

## At the Movies: Christmas Edition

### Week 2: A Christmas Carol/Charlie Brown Christmas

#### Luke 2:8-20

Appreciate our kids doing the heavy lifting today! Their Christmas gift to you each year is that you don't have to sit through a full sermon and their gift to me is I don't have to write one!

That performance gave us a lot of good nuggets of truth to chew on, starting with one of the very first lines...everybody loves a good Christmas movie. It's true. We may disagree about which one's the best, which, if your answer is anything but Elf, you're wrong...but most people have at least one Christmas movie they love, even if it's Die Hard! *(Which, side note: I wanted so badly to work into this series! Maybe next time!)*

So, turn to the person next to you and share your favorite Christmas movie.

We're in week 2 of our series, At the Movies: Christmas Edition and last week, we used Christmas Vacation to show us that when our reality doesn't live up to our expectations, it can sometimes leave us feeling disoriented and disappointed. A lot of us live in the darkness of unmet expectations, but Jesus came to shine light into those dark places of our life.

This week, our kiddos gave us two classics that help us see the beauty of the Christmas story. There's *A Christmas Carol*, which was first published on Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, 1843...180 years ago next week. There have been countless adaptations of it, but who's with me that the best is this one...(show Muppet's picture)

A Christmas Carol is the timeless story of Ebenezer Scrooge, this crotchety, stingy old man with a cold heart transforming into a generous and joyful person whose life reflects the warmth and love of the Christmas message.

And then you have poor Charlie Brown...I mean, the boy with the round head...getting frustrated about the commercialization of Christmas and, exasperated, he asks, "Isn't there anyone who can tell me what Christmas is all about?!"

Linus speaks up and shares the story of the shepherds finding Jesus laying in the manger. Which, wow! How about our Linus, huh? I just thought she was incredible! It was an inspired performance...of course, she was also my daughter, so I might be a little biased!

I think the reason we still love these stories is because they point to the hope of the Christmas message. They give us hope that we can change. Hope that our past doesn't have to define us and we can be transformed into something new. When you merge these two stories together, I think you get some powerful insight into the Gospel. Into the message of who Jesus is and what He came to do for you. When we put these two stories together, we discover that **A single encounter with Jesus can rewrite your story.**

We see this throughout Jesus' life. One encounter with him, and people went away changed. One encounter with Jesus and the woman at the well went away joyfully telling others to come see the man who told her everything she'd ever done, and yet still showed her love and gave her dignity. One encounter with Jesus and Peter dropped everything to follow him. One encounter with Jesus and people went away healed and whole. A single encounter with Jesus can rewrite your story; just like it did for the Shepherds in the text that Adalyn read for us.

Shepherds in that day were treated as the least of the least. They were considered untrustworthy and unclean. Their job was looked down upon. They were the social outcasts of their day. But, Jesus changes everything. God announces the birth of His Son through a chorus of angels, they go to check it out, and this single encounter with Jesus rewrote their story! Look at what happens next...(READ Luke 2:15-20)

Their encounter with Jesus transformed them from lowly shepherds into a bunch of preachers and worship leaders...telling others about him and singing God's praises! And even though shepherds were considered untrustworthy, the evidence of their transformation was so noticeable, and undeniable, that people listened and everyone was amazed. Not by them, but by what God had done in them through their encounter with Jesus.

And, the same continues to be true for us today. A single encounter with Jesus can rewrite your story, too. I don't know where you are in life today, or what your story has been like up to this point. All I know is what I read in Scripture and have experienced in my own life. It's a message the kids shared with us this morning and I want to make sure we all hear it...**We serve a God of second chances, who specializes in grace.**

We've all felt like Charlie Brown, or been made to feel like we're not good enough. We can't get anything right. Maybe you feel unloved and unlovable. We've all been Scrooge at one point or another. Our selfish actions have caused pain in the lives of others.

We can relate to these stories because they're our stories, too. But, the beauty of the Christmas message is that God sent his Son to show how much He loves us. God sent His Son to make a way for us to find new life and a fresh start. We serve a God of second...and third...and fourth chances and his specialty is grace that transforms us from death to life.

The Apostle Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:17, **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"** A single encounter with Jesus can rewrite your story and transform your life. That's my story, and it's the story of countless people in here this morning. It's the story of people in Scripture and throughout the ages who have experienced God's transforming grace in their life, ***and it can be your story, too.***

So, no matter where you've been, what you've done, or what's been done to you, **As you celebrate Christmas this year, remember that your story isn't finished.** We serve a God of second chances who specializes in grace. One encounter with Jesus can rewrite your story and change everything. Maybe today is the day for that to happen.