Epiphany 2020

# MDP of God

Last week I watched one of my favorite all time shows – A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

The version I saw was a musical version of that famous work

And most of you I presume know the story- it’s about a miserable old miser by the name of Ebenezer Scrooge

And Scrooge is the cheapest – greediest most uncaring man in all of England

In fact in the version I saw- Scrooge sings about how he hates people and he could care less whether or not they hate him

When two men come to him asking him to donate to help the poor- he says *if they need help let them go to prison or the workhouses* – his taxes support those institution and that’s where they need to go

When one of the men says, many would rather die then to go to those places- Scrooge replies – “then they should hurry up and die and decrease the surplus population”

And in the story his dead partner comes to him – tells him how he’s in hell – how he wears this big heavy chain that he fashioned for himself in the way he led his life

And when Scrooge says, “You were always a good man of business” – Marley says, “Mankind was my business- the common good was my business- what we did in our counting house was only a drop in the ocean of what was my business”

Marley goes on to say that because his spirit didn’t go our among people in this life that he was doomed to walk with this heavy chain among people every Christmas- powerless to change his state

He goes on to tell Scrooge that three ghosts will visit him – *it turns out he’s visited by the ghost of Christmas past* – the ghost of Christmas present, and the ghost of Christmas yet to come

In this particular version that I saw- one of the lines that Scrooge says several times that really jumped out at me – was Scrooge several times talked about how kind he was – how generous he was – how good he was

And as he said it in the show – it was like he really believed it

He was self-deluded – *he wasn’t kind-* he wasn’t carrying- he wasn’t good to anyone, not even himself

He was a miserable, lonely, wretched old man- *and yet he saw himself as kind and caring*

He was in the darkness and didn’t even know it- life was all about him and his money- people were a bother to him, except for the money he could get from them

He had a nephew who every year came to wish him a Merry Christmas and to invite him to his home for Christmas – and Scrooge couldn’t be bothered with him or his wife

For Scrooge he was the center of the world and no one and nothing else mattered

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I contrast Scrooge with the wise men we celebrate today

To go in search of the Christ Child they needed to first of all recognize that they weren’t the center of the world—they had to realize that this wonderful sign in the night sky was announcing someone far more important than they were--- *so they wanted to go and pay homage*

Scrooge of course at first recognized no one but himself

This a lesson in this for us – *it takes a humble heart to seek the king*

As Catholics we believe the greatest sin- *the sin that leads to all others* --**is the sin of pride**

So the greatest virtue is the virtue of humility

The Magi had that humility and as a result they found the Savior of the world

If we want to find God in our lives – if we want to be in relationship with the Lord of life – we need to be humble of heart

Related to that is an issue that I already alluded to- *it’s important that we strive to see ourselves as we really are*

Scrooge- a miserable old miser saw himself as caring and kind – *when he was nothing of the sort*

The Magi, from what we know of them, saw themselves rightly – they saw a need to pay homage to the one they knew was greater than themselves

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They saw that they weren’t the be all and end of life – *they weren’t even the be all and end all of their own lives*

That’s why they dedicated months to going to pay homage to the newborn King

In the same way my friends- if we are to find Jesus in our lives – we need to see ourselves as we really are – ***so what do we need to see?!?***

The bible teaches us that we are sinners in need of a Savior – *we need to recognize that^^^*

The bible teaches us that we are saved- by that I mean we have the hope of going to heaven – we are saved by God’s grace

The bible tells us that on our own we could never save ourselves- that we can’t earn our way into heaven – *we can’t get to the point where God owes us heaven* – we can’t ever deserve heaven

Heaven is a gift of God’s grace – and God’s grace comes to us through the sacraments

My friends, I fear that many of us today are like Scrooge – who don’t see ourselves as we really are

I say that because I run into people – usually when I’m speaking to them about the practice of their faith—and they’ll say to me – “I’m a good person”- “I deserve heaven because look at all the good things I do”

And the fact of the matter is my friends – *that none of us are really good*--- and by that none of us on our own are good enough to merit heaven

{Most of us have goodness in us that comes from God- most of us have done some good things [Even Scrooge had given Bob Crathet a job – that was a good thing]}

The goodness in us is in itself a gift of God’s grace – *but our goodness isn’t enough to save us* – **God’s grace saves us**

And most times that I hear people saying how they’re good – at the same time they use that goodness as an excuse as to why they don’t have to receive God’s grace in the sacraments

The reasoning goes, “I’m good so it doesn’t matter that I don’t come to church- so it doesn’t matter that I haven’t been to confession in years – so it doesn’t matter that I’ve never received the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation- [not married in Church]-that I never had my children baptized –/// I don’t need that—I’m good”

That’s kind of like Scrooge’s vision of himself

And again – none of us are good enough on our own to enter into heaven – heaven is a gift of God’s grace and God’s grace comes to us in the sacraments

The Magi had a burning desire to come into the presence of the newborn King

They had that desire because they were humble enough to recognize that they weren’t the center of the universe

My friends, like the Magi, lets be humble enough to recognize our need to come into the presence of our King

Let’s recognize how we are not the center of the world and that we need Him – *we need His grace* if we are to be made worthy of heaven

And let’s like the Magi yearn for the presence of our king

We don’t need to bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrr

He only wants the gift of our love – a love that will lead us like the Magi to yearn to come into His presence – to desire to be close to Him – and to recognize our need for him