

Scrooge, The Grinch, and Me

Written by Margaret Evans, Editor

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“*Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more . . . He became as good a friend, as good a master, as good a man as the good old City knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough in the good old world.*” – Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

I love a conversion story. Especially at Christmas. You can have your Rudolph, your Frosty, your “Wonderful Life” and all those other yuletide tales of kindly underdogs who deservedly triumph over adversity. I, myself, am a sucker for that far less common narrative – the black heart utterly transformed. The undeserving, unbearable wretch redeemed.

The first kind of story is sweet and satisfying. The second kind is life-shattering... in a good way. Miracles are like that.

A Christmas Carol is that second kind of story – my favorite kind. But sometimes I wonder about old Ebenezer Scrooge. Dickens tells us that Scrooge never wavered after his consciousness-raising all-nighter with the ghosts. His transformation was absolute. A complete

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180. But I find that difficult to believe, don't you? Old habits really do die hard. Surely Scrooge had his backsliding moments – days when the old greediness flared up, or the selfishness, or just the plain ol' persnickety nastiness. But I also like to believe that when those old habits did reappear, it was only temporary, because now Scrooge had a weapon against them.

Dickens gives us a little insight into that weapon right at the end of the story:

“Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.”

What Scrooge gained that night with the ghosts – his secret weapon – was humility. The ability to laugh at himself. And with that humility came wisdom. And peace. And joy. It was a gift outright, one bestowed upon Scrooge – out of the blue – despite his supreme unworthiness. As Dickens lays it out for us, Scrooge is “made good” in spite of, not because of, his own will. He is literally dragged into goodness, kicking and screaming. *A Christmas Carol* is not a “religious” story, per se, but Scrooge's conversion – his crash encounter with the terrible, wonderful power of divine love – is as sure, and as uninvited, as that of any sinner who ever got smacked into sainthood.

Another such Christmas anti-hero – one I can't get enough of – is the Grinch who stole Christmas...

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The Grinch is a green, grumpy-looking creature with a large, pointed nose and a small, dark, tufted hat. He is wearing a brown, shaggy collar and has a mischievous, slightly sinister expression. He is holding a small, dark, rectangular object in his right hand, which he is about to place in his mouth. The background is dark and indistinct.