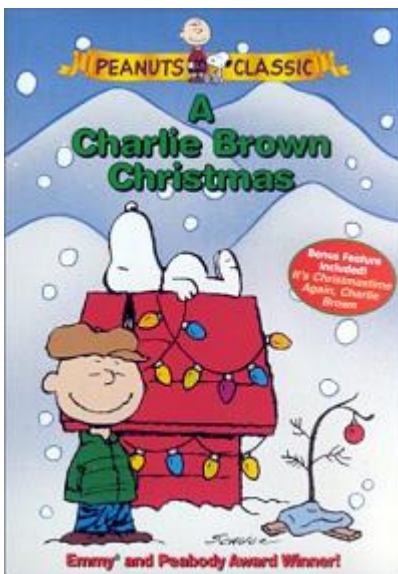


Charlie Brown-- What Christmas Means...

The first of nearly 50 Peanuts television movies, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* is the longest-running cartoon special in history, airing every year since its debut in 1965. Whimsical, melancholy, and ultimately full of wonder, it is a holiday favorite for countless families.



A Charlie Brown Christmas features Charlie Brown's search for meaning in the Christmas holiday. He starts the special seeking to understand why he always ends up depressed around the holidays. On the advice of Lucy, he gets involved in

directing a school play about the Nativity. When he loses control of the production because of the cast members' refusal to listen to him, he is given the lesser responsibility of finding a Christmas tree for the play.

Instead of buying a "big, shiny, aluminum" artificial tree as he was instructed to do by Lucy, he chooses a pitiful little twig. This makes him the target of laughter and derision by all except Linus. Charlie Brown cries out in abject desperation, wondering if anyone understands what Christmas is all about. Linus answers him by reciting the story of the birth of Jesus.

WATCH THIS CLIP WITH ME

Meanwhile, Snoopy has decorated his doghouse with colorful flashing lights and other baubles, and won 1st Prize in a decorating contest. Charlie Brown takes the decorations and puts a single ornament on his tree, which promptly collapses under the weight. He flees in despair.

Having heard Linus's explanation of what Christmas is all about, the other kids realize they've been too hard on Charlie Brown, and fix his tree up into a brilliant Christmas display using the rest of Snoopy's decorations. Charlie Brown returns to find the whole gang gathered around his tree. In a rare moment of happiness, he joins the crew in singing the Christmas carol "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing", as the closing credits roll.

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS REMINDS US OF WHAT CHRISTMAS REALLY MEANS.

Charlie Brown had lost sight of the point of Christmas, until Linus shared the wisdom from Luke 2

Luke 2:1-20

1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to his own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." 15 When the angels had left them and gone into

heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 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. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

I. Christmas Means...God Keeps His Promises

Born of A Virgin	
Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18,24,25
Born In Bethlehem	
Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
Slaughter of the Innocent	
Jer. 31 :15	Matthew 2:16-18
Flight to Egypt	
Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14,15

Imagining taking 100 quadrillion quarters and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state 2 feet deep. Now place one Sacagawea dollar coin on the pile somewhere

and stir the whole mass thoroughly... Blindfold a man and tell him he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up [that one marked Sacagawea dollar coin. What chance would he have of getting the right one?"

Christmas Means God keeps his promises. If he would go to such great length to keep his promises concerning Jesus Birth we can trust him to keep all the other the promises he makes.

II. Christmas Means...You Matter to God

For a long while, Sean Connery was a fan-favorite to play Gandalf, the venerable wizard from J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. However, Connery rejected the part in Peter Jackson's recent adaptation, in part because he did not want to spend 18 months filming in New Zealand. Instead, Sir Ian McKellen took up Gandalf's beard to wide acclaim. After the massive success of the first film, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Connery was asked if he regretted his decision. "I had never read Tolkien," he said, "and the script—when they sent it to me, I didn't understand bobbits...hobbits."

John 1:14

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We mattered so much to God that Jesus did not turn down the role. He became like us so that we could discover once again a real relationship with God.

Sean Connery didn't want to live in New Zealand and he didn't understand "hobbits," so he missed out on an incredible role in the three block buster movies.

Jesus took on the incredible Role

The Lord of life came down to suffer death;
The Bread came down, to hunger;
The fount of living water came down to thirst;
The Creator became like the creation;
The sinless came down to take our sin.

What does Christ mean. It means we matter to God. Not just a little, but to a degree that we can only imagine.

III.Christmas Means...There is a Gift to be Discovered.

A. Forgiveness

10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Opaquing fluid is the magical liquid that covers over your errors, your typos, your unfrotunae slpi-ups. You brush on the liquid and start all over again--hopefully this time with no unfortunate slip-ups. Opaquing fluid is forgiveness, an obliteration of a goof with no telltale traces that the goof happened at all.¹

The angel announces that a gift has come. Salvation. Every shepherd in the field had

¹ John V. Chervokas, How to Keep God Alive from 9 to 5. Christianity Today, Vol. 30, no. 6.

heard for a lifetime all about their sins all about their failings all about their need. They had made sacrifices in the temple; they had attended the feast of Israel. But deep in their hearts they knew, just as all men knew that it wasn't enough. Sin, their sin had created a gulf between them and their God. And now on this night an angel shares the incredible story, it's all changing. The savior has been born.

B. Appropriated

Imagine tomorrow morning getting up and looking at all the beautifully wrapped presents under the tree and then packing them up into a box and storing them in your basement.

Then next year get them all out again. Look at all the beautiful wrappings. Be thankful for how nice they look under your tree and then wrapping them all up again and boxing them away for another year.

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

When the Shepherds heard the news that a savior had come, they went to discover the gift. Christmas is all about discovering the great gift that God brings into the world through the birth of this little baby.

Salvation is at hand.

SUMMARY:

Christmas means family and gifts and decorations. But it also means something so much more. The Charlie Brown Christmas reminds us what it is all about. The God, who keeps his promises, has a wonderful gift for us, because we matter to him. That gift, forgiveness is the great gift for each of us this Christmas season.

PRAYER: Jesus, I stand in awe of how incredible your birth was, every prophecy fulfilled. God becomes man. Your birth is a reminder of how much I am loved. Thank you for loving me and for providing me with the greatest gift under my tree--the gift of forgiveness. Amen