December 12

Grace and peace to you today.

As we enter the third week of Advent, I’m reflecting on one of my favorite Christmas movies: “It’s a Wonderful Life.” Most of you probably know the story. The main character, George Bailey (played by Jimmy Stewart) is forced to stay behind and forego his plans for college and world travel when his father, who runs the local savings and loan, dies suddenly of a stroke. George chooses to carry on his father’s work, or the savings and loan will be bought by his nemesis, Mr. Potter, played by Lionel Barrymore. Along the way, a series of missteps take place and George laments his fate, wishing that he had never been born at all. His guardian angel, Clarence, grants his wish and George then spends a night experiencing existence as if, well, he never existed. In the course of it, he sees that his life has had a positive influence on so many people, including people he never met.

Have you ever thought of your life in those terms? Have you ever thought about the people God has put in your path, people you have influenced even with some small gesture of kindness or a word of encouragement? Maybe even people whose lives were affected by you even if you never met them, or perhaps had just a passing acquaintance with them.

As Christians, how we conduct ourselves, that is, what we do, what we say, and how we say it, is the best way to let the Light of Christ shine through us and into a dark world. I am reminded here of a passage from the book of the prophet Daniel:

“And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” (12:3).

This Advent season, my prayer for you is that your words and actions shine brightly, because when you think about it, the Christian life really is a wonderful life.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
December 13

Greetings, DGCC Family.

Yesterday we talked about one of my favorite Christmas movies: “It’s a Wonderful Life.” Today I would like to talk about another one of my favorites: “A Christmas Carol,” based on a short novel of the same name by Charles Dickens.

There are many versions of this movie, and my favorite is the old black and white one produced in 1951 with Alistair Sim playing the role of Ebeneezer Scrooge. You all know the story, so I won’t go into it here, but it’s one of my favorite movies for two reasons.

The first reason is that while it portrays Scrooge as a mean-spirited, miserly old man, it also goes into the reasons why he became that way. It takes the time to tell us about his background and that the reason for his character is deeply seated in his difficult childhood and issues of abandonment. While certainly Scrooge is responsible for his actions and demeanor, the story tells us what gave rise to that character.

The second reason why I like this movie, and perhaps the best reason, is that it’s a great story of redemption. Scrooge sees the errors of his ways through a series of encounters with the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future, and comes to be able to celebrate Christmas with great joy and happiness, turning from his former life.

Redemption. If nothing else, Christmas is a reminder that each and every one of us are also characters to a great story of redemption. And that redemption is found in the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ. The apostle Paul says it like this:

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

The Christmas season, go ahead and celebrate your redemption. Like the “reborn” Scrooge, give generously, laugh loudly, and take a moment to thank your Creator for the gift of His Son, wrapped not with sparkly paper but with swaddling clothes and placed not under a tree, but in a manger. The Father’s gift of redemption to you, and to me.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
December 14

Merry Christmas Season, everyone!

OK, another one of my Christmas movie favorites: “Chevy Chase’s Christmas Vacation.” Every year I am tempted to channel my inner Clark W. Griswold and decorate the house like he did, as an expert in “exterior holiday illumination.” But alas, every year that I get older, the notion of climbing up a ladder and crawling around the roof becomes decidedly less appealing. Though I have to say, it would be amusing to karate chop the plastic Santa just like our friend Clark did in the front yard just to see what the neighbors would think.

In any case, poor Clark desperately tries to create (or recreate) some mythical ideal of Christmas through elaborate decorations, having the extended family all under his roof (including Cousin Eddie and “Snots” the dog), dreaming of giving his family an in-ground pool with his Christmas bonus, and so on. Of course, it’s a disaster. Uncle Louis torches the Christmas tree, Aunt Edna mixes cat food in the jello mold (as if jello isn’t already disgusting enough), and Clark’s bonus turns out to be an invitation to the “Jelly of the Month Club.” And then things go really downhill from there.

Sometimes, I think we’re all a little like our friend Mr. Griswold. Our idea of the perfect Christmas can be a little misplaced. There’s certainly nothing wrong with decorations, good food, and the gathering of family, even the Cousin Eddy’s of the world. However, this Christmas, let’s all remember what we truly are celebrating, no matter what the world says. The apostle Paul said it simply, and beautifully, like this:

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

IHS,

Pastor Lou

December 15

Greetings, DGCC Family.

And now, my all-time favorite Christmas movie is…well, click on the link below to find out and see what Lucy, Charlie, and Linus have to say about the true meaning of Christmas. It needs no comment from me.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXmGLJ0S1Bs

IHS,
Pastor Lou

December 16

Happy Friday, everyone. Here’s your musical devotion for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE

IHS,
Pastor Lou