

**Sun., Dec. 6 (Second Sunday of Advent) (Holy Communion):**

Memory Verse: Psalm 71:5 “You are my hope, O Lord. You are my trust since the time of my youth.”

Message: **This Year Be a Scrooge: Do Good Feel Good Christmas: Dig Down (Hope!)**

Sermon Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Reading of Scripture: Acts 10:9-23; Reader: Marilee Leonard

Blurb: To be a Christmas Scrooge, we have to dig down right into our hearts. We ask Jesus to transform our hearts off of hoping in our own resources and instead to plant His hope there. Only then will we have a changed life that consistently can do the good we desire to do and take hold of what is truly life. But that doesn't mean it's easy. We still must keep fighting what defeats us!

**WELCOME** -Pastor David

Holy Communion - Gather elements

Be prepared to light your home Advent wreaths

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor David

“You are my hope, O Lord. You are my trust since the time of my youth.” -Psalm 71:5

**WORSHIP MUSIC SET** -Sanctify

*Joy*

*People Look East*

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

**GENERATIONAL BRIDGE:** Scrooge Video 2

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH** -Matt Lindholm as Scrooge; Reader: Marilee Leonard

**SCRIPTURE READING:** Acts 10:9-23 (CEB) -Reader: Marilee Leonard

**Last week we heard about the angel who appeared to the Roman centurion named Cornelius. We go back to Acts chapter 10 and pick up the story. Now it is Peter who has a vision that teaches him that God includes Gentiles in salvation. Acts 10:9-23a**

**9 At noon on the following day, as their journey brought them close to the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted to eat. While others were preparing the meal, he had a visionary experience. 11 He saw heaven opened up and something like a large linen sheet being lowered to the earth by its four corners. 12 Inside the sheet were all kinds of four-legged animals, reptiles, and wild birds. 13 A voice told him, “Get up, Peter! Kill and eat!”**

**14 Peter exclaimed, “Absolutely not, Lord! I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”**

**15 The voice spoke a second time, “Never consider unclean what God has made pure.” 16 This happened three times, then the object was suddenly pulled back into heaven.**

**17 Peter was bewildered about the meaning of the vision. Just then, the messengers sent by Cornelius discovered the whereabouts of Simon's house and arrived at the gate. 18 Calling out, they inquired whether the Simon known as Peter was a guest there.**

**19 While Peter was brooding over the vision, the Spirit interrupted him, "Look! Three people are looking for you. 20 Go downstairs. Don't ask questions; just go with them because I have sent them."**

**21 So Peter went downstairs and told them, "I'm the one you are looking for. Why have you come?"**

**22 They replied, "We've come on behalf of Cornelius, a centurion and righteous man, a God-worshipper who is well-respected by all Jewish people. A holy angel directed him to summon you to his house and to hear what you have to say." 23 Peter invited them into the house as his guests.**

**MESSAGE:** "This Year Be a Scrooge: Do Good Feel Good Christmas #2: Dig Down (Hope!)"

**PP#1:** This Year Be a Scrooge: Do Good Feel Good Christmas

Dig Down: Hope!

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." -Romans 15:13

This Christmas we are learning to be a Scrooge, like Ebenezer Scrooge, but *AFTER* he was transformed by Christmas. This means we celebrate a Do Good Feel Good Christmas. We change from only seeking the good feelings of Christmas, to having Jesus give us the true inner foundation of joy, and having that show itself in our lives by doing good. Doing good is a response from our changed hearts, just like Ebenezer discovered the true joy of Christmas and then went out and gave extravagantly. Christmas is not a feel good event. It's an awakening that we join.

To join the awakening of Christmas God does in us, we learned last week to Gear Up! Christmas Scrooges practice Christmas habits, and shift into a higher gear of joy.

Today we learn that to join the awakening of Christmas, we Dig Down! We dig down to the hope that comes from Christmas—not the fluffy, fickle hope that comes from what we plan or do. Romans 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

Dig down.

We often talk about the three depths of our lives. We have public lives that everyone sees, private lives that only our inner circle sees, and then there is our hidden, secret lives. When we join the awakening of Christmas, our inner transformation flips our doing of good.

Normally, you see, we try hard to do good in our public lives, when other people are watching. We want them to see us as a good person, one who looks like a Christian. But then we need to work hard at behaving the same way in our private lives. Why is it that we save the worst of ourselves for those we love most? We come home from a long day of talking respectfully and being polite to others to being crabby and unreasonable around home. It's almost like we store up all that negativity while we are around those not as close to us, and let it all out on those we care about most!

This past summer my neighbor across the street made a passing comment to me that she knew we had had a tough time the previous week. At first I didn't catch what she was referring to.

But upon reflection, I remembered that one cool night I had been very cranky. I was irritable and had hollered and yelled at my beloved family. It was a cool night, because I had ... opened the windows! I would never holler at my neighbors, but they discovered that I do at my family! What a witness!

