

Victory of the Lamb – Christmas Eve 2021 – Christmas At The Movies
A Christmas Carol – 1 Timothy 1:12-17 Pastor Bill Limmer

You have made a list, and you have checked it twice, over and over again. It's not a naughty and nice list but a list of people you need to get gifts for. You take a deep breath. Your shopping is complete. You load up the car to go to the celebration for one side of the family. You run back inside and double check around the Christmas tree to make sure you have all the gifts you need for this celebration. You are good to go. You lock the door and you are on your way, listening to Christmas carols in the car, when suddenly you remember: you inadvertently forgot someone. Son of a nutcracker. Oh Santa. You need a second chance. Good thing Walgreens is open!

Here at Victory this Christmas season, we have been having a lot of fun in our series **Christmas at the Movies**. We have looked at all these movies under the lens of the greatest story ever: God sending his Son in flesh and blood to be our Savior and the Savior of the World. For our Christmas Eve worship, we are going to consider a movie that is the first and most published Christmas movie of all time. There are a lot of versions from George C Scott, Jim Carey, Bill Murray and for some, your favorite rendition is *Mickey Mouse's A Christmas Carol*. As we look at this movie and God's Word, we are going to answer the question, **Do we get the gift of a second chance?**

Not long after the movie begins, Jacob Marley visits Ebenezer on Christmas Eve in his home. The thing is Marley has been dead for seven years to the day. Marley warns him Ebenezer he must change his life or he will die and even more chains will hold him tight forever. He then announces to Ebenezer that he is going to be visited by three spirits that night. The Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. When I was a little kid at this point in the movie, I was freaking out with all these spirits and ghosts. Good thing the lights were on, and my parents were home.

As the Ghost of Christmas Past takes Ebenezer back in time, he sees a young woman that loved him and whom he loved. But that never materialized not because of her but because of him. As he looks back, if only he had a second chance.

In the Bible, there is a guy by the name of Paul. And one of the things about the Bible is it is really honest. This is what Paul says about himself in the Bible: 1 Timothy 1:13 **I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man.** At one time in his life, Paul, was very much an anti-Jesus guy. Paul approved of the arrest and brutal murder of Christians. Paul hunted down people who followed Jesus. Talk about a Scrooge. If only, he had a second chance.

We all have a past. We all have some chains from the past. For some of us we have family members and friends who do a great job of reminding us of our failures, mistakes, and sins. For some of us, we wish we had a second chance to not say that thing we said or to not post that thing on social. We all have a worst thing we ever did. As we look back, we wish we had a second chance.

And that leads us to The Ghost of Christmas Present. The ghost of Christmas Present visits Ebenezer and takes him to Bob Cratchit's home, where the family is celebrating Christmas dinner. Scrooge is shocked at how little food they have. In addition to his dismay over their lack of food, Scrooge is concerned about the crippled Tiny Tim. He wonders to the Ghost of Christmas Present, "Will these conditions change? Will Tiny Tim live?" The Ghost responds these conditions won't change and Tiny Tim will die... unless you change. As painful and horrible as these things are, Scrooge doesn't think he can change. Scrooge believes he is beyond hope and beyond redemption. He thinks he has no future. He thinks he is beyond a second chance.

The Apostle Paul could relate to blown opportunities, regrets, guilt, and shame. He says, 1 Timothy 1:15-16 **Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.** There was a time when he thought he was beyond a second chance.

I know some of us can relate. I remember going over this passage at the Seminary. I raised my hand and told the professor. I have a problem with this verse. I said to him, "I believe that I am the worst of sinners." The professor, with love and concern for the truth of God's Word, responded, "Good, Bill. That is how we are all to feel because we know ourselves better than anyone else."

Our present day is full of stress. If I give you five minutes to think of the things that are stressing you, you will likely not be able to complete your list. One of the things that causes of stress is trying to hide our past. We have so much regret.

We walk around with three haunting voices, would have, could have, and should have. We sometimes feel we have no future. One of our stressors is what will happen in the future. As we look to the future, we have fears and anxiety. Our number one song on Spotify again this year is a song of anxiety called “What if . . . this happens.” We wonder, am I so pathetic that I am beyond a second chance.

Which leads us to the future. The Ghost of Christmas Future takes Scrooge to the cemetery. He sees and hears Bob Cratchit reciting Scripture at the grave of Tiny Tim. Scrooge is thrown into his own grave and no one cares. He is deeply moved and cries out to the Ghost of Christmas Future take me home. When he awakes, it is Christmas morning. As the movie closes, Scrooge has his second chance.

For the Apostle Paul – He too had a moment of repentance which shaped his present and his future. And so he could say 1 Timothy 1:15 **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.** ¹⁶ **But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.** ¹⁷ **Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.** Paul repented of his sins, he ends up writing about half of the New Testament and went on one world missionary journey after another. He knew that despite his past, he had an eternal future... **not because of his good works but because of Jesus.**

And that brings us to us. We all need a second chance whether we are standing on the platform or worshipping online from prison. And I want you to know that God is the giver of continuous second chances. Your past doesn't define you. Because God in Jesus dropped the charges. You have a second chance.

When stress, anxiety and grief have your wrapped up figuratively or literally in a ball in the corner. Jesus knows exactly what you are going through and exactly what you feel for the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among. know that Jesus, Immanuel – God with us, is with you. And he is carrying you and your burdens. And he is not letting go even if you kick and scream. He knows your hurt. He knows your pain. Trust him with all your inmost fears, anxieties, sin, grief, pain. Trust him with all the things. Tell him what you haven't told anyone else, because he is your sure hope. Because he is love, he loves you where you are.

You are the very reason he came. Your present isn't final. You have a second chance.

And when the future is cloudy you can admit, I don't know what the future holds but I know who holds the future. And that same Jesus who holds the future is holding me. And because of that heaven is my home! I have a second chance.

Here is the message of Christmas, Jesus doesn't just give you a second chance, Jesus is your second chance. In Jesus God took on human flesh into his divine nature. He lived in your place, no sins, no regrets, no could have, would have or should have. He grew from the olive-colored skin baby boy to the crimson blood smeared man on the cross and dying and paying the price for your sins, and walked out of the grave three days later to make the final declaration that you are free from sin. Romans 5:15 **But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many. Do we get the gift of a second chance?** Oh, yes we get a second chance. God gave us the gift of Jesus. **Jesus is the gift of your second chance.** In Jesus God blesses us everyone. Won't you receive Jesus, he is your only chance.