



The Greatest

LOVE Story

Ever Told



The first classic Christmas movies



The Christmas Movie Industry

- We all know the formula, right?
- Give me the plot outline
- Today it is just plug and play, and it dominates our entire cultural concept of the meaning of Christmas
- Christmas has become one giant meme
- But, once upon a time there was no cultural concept, there was no “redemption” story, until



Charles Dickens – author of A Christmas Carol and the true father of the worldwide phenomenon the world thinks of as Christmas – (IMDB photo)



Merry Dickens Christmas

- Already a celebrated author, but by 1843 his sales were dropping and he needed a new hit
- He was also fervent Unitarian, who was passionate about the Gospel's mandate to love your neighbor, and who was embarking on a national campaign to draw attention oppressed workers, especially kids
- Out of desperation/inspiration, he converted an idea he had for a pamphlet about worker's rights into a novel about how Christmas changed a cynical businessman into a compassionate philanthropist
- A Christmas Carol became a best-seller and, – in one fell swoop – crystalized into the Western psyche, ALL of the Christmas traditions we practice today



There Is Just One Problem

- **HE GOT THE MESSAGE AND MEANING OF CHRISTMAS COMPLETELY BACKWARDS!!!!!!!**
- The message and meaning of Christmas isn't that we need to try harder to become more loving and be nicer
- The message is that – in spite of all of our weaknesses and failures – **WE ARE LOVED**, and that changes everything



Merry Christmas, Y'all

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His [a]only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but **that the world might be saved through Him. 18 He who believes in Him is not judged;** he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the [b]only begotten Son of God. – John 3:16-18



The GREATEST Gift

¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, **being rooted and grounded in love,** ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the [m]saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to **know the love of Christ** which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. **Eph 3**



Cause and Effect of Love

■ **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, **but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another

■ **16** We have come to know and have believed the love which God has [d]for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. **17** By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. **18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear,** (1 John 4)



Here is the REAL STORY

- God doesn't just love the world, He loves YOU and ME, **we are individually dear to Him, each one of us**
- **He gave His only Son** through the Incarnation so that we could **personally enter into that loving relationship Him**
- **That love changes us** – it heals us and builds a shield of peace and hope around us as His Spirit fills us and flows through us
- Then – only then – can we be instruments of His love to the rest of the world



Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas

- During the Christmas season – or any other time of the year, for that matter, which are you most likely to focus on ...
- The fact that you should be doing better and trying harder because you still don't feel worthy or like you will ever be enough?
- Or the wonderful TRUTH about you, which is that



Merry Christmas, YOU ARE

- deeply loved by God,
- fully accepted by God,
- completely and permanently forgiven by God,
- lavishly blessed by God,
- and eternally, perfectly embraced by God as his child; a child who brings Him unspeakable JOY
- **WHAT A WONDERFUL LIFE!!! \O/**