

Sermon :: 30-Nov-2025
Advent I, Year A

“ Come, let us walk [|] in the *light* of the *LORD!* ”

‘High-brow’ cinema, I know, it’s *not* ... but it *is* a childhood favorite that I’ve never let go of: *Mr Magoo’s Christmas Carol* ... the 1962 animated adaptation of Charles Dickens’ arguably most *famous*—or, at least, most enduringly *popular*—work. The premise is that Mr Magoo is a stage actor, playing the lead role in a Broadway adaptation of A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

After enduring the appearance of Marley’s ghost ... and visitations by the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come¹ ... we come, at last, to *final stave* of Dickens’ ‘carol’: Scrooge-Magoo awakens to discover that the apparitions have vanished, and it’s now *Christmas morning*. In unalloyed, child-like joy, Scrooge-Magoo struts and prances, barefoot, on his second-story bedroom window ledge in his long, flowing nightshirt and pink, pom-pom-ed nightcap ... yelling down to a snowman (whom he mistakes for a *real* person) to go buy **that** giant turkey hanging in the butcher’s window. When the butcher brings it back, nearsighted Scrooge-Magoo mistakes the bird’s *wing* for the butcher’s *hand* and shakes it vigorously, in spirited how-do-you-do.

Soon enough, Scrooge-Magoo is off to the Cratchit house: arriving just as they’re preparing to carve that ‘ginormous’ turkey, which he’s sent them, anonymously. He walks into the house ... gives Bob Cratchit a *huge* raise ... hands out money by the *bagful* to all the children ... gives Tiny Tim ‘horsey rides’ on his own elderly back ... and even splits, with him, a jar of Mrs Cratchit’s delectable razzleberry dressing.²

As I said, high art it surely *isn’t*. But ... owing to *both* the fantastical visual possibilities of animation ... *and* an endless series of hilarious flubs caused by Magoo’s profound myopia ... *I* find this the most exuberant ... most passionate ... most LET-IT-GO! ... depiction of Stave V of A CHRISTMAS CAROL—the brief final chapter set on Christmas Day—I know. Scrooge-Magoo isn’t just happy, but *giddy* ... *skipping* more than walking ... singing at the *top* of his *lungs* ... and **declaiming** in that strange, nasally voice only Jim Backus could pull off, “*Merry Christmas ... Merry, Merry Christmas, indeed!*”

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This year, we’re taking Dickens’ 1843 novella as our Advent theme: Sunday morning adult discussions, starting today ... fellowship supper-and-movie nights on Wednesdays, beginning this week ... and also *here*, in our preaching. And while the *end* of the tale ... its *happy* ending ... may *seem* like an **odd** place to start ... it strikes me that on this First Sunday of Advent, it’s exactly the *right* place. For on this day ... the first day of the Church’s new liturgical year ... we, too, *begin* with the **ending**: the ending of *time* ... the ending of our *waiting* ... the ending of all that’s *wrong* with this world ... the ending of humanity’s *separation* from *God*.

¹ Including, during the third visitation, a truly *harrowing* scene in a pawn shop, when burglars are seeking to fence all the things they’ve stolen the (late) Scrooge’s home. This scared me no end, when I was a kid!

² [I decided I needed to excise this from the sermon proper – but I can’t resist including it here:] As the movie ends, we’re back in the Broadway theatre. Mister Magoo takes one final bow—with his back turned, nearsightedly, to the audience—and then rushes into the wings, to drag the director out for a bow. In doing so, Magoo manages to untie the rope that’s holding up all of the tall scenery ... which immediately falls, in a loud heap, flattening the hapless director to the ground ... while *Magoo* continues to bow and prance, utterly unscathed ... finally exclaiming, “Oh, Magoo, you’ve done it again! You’ve brought down the *house!*”

We begin, in a word, with Christ's coming into this world *again* ... "in His glorious majesty," as our collect puts it; "with clouds descending ... Christ the Lord returns to reign," **[8:00 as Anglicanism's most famous Advent hymn sings it] [10:15 in the words of our opening hymn (which, by the way, is one of the most evocative—and most perfect—in all of hymnody, I think)]**. We celebrate ... with *joyful*, even *giddy*, anticipation ... the day when our endless annual cycles of Advent-Christmas-Epiphany-Lent-Easter-Pentecost ... will *finally* come to an *end* ... and this world will be ruled ... united ... perfected ... glorified ... by the forever-presence of its Creator King. Yes, to be sure: We *will*, soon enough, begin preparing for our journey to the *Manger* ... to the recollection of Christ's *first* (and *also* glorious) coming. But *today* ... this 'new year's day,' as it were ... we pause to preview ... to praise ... indeed, to *proclaim* ... the day when *all* shall see their Savior face-to-face, in *life* ... and this world will, once more, be made *whole*.

