

New Years - 2021

For many years, I would go to watch the Guthrie's presentation of a Christmas Carol.

As you may remember Scrooge is visited by three ghosts who transform him from a miserly old scoundrel into a kind, loving and considerate gentleman. At one point, he asks his partner Marley's ghost about the chain he is carrying around and tells him that he thought he had been a good man of business. Marley responds that he had forged the chain because, even though he may have been a good man of business, he had neglected mankind and the welfare of others, which should have been his business.

Later on, the Spirit of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back to the death of his sister who had died giving birth to his nephew, Fred. In his real life, he had already left her side, but in the vision, he sees that before she died, she had asked him to care for Fred. And he realizes that for all of these years, he had pushed Fred away and blamed him for the death of his beloved sister, just as his own father had rejected him at first because his own mother had also died giving birth to him.

Now earlier in the movie, and despite all of his uncle's rejections, Fred had stopped by Scrooge's business to invite him over for Christmas dinner. After his transformation, Scrooge goes to Fred's house to see if he can take him up on his offer. The scene which I believe is at the heart of the movie comes after he has entered the dining room and been welcomed by Fred. He approaches Fred's wife and says to her: "Can you forgive a pig-headed old fool for having no eyes to see with, no ears to hear with all these years?"

In an address to the graduates of Wellesley College one year, Barbara Bush once said: "As important as your obligation as a doctor, a lawyer, or a business leader may be, your human connections with your spouse, your children and your friends are the most important investment you will ever make. At the end of your life, you will never regret not having passed one more test, not winning one more verdict or not closing one more deal, but you will regret time not spent with your spouse, your children or your friends." (*Time Marches On, From Storytelling the Word*, pp. 212-216, copyright 1996 by William J. Bausch. Twenty-third Publications, Mystic, CT, 06355)

Today is an important day for all of us, the beginning of another year. In essence, we are emphatically reminded, today of all days, that God has given us another day of life, more "time" in our lives to "get it right". Today, just like George Bailey, we have been given a wonderful gift, the gift of another day, the first day of the rest of our lives. All we have to do is make sure that we don't blow it. Because, like Marley's ghost, if we don't take care of one another here on earth, then it will be too late for us to change it. As we look over our lives and make all of our new year's resolutions, there is one which should take precedence over all of the others: the resolution to do more each and every day of this year to try to love others to the best of our ability.

My wish for all of you as we begin a new year of life is the blessing from our first reading, with all of its inner meaning: "May the Lord bless you and keep you! May the Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!" Or put more succinctly in the words of Tiny Tim: "May God bless us, everyone."