

December 11, 2005

## Valuing Relationships Especially At Christmas

### Matthew 1:18-25

#### INTRODUCTION

To my friends Living the Call Together at the Norwalk Alliance church.

Our Journey with Scrooge continues. He is beginning to experience the transforming grace that came into the world at Christmas. But his path is yet long. He must learn a lesson that we all must learn—to value those relationships we are blessed to have especially at Christmas.

The Spirit of Christmas present leads him to discovering great value in those around him.

**T.S. Watch this video clip with me.**

#### (VIDEO)

One of the chief indictments of our Christmas holiday is that it has become a materialistic orgy instead of a sacred celebration.

So to help you on your own materialistic orgy the *Robb Report* presents the “Ultimate Gift Guide”

Blancpain 1735 timepiece \$1 million  
Grand complication watch, one of only 30 to be crafted.

Maserati MC12 \$1 million  
One of only 25 road versions of race car, capable of 205 MPH.

Montegrappa pen \$1 million  
Personally commissioned by Robb Report reader. Includes visit to Montegrappa headquarters near Venice.

Rinspeed Automotive Collection \$4.5 million  
Family of distinctive creations includes vehicle that can be driven over sea and in their air as well as on land.

Fabergé Chess Set \$12.5 million

Completed in 1905, set was gift to Russian commander-in-chief.

“Diamonds du Jour” \$21.5 million Seven exquisite diamond rings form Vivid Collection.

Easton Neston Estate \$89.9 million

Luxurious living is epitomized by Easton Neston, a grand 17th-century estate covering more than 3,300 acres in Northamptonshire, England. Commissioned in 1685, the estate includes an eight-bedroom main house as its centerpiece. In addition to its magnificent residence and stunning gardens, Easton Neston includes the village of Hulcote, established in the 19th century and consisting of four houses, 17 cottages, and a schoolhouse.

Many people trust in things to bring them happiness. But even if we receive what we might have thought of as the "ultimate" in material gifts, most have found that true happiness often eludes us. The coming of Jesus stands in stark contrast to the present-day emphasis on spending and getting.

As we continue in our journey from humbug to hallelujah, we come now to Scrooge's encounter with the Ghost of Christmas Present. In this second "holy haunting" the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge is shown what truly makes us rich at Christmas.

### **ONE OF THE GREAT LESSONS OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS THAT "RELATIONSHIPS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ACCOMPLISHMENT."**

The value of relationships is at the heart of the story of the very first Christmas.

*Matt 1:18-25*

*18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

*20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

*22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"-which means, "God with us."*

*24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

## **I. What makes us rich?**

In the biblical narrative of Jesus' birth recorded in Matthew, Mary and Joseph demonstrate the treasures of love for each other and for the Lord.

### **A. Our Relationship with God**

*Matt 1:19, 24*

*19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

*24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.*

- He was asked to commit his life to something none of us could ever imagine. He was to stand with

Mary and accept the child God was bringing into the world through her. He was to care for this son as his own, indeed, as his firstborn and therefore most favored child. He was to endure the embarrassment, the questions, and the uncertainties.

### **B. Our Relationship with Family**

*Matt 1:24-25*

*24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

- Joseph chose love for the Lord and for Mary over the convenient choice of a quiet divorce in these less-than-flattering circumstances

### **C. Our Relationship with Others Whom God Sends As A Blessing.**

*Luke 2:16-20*

*16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*

*NIV*

## **II. WHERE ARE YOUR RICHES?**

### **A. We get rich when we invest in the kingdom**

*Luke 12:34*

*34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*  
Investments in the kingdom of God always pay off.

Giving, tithing, working serving

### **B. We get rich as we invest in lives.**

*1 Tim 6:18-19*

*18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

*NIV*

True riches are not found in the stingy accumulation of wealth, but in the extravagant investment of love.

Dr. Doug Rumford shares this story "The Greatest Gift."

It is about a man named Paul who received a new car from his brother as a Christmas present. On Christmas Eve, when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around that shiny new car, admiring and touching it.