The theme of our *lessons*, this day, concerns our *preparation*: What is the right *posture* ... the correct *mindset* ... the essential '*attitude of heart*' ... for such a momentous day? How **do** we position—*pose*—ourselves not *only* to 'meet our maker' ... but *also*, to enter the glorious and God-ordained *closure* of all the human messiness of this *worldly* life ... and the *opening* of Christ's exclusive and peace-filled reign? ¶Saint *Paul* talks to us about *morals*: telling us to put on the "armor of light" ... to put away human pettiness and heedless consuming ... and, "[i]nstead, *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*." ¶Jesus speaks to us about *mindfulness*: about being "ready," at every hour of every day, "for you know not on what day your Lord is coming." Either way ... *both* of them make clear that the time for us to *prepare* for Christ's coming is *now* ... while we're still *waiting*.

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Being *ready—now; today*—to *meet* Jesus ... our heads held high, our hope abounding, and our hearts full of love: Perhaps *this* is exactly what makes the final 'act' of Dickens' A CHRISTMAS CAROL so *fulfilling* ... so *uplifting* ... so *right*: The once-miserly, -miserable, -misanthropic Scrooge's transformation is not just for a day, but for a *lifetime*; not only about righting past wrongs (although he does have a *lot* to atone for!) ... but also *bringing*—actively **carrying**—the peace of Jesus ... the *generosity* of His *Spirit* ... the *joy* of His *salvation* ... the *knowledge* of His *long-lovingness* of us ... into this world like an elixir ... like a cure ... and letting it pulse through this old world ... until it, *too*, begins to feel like dancing on the window ledge in its nightshirt and eating razzleberry dressing, by the heaping handful, right from Mrs Cratchit's jar.

For the *truth* ... the truth that *Scrooge finally* comes to grasp, courtesy of the three *spirits* ... and the truth we **already** hold in *our* hearts, by *faith* ... is that Jesus' peace *needn't—shouldn't*—wait until He comes again: The joy of our being redeemed ... being saved ... being raised to new-and-forever life ... is *present*, not *future*. His generosity—of *means and* of *spirit*—we can practice **now** ... His love we can wrap around this world, like a warm *blanket* or protective *shield, today*.

As Christ's disciples ... His siblings ... His beloved ... we, like Scrooge-reborn, can *anticipate* ... can '*prequel*' ... can give the world a *foretaste* of ... Jesus' coming again, *one* day, in *glory* ... by sharing the Jesus we know and carry in our hearts, *now*, in *love*. We *can* be ... in fact, we're *called* to be ... the harbingers of the joy and peace, rest and renewal of Christ's Second Coming, *right now* ... in this *present* day ... in this muddy, miry, grimy, grizzled, smoky, sooty world: in *how* we walk this earth ... *how* we lead our lives ... *how* we embrace our *own* inherent and unforfeitable Christ-ly-ness. ¶By being ready—at *any* time; indeed, at *every* time—to meet Christ *around* the next corner ... in the supermarket checkout line ... on the airplane next to us. ¶By living *every* day—both morally and mindfully—from the depths of our hearts to tips of our fingers ... not in some cold, dry, prim, prudent, stingy, arched-brow *knowledge* that Christ's *First* Coming *began* a new age that we, like 'old

Scrooge' just need to *wait **out*** ... but, like 'Christmas Day Scrooge,' by actively, warmly, generously, spiritedly and openly *anticipating—bringing and living into **existence***—His *Second* Coming ... that will make this a world where all *thrive* ... all *delight* ... all are *at-peace*.

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The *wonder* ... the *beauty* ... the *all-rightness* of Christ's Coming Again. ¶It is the joyful good news *Scrooge* learns ... in visits from spirits. ¶It is the joyful Good News *we* receive from Christ ... first. in Baptism ... and every week, at this Eucharist. ¶And it is the joyful, liberating Good News He ... *and we, **in Him*** ... possess, to share with a world in such deep, dire need of it. So let us don our nightshirts and pom-pom-ed caps... throw open the windows ... scoop up the razzleberry dressing with our fingers ... and proclaim—at the top of our lungs and with every ounce of our effort—that **the** Savior *has* come ... *is* come ... and *will* come, again ... in "*glorious* majesty" ... *perfect* peace ... and *boundless* love ... for the **whole** world. "God bless us, every one!"

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