

God has for us, in the lion Aslan's words to the children: “*You do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be.*”]. Jesus means us to have the same divine happiness He Himself enjoys— **John 10:10b**, “*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*” With that blessed, fulfilling, transforming, “abundant life”—with that “*life...to the full,*” **may** (as Tiny Tim observed), “**God bless Us, Every One!**”

43-10-04-The Transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge
Advent, Christmas, joy, life, self-giving, love, salvation
John 10:9-10

God's focus in salvation isn't on trespasses but on transformation.

INTRODUCTION:

—On finding Mary pregnant, Joseph was told by an angel— **Mat 1:21**, “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because **he will save his people from their sins.**” This means much more than pardon for our sins. Because “the wages of sin is death,” Jesus lovingly took those wages for us. But His Cross did more than provide forgiveness. He procured our fulfillment in life—a life of Kingdom living— **(text) John 10:9-10**, *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

—We couldn't have spiritual life without His payment for sin's penalty. But His Cross went beyond that, paving the way for “life abundant,” “*life... to the full*” by paying for our deliverance from sin's power. **HOM.idea**. **Title** illustrates God's goal in salvation. The work of the 3 ghosts was not to get Scrooge to say, “*I need pardon,*” but to say, “*I need change!*” Mourning a lost past, confessing a sinful present, and fearing a hellish future can bring either despair or hope, depending on how we respond to Advent [Christ's coming]. The proof of Scrooge's transformation was seen in his transformed response to the coming of Christmas Day. His changed life illustrates the “abundant life” of Kingdom living in 3 ways...

I. A Rebirth of Childlikeness

A. “*I don't know what to do!*” cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath.... // “*...I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby.*”

1. Childish minds are hard to teach, but childlike minds are easily instructed; it's why Jesus said in Mat 18:3, “I tell you the truth, unless you **change** and become like **little children**, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (“*life... to the full*” is open to God and hungry to learn.)
2. Why does God call us His “children” from youth to old age? He knows we never outgrow our need for His Fatherly guidance.
3. Scrooge was leaving a childish, immature “pride of knowledge” for the childlikeness that's supposed to be our true human nature.

- B. Scrooge exclaimed, “*I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man.*”
1. The old Scrooge would scorn such talk as a silly humbug, but his new self was celebrating with uninhibited joy. [One movie had him dancing with his maid, not caring what she thought of his behavior.]
 2. God did not create sourpusses! Unrestrained displays of joyous emotion and spiritual delight were meant to be! (When God sees us giddy with joy, He probably says, “*Now that’s more like it!*”)

TRANS: More like what? Like the “children” He made us to be, enjoying “*life...to the full*” by new birth into Kingdom living. Once Scrooge ignored people’s opinion of him, because he ignored people. Now, he’d become unselfconscious, forgetting himself before people in a childlike way. It’s a lifestyle change that also leads us to care for people, through...

II. A Renewal of Charitableness

- A. What Scrooge said next was, “*A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world.*” (Kingdom living helps us to enjoy both things and people with a divinely joyful attitude.)
1. [Hearing church bells, Scrooge cried, “*Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious! Glorious!*”] Living “*life...to the full*” turns a “humbug” viewpoint into appreciation for creation, and joy in even little things. [To his door knocker he cried, “*I shall love it, as long as I live!...* ” patting it with his hand. “*I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It’s a wonderful knocker!*”]
 2. The eyes of a “life...more abundant” see people in a new way [Talking with the boy in the street: “*An intelligent boy!... A remarkable boy!... What a delightful boy!*” said Scrooge. “*It’s a pleasure to talk to him.*”] (Praise never hurts people, but it does help sanctify our attitude towards them.)
- B. In Kingdom living, self-love is not the motive of charitableness, (Loving charity is shown without show [The large turkey Scrooge sent to the Crachits was sent anonymously; on meeting the relief fund solicitor he’d rebuffed the day before, he whispered the amount he want to pledge.]– Mat 6:1, “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”)

TRANS: God doesn’t ask us to repair our past, to fix our errors or undo our sins. We couldn’t, if we tried. His focus isn’t on trespasses but on transformation. God wants His “children” back—back on track with the

childlike teachableness and loving charity He created us to experience. His love can transform us! He wants to rebuild our lives with...

III. A Reputation of Christlikeness

- A. The 3 spirits brought Scrooge what God’s Spirit brings us: warning and conviction. But regret wasn’t the goal in Dickens’ story, nor is it the Spirit’s goal in ours: God wants us to find a new perspective on life through Christ, as Scrooge found it through Christmas.
1. God’s focus isn’t religious but relational [Scrooge left his home: “*He went to church*, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure.”] (That “he went to church” was a prelude: just the beginning of the real program.)
 2. Jesus spent less time in the synagogue than he did with people and with His Father. If church helps in our transformation, it will be by nurturing our love for others (and that includes God!)
- B. Repentance for trespasses is private; transforming renewal must be public: people will see the Christlike change; people will talk!
1. Scrooge’s nephew witnessed the transformation in his uncle, when he showed up at their home to celebrate on Christmas Day.
 2. Bob Crachit, the day after Christmas, found Scrooge’s change incredible, when he raised his salary for being late to work.
 3. The whole town became so familiar with the new, transformed Scrooge that “it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge.”

CONCLUSION:

–God’s focus in salvation isn’t on trespasses but on transformation. [After his last vision, Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed, “*I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!*” “*The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees!*”] That’s how it starts, on our knees, repenting our past, changing our present, welcoming a future made hopeful... by what? By “Christmas Time”? Yes, if we see it as Christ’s Advent: the arrival of Jesus, Who came to “save his people from their sins.”

–God knows that pardon for past sins won’t stop our present sinning. That’s why His ultimate goal is to transform us with the “abundant life” of Kingdom living. [In the last Narnia book, I think C. S. Lewis captured this desire