

**Thurs., Dec. 24 (Christmas Eve):**

Memory Verse: “The angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.’” -Luke 2:10

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

Sermon Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Blurb: We often think of Christmas Eve as a warm and serene. Yet Jesus came to take away our sin and to offer us a new start. So Christmas Eve is actually messy: a time to ask Jesus to clean up our sinful hearts and to chase away the darkness inside. We’ll use candles to represent the light that Jesus gives us when we invite Him to live in our hearts. Merry Christmas!

**WELCOME -Pastor David**

Can’t gather in person for this special service, but we still gather together!

Christmas is special because of Jesus, and that is still true. This is what we celebrate!

In your home perhaps light your personal Advent wreaths

Begin tonight with the 4 candles: Joy, Hope, Faith, and Love

In your Christmas Bags are candles and holders to use today. Save the candy cane and Holy Communion cups for tomorrow’s Pageant video and Sunday worship.

**MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David**

“The angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.’” -Luke 2:10

**WORSHIP MUSIC SET: Carol Medley -Joyful Hearts Caroling Group**

**SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 2:1-7; Reader: Pastor Andrew**

**Tonight on Christmas Eve, we hear the Christmas story from Luke 2. The first part is about Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem where Jesus is born.**

**“1 In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. 2 This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. 3 Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. 4 Since Joseph belonged to David’s house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David’s city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. 5 He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. 6 While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. 7 She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.”**

**SERVE MOMENT: Christmas Offering: Feed My Starving Children, Goal: \$725 -Pastor Andrew**

You can give by mail or drop it off in the church office. Or, most conveniently, you can make an automated transfer or a debit card payment on the church website.

**PRAYER** -Pastor Andrew

**CHRISTMAS CAROLS** -Joyful Hearts Caroling Group

**MESSAGE:** “This Year Be a Scrooge: Do Good Feel Good Christmas #5: Kneel Down (Peace!)”

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

Kneel Down (Peace!)

“They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” -Matthew 2:11

Do Good Feel Good Christmas. Kneel Down: Peace! Matthew 2:11, “They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

The climax of the story of Ebenezer Scrooge is when the Ghost of Christmas Future shows him how people rejoice over his death, how Tiny Tim dies, and especially when Scrooge sees his own tombstone. Overcome, Scrooge kneels down—weeping—saying he is so sorry for all the bad things he did and how he wishes he had one more chance to do things differently.

And then, the amazing gift is that suddenly it’s Christmas morning, and Scrooge wakes up! He realizes that he does have a chance to start over, and he begins to lead a very different life: a life of joy, helping others, generosity, and sharing blessing with everyone he meets.

I’m struck that it is *that moment*—when Scrooge is kneeling down, sorry for his selfish life, realizing it gains him nothing that lasts, and wanting a new start—that moment, is Christmas. It’s the moment of his transformation. It’s the beginning of his new life.

And it is that moment that you and I come to again tonight.

Christmas is about celebrating the birth of Jesus, and we try to do that with all kinds of festivities, traditions, gatherings, parties, or in the words of *A Christmas Carol*, “merrymaking.” One important tradition we do as a Church is have our Christmas Eve candlelight service at the church building. But things are different this year! So, instead, we are doing this service remotely, each of us gathering on our own together. And it will be special.

But the danger with all of the merrymaking and festivities is that we might just miss Christmas in the midst of it all, and make it about that which doesn’t last. We might miss making Jesus the focus of our Christmas, and, we might miss the special Christmas moment: the one that Scrooge had kneeling in the snow by his tombstone.

Perhaps having a smaller Christmas this year is a blessing. Perhaps a remote Christmas Eve service gives us the opportunity to, in the quiet of our own homes and hearts, have that honest time of truly kneeling down and giving ourselves completely to Jesus. Tonight, let’s do this! Let’s cut to the heart of Christmas and make it about worshiping this Jesus and accepting the new life He brings. Let’s look honestly at our selfish lives, admit that it produces nothing good or lasting, and leave it behind, so we can instead join the movement of Christmas that Jesus brings.

Let’s go back to the Christmas story and hear what the angels say to the shepherds. The shepherds, we see, become Christmas Scrooges! Luke 2, picking it up at verse 8.

**PP#2:** Luke 2:8-20 (CEB)

“8 Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. 9 The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 The angel said, ‘Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. 11 Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.’ 13 Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, 14 ‘Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favors.’”

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Hear the angels in your ear! Take it deeply into your minds, and let it sink into your heart: “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth *peace* among those whom He favors.”

Peace. Peace is what happens at Christmas. Peace is what the baby born in Bethlehem brings.

The biblical understanding of peace, in it’s Jewish context, is shalom. Shalom is not just being without storms, like we think about peace. It’s a holistic meaning: being at rest, being right toward the world, wholeness, completeness, being well centered. We may be facing storms all over the place, but with shalom, we are steady and anchored on the inside. This is the peace that Jesus brings. This is the peace of Christmas.

Sometimes, we are the opposite of shalom. This was Scrooge before Christmas. On the outside everything seemed fine. He lived his selfish life, just the way he wanted. But inside he was empty, bitter, bah humbug! Christmas brings about a radical transformation. Christmas gives us the opportunity to receive shalom on the inside and face anything on the outside from wholeness and joy.

This Scrooge transformation is what happens to the shepherds who heard the angels. We go back to Luke 2, now verse 15.

**PP#3:** Luke 2:8-20 (CEB)

“15 When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.” 16 They went quickly and found Mary, Joseph and the baby lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. 18 Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. 20 The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.”

