no matter how successful we may become in worldly matters.

Mr. Scrooge is transformed from the mean miser to a man with a loving, generous heart. One who uses his abundance to bless others. As Christians, we are also transformed into new people when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. But we can only be transformed because we are first redeemed by Jesus Christ. No amount of good works can do that for us. We are redeemed only because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sin. Redemption comes before transformation. Our role is to accept the gift of life that has been offered to us by repenting of our sins.

Mr. Scrooge received the gift of truth about his past, which made him sad. He received a gift of truth about his present, which made him sorry. And he received the gift of his future, which terrified him. Scripture reveals these same truths for us, but our outlook is different. Our gift from Christ, when we accept it as truth, allows us to let go of the past sins, live into the present with a life of spiritual abundance, and have hope in the promise of our future.

Let's go forward into Advent, remembering the first coming of Jesus Christ as our opportunity to go with Him into eternity when he returns to take us home.