The little boy looked up and asked, "Is this your car, mister?"

"Yes," Paul said, "My brother gave it to me for Christmas."

The little boy answered, "You mean your brother gave it to you, and it didn't cost you nothin'?"!

Paul nodded. The little boy said, "Boy, I wish . . ."

And Paul thought he knew what the little boy was wishing--that he had a brother like that, too. But he surprised Paul.

"I wish," the boy went on, "I could be a brother like that!"

Paul looked at the boy, overwhelmed. Then he asked, "Would you like to have a ride in my new car?"

The boy exclaimed, "Oh yes, I'd love that!" (Now, let me hasten to add for the boys and girls listening, that we are now told not to ride with strangers! And that is the best advice. But many years ago, it seems that people could be trusted more.) Anyway, they went for a ride.

After a short ride, the little boy turned to Paul and asked, "Mister, would you mind driving in front of my house?"

Paul smiled, because he thought he knew why the little boy wanted to drive in front of his house. He wanted to show his neighbors he could come home in this big, beautiful car.

"Will you stop where those two steps are?" asked the little boy as they drove up to his house. He ran up the steps and into the house. In a little while, Paul saw him coming back. He was carrying his little brother, who was crippled with polio. He set him down on the bottom step and scooted up against him.

He pointed to the car. "There she is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. Ain't she beautiful? His brother gave it to him for Christmas and it didn't cost him nothin'. You know what, Buddy? Someday I'm going to give you one just like it! Then you can see all the Christmas things in the windows I've been telling you about."

Well, Paul got out and walked over to the boys.

"Do you want to ride around and see those things right now?" They both nodded eagerly, with bright faces. Paul leaned over and lifted the lad up to the front seat of the car. His shining-eyed older brother climbed in beside him and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride.

True riches are not found in what we get from others but in the extravagant investment of love. And if we have forgotten or neglected this truth, now is the time to change.

Along with breaking the Christmas chains forged in life, and reawakening the joy inherent in Christmas, we can learn to value relationships especially at Christmas.

### **III. Value and care for those God brings into our lives**

Stop now and to take inventory of your relationships. What do you discover about where you have invested? Where have you neglected to invest? Are there any significant 'debts' you owe to others, or feel they owe to you? If so, how can you take a step to invest in rebuilding those relationships?

- Take a family portrait from some time ago (from the time when you were a child, or when your children were younger), and pray over it. Give thanks for the positive things that have happened over the years, and offer to God the sadness, pain, disappointment and regret that you may feel. Then ask God to help you make this the richest season ever with your loved ones.
- Who could be your Cratchit family? Ebenezer Scrooge found a natural outlet for his Christmas joy in the Cratchit family as he reached out to them in their need. Ask the Lord to bring to mind a special need--food, transportation, time--you could meet this season. Then do it.
- Give the gift that money can't buy--give yourself. After all, that's what God did. Spend time with someone just to show you care. You were given a snowflake on the way in. We're told that every snowflake is unique and special in its make up. Each is a treasure and a work of art. So

are all those relationships that we have with family and friends. This week wear the snowflake and everytime you see it whisper a prayer of thanks for someone who has crossed your path.

- ☒ Send someone a snowflake card this week. Reconnect with a long-lost friend or relative? Or what about someone who has helped you in the past, and whom you've never thanked in the way you'd like?

## CONCLUSION

**Closing prayer:** *Lord Jesus, it has been good being here this morning with you, celebrating your birth and meditating upon the fact that Christmas is for people. You are beginning to turn our humbugs into hallelujahs and for that we give you thanks. We've seen how disconnected and isolated Scrooge was, and how he allowed past wounds and other "loves" to keep him from loving others. Help us this week to cherish the blessing of warm, positive relationships, and to reestablish ties with the forgotten people in our lives. May we have "Tiny Tim" hearts as we become like children and embrace the true spirit of Christmas. These favors we ask in the name of Jesus, our Everlasting Father. Amen.*