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Something happened when the shepherds went to go see the baby. On Christmas Eve they looked peaceful on the outside, sleepily tending their sheep. But they needed inner shalom. And then

they go to Bethlehem and see the baby for themselves. I envision them kneeling down before Him in the straw. Perhaps they got to literally hold Him, in their arms, as they received Him physically and spiritually. And then we see the shepherds leaving very differently. They have become Christmas Scrooges! They are filled with joy, glorify and praise God, and go around telling everyone what the angels said. They have a new lightness, an exuberance, a new beginning!

They knelt down at the baby and worshiped. The magi who came later, Matthew says, entered the house and when they saw Jesus fell to their knees and honored Him (2:11). Ebenezer Scrooge knelt at his gravestone, repented, and asked for a second chance. Christmas for us is an opportunity to kneel down before Jesus, to worship, to repent of our sin, and ask Jesus for a second chance.

Christmas, we often say, is a season for giving. God gave us Jesus. The wise men gave presents. And so, we also give presents, right? But what can we give Jesus?

One Christmas carol—*In the Bleak Midwinter*—asks this question, “What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part; Yet what can I give Him: give my heart.”

**PP#4:** Christmas: Invite Jesus into your dark heart!

We often think of giving Jesus our hearts as a tender, loving moment of commitment and trust. Open your hearts to Jesus! Merry Christmas! Yet the reality is, that our hearts are like the way Ebenezer Scrooge’s was: they are selfish and filled with sin. There’s bitterness there, resentment, anger, greed. Maybe our hearts are too ugly for Jesus?

You need to hear true Christmas! Jesus asks us to come to Him, ugly as we are. The shepherds were smelly and disgusting. They come to Jesus. The magi were outsiders and strangers. They come to Jesus. Scrooge’s heart was heavy with ugliness, and he was transformed. We are too spiritually poor to offer Jesus anything good. But Jesus doesn’t ask us for good things. What Jesus wants is our sin! He came to take our sin away. So, on Christmas, you need to know that the one thing that Jesus really wants, is your heart full of sin!

So, I want to invite you this Christmas Eve, to give Jesus the one thing He came to take from you. Like Scrooge, kneel down as you consider your own life and death, open your hearts, and give Him your sin. Repent. Give Him your past. Ask Him to take it away and give you a new start. This is what Christmas is all about!

Don’t miss Christmas this year by only giving presents, by giving parties, by celebrating. If you’re home alone and you can do this in some way, literally, physically, kneel down, go ahead and to it right now. Or, you can also kneel down in your hearts. Kneel down like Scrooge, at your tombstone, realizing that nothing you’ve been striving for is lasting, with the sins of your life flooding your mind. Close your eyes in repentance, begging for Him to take your past and forgive your sin. In your tears and sobs, ask Jesus for a second chance. Ask Jesus to be your inner peace, to replace your sins and the bitterness in your heart with shalom. Ask Him to make you whole, complete, centered. Ask Jesus for a Christmas morning, for the opportunity to live differently, to live for Him, to live in peace and joy. Give your sinful heart to the Prince of Peace!

[Pause for prayer.]

We often think of that first Christmas Eve as a soft and serene scene. But it wasn’t. It was in a strange place, with smelly animals, no comforts, in the mess of childbirth. Jesus can handle your mess! Your smelliness! That’s how He came, because that’s *why* He came.

But the serenity comes into your heart! Jesus comes as the Light of heaven, to push away the darkness, to put a light within your heart.

**PP#5:** *Image of a burning candle representing our hearts.*

That's why we have the tradition of the Candlelight Service at Christmas. That's why we need to do candle lighting this year, too, even though we can't gather together to do it. We can still do it together! We *must* do it together! We proclaim that Jesus is our Light, that He came to push back the darkness, to take away our sin, and to bring light and life in our dark hearts.

#### **CANDLELIGHT SERVICE: LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

We each have a candle. I invite you to take out your candles and hold them now. Look at your unlit candle, and reflect on your hearts. In what ways is your heart darkened by sin? In what ways do you need the light of Christmas? If Jesus doesn't live there, then tonight is a great time to invite Him to come in. If you have sin that lingers in your hearts, or that has crept back in, then tonight is a great time to ask Jesus to push back that darkness.

On this Christmas Eve, to mark the birth of Jesus, I invite you to light the center Jesus candle of your Advent Wreath. The Advent Wreath proclaims that Jesus came to bring joy, hope, faith, love, and peace. The Jesus candle is the peace candle, because Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and He offers us shalom for our deepest selves.

**GENERATIONAL BRIDGE:** Scrooge Video 5

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH** -Matt Lindholm as Scrooge

#### **CANDLELIGHT SERVICE: LIGHTING OUR INDIVIDUAL CANDLES**

Now, the Christmas celebration is that this Prince of Peace, born at Christmas, came to give His light to each of us. So, I now invite each of us, to represent us asking Jesus to come into our hearts, to light our candle, perhaps from the center Jesus candle of your Advent Wreath. As you see your candle burning, reflect on how you have the shalom *of* Jesus—who *is* Jesus!—burning within you. Merry Christmas!

As your candles burn, we sing *Silent Night*.

**SONG:** *Silent Night* -Joyful Hearts Caroling Group

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** -Pastor David

Christmas Day Christmas Pageant video - Candy canes from Christmas Bag  
Sunday, worship of carol service with Holy Communion

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor David

“The angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.’” -Luke 2:10

**BENEDICTION** -Pastor David

Blow out your candle as the light of Jesus now shines in your hearts!  
Merry Christmas!