

OPINION

Scrooge proved even hard hearts can melt in Christmas light

There are at least 135 movie versions of "A Christmas Carol." At any given moment on TV, you can find Mickey's Christmas Carol from 1983, the George C Scott version from 1984, and "Disney's A Christmas Carol" with the animated Jim Carrey, who plays Scrooge and all three ghosts.



JONATHAN TOBIAS

Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days, and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas."

It is clear what "A Christmas Carol" is not about. It is not about politics or ideology. It is not even about economics, and that may be surprising.

It is all about Scrooge. Scrooge was free to be

can match Dickens' trenchant introduction of the main character: "Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone,

as Scrooge as he wanted to be. He wanted nothing to do with Christmas, nothing to do with the "business of men." He wanted to be left alone, as he made clear to the two gentlemen who were raising funds for charity.

And, by and large, no one stood in his way. He was free to shrivel up in loneliness, free to die alone and very much disliked and avoided. He was rich and unfettered by society, with all the expenditures of charity, generosity, gift-giving at Christmas and the expense of throwing office parties, like the one good ol' Fezziwig had given when Scrooge was his apprentice, in the springtime of life before he had shriveled in winter, when he could still fall in love.

It speaks to the genius of Dickens that he makes of Scrooge a three-dimensional character. Scrooge is not a cartoon villain. The Ghost of Christmas Past leads him into the hallways of memory, and it becomes clear that Scrooge's tale is more tragic than sinister.

Through the visitations of the three ghosts, we come to understand Scrooge. And without making it too obvious, the author leaves us to wonder if maybe this journey into the hallways of past,

present, and future might be a little familiar, maybe too familiar.

We come to understand Scrooge. Scrooge is us, or very well could be.

Scrooge's life was hard, and he became a hard-hearted man. This is what happens a lot in life: a hard world makes for hard hearts.

The Christmas story of Bethlehem also happened in a hard world.

The Bethlehem world was a cruel one. It languished under Roman occupation. These great King James Version words are not meant to describe pleasantries: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed."

Rome could do whatever it wanted to Palestine, and often did: massacres and arbitrary acts of gross injustice were more the norm than the exception. The puppet state of Herod was no better. He had no qualms about slaughtering 14,000 infants all for the sake of keeping himself in power.

But in the very heart of this hard world, cold and dark, in a cave-stable, the unlikely thing happened, the turn of the cosmic tide. Into hardhearted humanity

came the infinite light of divinity, the reality of love, joy and peace. Even on this earth.

Right at the moment when it seemed that Scrooge could not turn back from his inexorable march toward a lonely death, when his curtains and blankets were taken to "the low-browed beetling shop," Christmas morning broke through in sunshine and pealing church bells.

No one made him do it. Scrooge freely changed. The Phantom of Christmas

Future "had dwindled into a bedpost," thus proving that no future is set in stone. Doom can be changed into blessing.

Hard hearts can melt in the Christmas light.

"His own heart laughed, and that was quite enough for him," Dickens concluded.

Indeed, because in his nighttime visitations, Scrooge had gone to Bethlehem.

Jonathan Tobias is a resident of Edenton.

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Except for the Sheriff's Department, Dispatch Office and Emergency Medical Services, all County Offices in the Perquimans County Courthouse, Courthouse Annex, Social Services, Agricultural Extension Service, Perquimans County Library, and the Perquimans County Recreation Department will be closed on Friday, Monday, and Tuesday, December 23, 26, & 27, 2022, for Christmas and Monday, January 2, 2023, for New Year's Day. In addition, the Perquimans County Library will be closed Saturday, December 24, 2022, for Christmas Holiday. The Water Department will be closed but emergencies may be reported to the Dispatch Office by calling 426-8230.

Frank Heath
Frank Heath, County Manager

Keeping Christmas Spirit 365 days a year

Isaiah prophesized the coming of Jesus, and we read in Chapter 11, Verse 6, "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them." The exact comparisons continue through Verse 9.

As I reflect on Christmas, I think about the birth of the Prince of Peace and the peace of God's creatures and humanity. We are reminded of these multiple times throughout the scriptures as we plan for the second coming of Christ. I believe that God reminds us of this prophecy every Christmas Eve and Christmas Day as we celebrate the birth of Christ.

I completed a 40-year law enforcement career. I spent several years on duty on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. In Fairfax County, Virginia, where I worked, all types of crimes were committed every day except two: Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

For the most part, crime did not occur in those days. Everything was quiet and peaceful. People got along with each other.

Sadly, during the evening on Christmas Eve, homeless people, alcoholics, and others with nowhere to go would cause minor disturbances. Some would trespass at Christmas Eve office parties just so they could get arrested and enjoy a good meal in jail on Christmas Day.

Suicides also happened around Christmas, usually because the victim suffered from loneliness or a mental health condition. Unhappily, many of these people had families and loved ones who had abandoned them.

All in all, I believed that the police could take this time off and stay at home. I then realized that the Christmas Spirit entered everyone — the good and the bad, weak and strong — and that everyone was at peace. I witnessed firsthand on these holy days that "The wolf did live with the lamb" and served as a witness for His return for us.

I have asked myself numerous times what if everyone could capture the spirit of Christmas each day of the year? What if we could live Christmas every day? We would not have crime and we could live in peace and harmony together.

Lord, I pray for the ability to live Christmas every day in my heart and my actions. I pray for our police officers, who



KEITH THROCKMORTON

are missing Christmas with their families, to serve their communities. I pray for those mentioned in this column who have no one

to love or care for them. Consider opening your home on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to those on duty and sharing a cup of coffee in appreciation for the work they do. Also, include

anyone alone and in need of love and the spirit of Christmas.

We should remember those mentioned and follow God's word in Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"; in John 13:35: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another"; and Mark 12:31: "And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

Merry Christmas, and make the spirit of Christmas alive in you 365 days of the year.

Keith Throckmorton retired from the Fairfax County (Virginia) Police Department. He is a resident of Perquimans County.

Peace on Earth and Goodwill to all

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