We take advantage of their love, don't we? Just not right! But since they love us, we know they will forgive us and overlook our faults. So as we mature in Jesus, we push our grace-filled way of treating others—which we learn from how our God treats us with such grace—and we strive to push that grace right down into our private lives! We need to treat those closest to us **AT LEAST AS GRACEFULLY** as we treat complete strangers, right? So, as Christmas Scrooges, we dig down into our private lives.

**PP#2:** Acts of the Apostles 2:10

“[Cornelius] and all his household were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.”

Let's go back briefly to Cornelius. He was a Scrooge we met last week in Acts 10. It says in verse 2 that “He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.” So, he gave generously out in his public life. But he also was God-fearing with his family and household.

**PP#3:** “One another” verses in the Bible:

“**Love one another**” John 13:35

“**Honor one another above yourselves**” Romans 12:10

“**Forgive one another**” Ephesians 4:32

“**Serve one another**” Galatians 5:13

“**Build up one another**” 1 Thessalonians 5:11

“**Pray for one another**” James 5:16

“**Spur one another on to good deeds**” Hebrews 10:24

In the Bible there are a lot of instructions to be a blessing to others, both publically and in your private life. I've make a short list of some of the “one another” verses in the Bible. They show us how God is very concerned that we be a Scrooge to others, out in public, *and at home*. Let's read these together, say them with me out loud, and as we do, think about how this is a calling for you, both out in public and with those closest to you. Ready? Let's read the first one:

“**Love one another**” John 13:35

Keep going! “**Honor one another above yourselves**” Romans 12:10

Ready? “**Forgive one another**” Ephesians 4:32

Again: “**Serve one another**” Galatians 5:13

“**Build up one another**” 1 Thessalonians 5:11

“**Pray for one another**” James 5:16

“**Spur one another on to good deeds**” Hebrews 10:24

Doing good to others really matters to God! How did you do on sending your notes to someone this past week to encourage them? If you missed it, I'll give you one more week. Also this week, we're delivering meals to St. Andrew's Shelter. We have another opportunity as this year's Christmas offering. It's going to Feed My Starving Children Mobile Pack coming to Forest Lake this spring. We need to cover the cost of the food that we are packing. Our goal is \$725 this year. Here's an opportunity to serve one another!

**PP#4: Dig Down: Hope!**

1. Into your public life
2. Into your personal life
3. Into your secret life

So, Dig Down into your public life. Dig down into your personal life. But God wants to dig down right into the boardroom of our very souls, right into our secret lives. Only God knows what we really think, what goes through our minds, the feelings we harbor, the inner workings we keep hidden. And the Bible says that God's desire is that we be perfect in love, that in our hearts, our innermost being, that we only have love for others, ourselves and God. Does that seem impossible?

Now, here is where God flips things the other way around. When we try to do this in our own efforts, we try to bring our doing good from our public lives, into our private lives, and then even into our secret lives. But yet, even on our best days, we still harbor negativity and selfishness in our hearts towards others. Even trying to do good in our public and private lives is difficult. Our strength wears out, and we slip.

That's why we need Christmas! Christmas is about Jesus coming right down into our innermost beings. He condescends, coming down from on high, lowly to earth to come as a human baby. And then He invites us to take Him right down deeply into our hearts. And this is where God does the flip. Christmas transformation is about inviting Jesus into our hearts, and Jesus then transforms our hearts from a negative centering on self, to a love that pours out. And the Christmas movement wells up from inside us, and pours out into our personal lives, and all over our public lives. Rather than trying to apply our doing good deeper and deeper into our hearts, when we receive the Jesus of Christmas, He places a hope there that flows out and radically converts the rest of our lives. Like Scrooge and Cornelius, we are transformed from the inside out! We feel truly good with Jesus in our hearts (joy), and that turns into doing good in our lives (hope)!

**PP#5: 1 Timothy 6:17-19**

“17 Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical and not to place their hope on their finances, which are uncertain. Instead, they need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others. 19 When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly life.”

Turn to 1 Timothy 6. Paul here tells us how to become Christmas Scrooges. 1 Timothy 6:17, “Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical and not to place their hope on their finances, which are uncertain.” This is the old Scrooge. We put our hope in our money, in our own provision, in our own activity. But it is uncertain! It's uncertain not only because money can go as easily as it comes, but also uncertain because we struggle in our own strength to do good in our daily lives—public and private! The key, says Paul, is to have a heart conversion.

We keep going in verse 17, “Instead, [Scrooges] need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment.” That's a heart conversion from relying on self to asking the hope of Jesus into our hearts. When we place our hope in Jesus rather than our own resources, then we will be able to truly do the God we are called to do. Verse 18, “Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others. 19 When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly life.”

“*They can take hold of what is truly life.*” Do you see the inversion God does? When we allow Jesus to transform our hearts, shifting off of a hope in money and ourselves, and shifting instead onto a hope in Jesus, then we will grow truly rich, being rich in doing good to others. This will create the treasures that really satisfy and that hold our futures secure in glory. And *this* is how we hold what is truly life *right now!* That looks like a Christmas Scrooge!

**PP#6:** Do Good: Hope!      Keep fighting what defeats you

But a key application I think we need to remember, is that Christmas is not a one time event. Scrooge’s conversion doesn’t mean the rest of his life is now easy and problem free.

Let’s go back to the story with Cornelius in Luke 10. Cornelius sends his messengers to go get the Apostle Peter. And as they approach the house, God gives Peter a vision to change his heart. The vision is not really about *food*, but clean and unclean *people*. Jews didn’t eat certain kinds of foods, and in those days they didn’t fellowship with certain kinds of people. God uses the vision of Peter eating unclean foods to show him that God believes that all people are clean and that God wants Peter to go fellowship with Gentiles.

But between this story in Acts 10, and the story in Acts 15 of the Jerusalem Council, comes another story Paul tells in Galatians 2. In Acts 10, Peter learns that the Gospel is not just for Jews, but for all people. In Acts 15, at the Jerusalem Council, the church declares that Gentiles can be saved without following the Jewish laws. But between them comes Galatians 2. In Galatians 2, Peter is with Paul in Antioch, and the Christian Jews and Gentiles are fellowshiping together. But then arrive some Jews from Jerusalem, who refuse to visit with the Gentiles. Peter is swayed by these Jews and draws back and separates from the Gentiles. The rest of the Jews, who had been with the Gentiles, follow Peter’s lead, even Barnabas! So Paul says he had to call out Peter’s backsliding!

Peter learned his lesson back in Acts 10, and he was transformed. His heart was changed and he welcomed Cornelius and even baptized him. But before too long, he was swayed by others around and stopped doing the good God had called him to do to others.

Giving your heart to Jesus doesn’t mean you no longer have to struggle and fight to do what is right. We have the power of Jesus in our hearts, but we still have to work at it. Before we *could not* in our own strength; now *we can*. But that still means *we must*.

Peter had to continue to fight what defeated him. It’s power was broken, but Peter still had to work hard at doing good.

In the video this morning, Sarah comes to Scrooge for money. They are putting their hope in money, and so need more. That was Scrooge’s temptation all along. So, as he seeks to help them, he has to continue to confront his temptation, and continue to anchor his hope in Jesus. Christmas Scrooges have to continue to battle what defeats us.

Even when God gives you victory to beat your old monster, it will continue to rear its ugly head. It doesn’t go away. You were not able to defeat it in the first place by your own power. So we must continue to rely on God’s power as we battle it in the future. When you fail to tap into God’s power, your monster will cause you to fall again.

**PP#7:** Do Good: Hope!

Keep fighting what defeats you  
by staying yoked to Jesus

A couple of weeks ago we learned how we need to yoke up with Jesus. This is how we keep battling what beats us. We take on Jesus’ yolk, we bind ourselves to Him, we let Him pick the

direction, and when we want to wander or grow lazy, His yoke pulls us and keeps us in track. It's not easy, but it is the only way we make progress. And when we look back, we see that we've been able to accomplish much good.

This past summer we went on a long bike ride as a family. Nathan zoomed on ahead, and we didn't see him until the end. But Rebekah and I hung together. There were hills, and tunnels, turns, and difficult surfaces. I remember panting to Rebekah that I wasn't sure I could keep going. I didn't feel like we were making any real progress. All I could see was the unending long tunnels, the loose gravel, the twists and turns I had to focus on. She kept encouraging me, telling me I could do it, telling me to go left, or keep my head up, or that we were almost at the next waypoint. Then, when we were crossing a bridge, she pulled over and we stopped. We looked around, and she pointed out to me, miles off in the distance, where our starting point was. I was shocked! I couldn't believe it. It wasn't until I looked back that I could see the progress we had made. Being yoked with her kept me going, kept me focused, going the right way. And I was able to look back and see that because of that, I had made amazing progress, which I could not have done on my own.

Being a Christmas Scrooge means you must keep fighting what defeats you, by staying yoked to Jesus.

So, dig down! Following Paul's instruction in 1 Timothy 6, I want to tell you who are rich to not put your hope in your resources, but instead to hope in God. Do good. Be rich in the good things you do. Be generous, share with others. This way, my fellow Scrooges, we can take hold of what is truly life!

Amen!

**HOLY COMMUNION:** -Pastor David

Theme: Inviting the Holy Spirit deeply into our hearts.

Prayers of Confession, Pardon, and Words of Grace

Words of Institution, Prayer of the Holy Spirit, Receiving the Elements, Prayer

**CLOSING SONG:** *More Blessed to Give than Receive* -Sanctify

**OFFERING:** -Pastor David

-Give of your monies to God's work through this church. You can give in person, in the offering box as you leave the sanctuary. You can mail it or drop it off in the church office. Or, most conveniently, you can make an automated transfer or a debit card payment using the square on the bulletin or by going to the church website.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** -Pastor David

Today we learned to gear up. Next week, as we head to Christmas, we'll learn to dig down. St. Andrew's Family Shelter food sign-up this week!  
Continue your Advent Christmas Count Down today! Watch the video tomorrow.

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor David

"You are my hope, O Lord. You are my trust since the time of my youth." -Psalm 71:5

**BENEDICTION** -Pastor David

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." -Romans 15:13