you has Scrooge watching his maid who has just stolen some of his belongings. She is bartering with another thief. Reality sinks in for Scrooge about how he will be remembered. Take a look: (show scene of ghost of Christmas future)

Scrooge is confronted with himself. Not only is he shocked at the lack of respect they had for him but he sees his own greed in them. He begs for them to be tender and sensitive, the very qualities he does not possess. Later in the scene he watches the Cratchit family grieving because Tiny Tim has died.

So after seeing how he would be remembered if he died without having changed, Scrooge finally realizes what is most important in life. It is not making money; it is helping others and spreading joy. Scrooge learns that being rich in life is not about money; it is about relationships. It is about love and concern for others. Scrooge learns that the only way he will be happy is if lets go of what he has and gives himself away. Scrooge learns that the secret to happiness is generosity!

Jesus said it so well in Matthew 16:25: “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” If there ever was a passage of scripture that summed up the lesson of A Christmas Carol, it is this one.

You know what “Bah Humbug” means don’t you? It means a hoax or a deception. Scrooge used it to say that Christmas was a hoax, a scam or a deception. He simply saw it as an opportunity for people to get his money. But in the end Scrooge learned that he was the one who deceived himself. He believed in the greatest deception of all – that happiness is found in ignoring others and living only for yourself.

Thanks to Jacob Marley and the three ghosts Scrooge learned that the opposite is true. Joy can only be found by giving yourself away. I will let the concluding scene of the movie illustrate it for us: (show concluding scene)

Let’s all keep Christmas well this year and always. God bless us everyone! Amen.
the wheel; he was a human being with needs and joys and concerns. He was a man with a sick child and a small Christmas goose. He was a man who had a mean boss who did not pay him enough to care for his family and sick child.

Jesus reminded us of this when he told the parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25. The parable tells us that when the Kingdom comes Jesus will not ask his followers how much money we made or if we were successful in business. He will not ask us how often we read the Bible or whether we were sprinkled or dunked at our Baptism. He will ask us if we clothed the naked, feed the hungry, took care of the sick and dying, and visited the prisoner. Why? Because when we take care of anyone in need it is like we are taking care of Christ. He said so in verse 40, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

This is how intimately connected Christ is to each human being on earth.

So how about you? Do you have it right? Do you live your life beyond the “narrow limits” of your own needs and wants and reach out to help others?

Jacob Marley discovered that he got it all wrong but he could not turn back time. The only thing he could do was warn Scrooge to change his ways.

Marley told Scrooge that his warnings would come in the form of three ghosts – the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future. Each ghost would make Scrooge examine his life. May this story cause us to examine our lives as well.

Here is the scene when the Ghost of Christmas past visits Scrooge. We pick up the scene when the ghost has Scrooge look at his life when he was a young man. As you will see, he wasn’t always so hard and greedy:

The Ghost of Christmas Past has Scrooge look at his life when he was young and worked for a kind man by the name of Fezziwig. He was also in love with a girl named Bell and he enjoyed dancing with her. Bell told him being serious all the time was not healthy, and Scrooge said that he would then go around living his life with a smile on his face, but it was not to be. He allowed himself to be consumed with making money and succeeding in business. This caused him to lose the woman he loved and miss out on the joy of living.

The ghost asked Scrooge this question: “When was the last time you danced?” And I would like to ask all of you that question: When was the last time you danced? In other words, when was the last time you did something fun? When was the last time you turned off your cell phone and enjoyed the people in your life? When was the last time you did something just because it gave you joy? Like Scrooge maybe you can remember a time in your past when you were happy and joyful, but life has beaten the joy out of you. Work, bills, unrealistic goals, deadlines, grief, disappointments, and preoccupation with success have stolen your joy. Maybe you can’t really pin point the time you lost your joy, but you know it has been a long time since you danced through life with a smile on your face. Well it is time to ask God to give you the courage to take back your joy!

I remember taking dancing lessons with Brandy before we got married. I knew how to look like a regular idiot on the dance floor but I did not have a clue how to really dance. But I needed to learn because I didn’t want her feet at my wedding reception. The song for our first dance was “Pride and Joy” by Stevie Ray Vaughan. It is a great song, but I didn’t know how to dance to it!

So we took lessons and I did the best I could, which wasn’t very good at all. We learned the two step and the four point move or something or other. I don’t remember. Brandy was patient but, truthfully, none of it stuck. When the day of the wedding came I couldn’t remember which foot went where and which was last or first. I was nervous about it.

Our wedding ceremony was beautiful and then we headed to the wedding reception. The band announced us and they started to play “Pride and Joy.” My head and in tears but I vowed to remember everything in those lessons, which meant I kept looking at my feet! Then I looked up and saw Brandy and she looked gorgeous. Suddenly, it dawned on me, “Charley, this is not about getting the dance right. This is about enjoying the moment and your new wife!” And I said, “To heck with it,” and I just looked at Brandy instead of my feet. I moved however I wanted to move! I may have looked bad, but I tell you who looked good – Brandy! We had a ball. It was not about getting the dance right; it was about enjoying the moment.

That’s how life gets sometimes. We get so preoccupied with making all the right moves that we forget to enjoy the moment and the people we are with. We get so preoccupied making a living that we forget to make a life. As Ferris Bueller said, “Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and take a look around once in awhile you just might miss it.” We take ourselves too seriously and forget that God wants us to have joy in our hearts. Look at what Proverbs 17:22 says: “A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

That certainly describes Scrooge, doesn’t it? He let work and making money crush his joy and dry up his bones and he forgot what was most important in life. And what was that? Well, that leads us to the next scene where the Ghost of Christmas Present is giving Scrooge Christmas dinner with this family. He learns some powerful lessons. Take a look:

(Show scene of Ghost of Christmas Present)

We can learn many lessons from this scene. One, of course, is recognizing how the Cratchit family was so grateful for what little they had, and Scrooge wasn’t grateful for the bounty he had. They were happy with little. Scrooge was ungrateful with a lot, which proves that “It is not happy people who are thankful; it is thankful people who are happy.”

But there is another lesson in this scene that is even more powerful. The Ghost of Christmas present is giving Scrooge the chance to humanize a “cog in his wheel.” Bob Cratchit was just an employee that Scrooge thought he could push around. Scrooge overworked and underpaid him. To Scrooge, Bob was just a means to make him more money. But then when he saw Bob at his humble dinner table with this loving family and his sick child, Tiny Tim, he no longer was a cog in the wheel; he was a human being with needs and joys and concerns. He was a man with a sick child and a small Christmas goose. He was a man who had a mean boss who did not pay him enough to care for his family and sick child.

We would all do well to humanize the people who serve and help us. The waiter or waitress who got your order wrong is not a robot. They are people just like you and me. They have kids at home to feed and support, bills to pay, hurts, joys and dreams. The lady on the phone who is refilling your prescription is not a computer. She is a lady with bad problems who is taking care of her sick mother. She hopes and prays that today she can speak to some nice customers for a change. The receptionist at the doctor’s office has no control over how long the doctor is taking with patients and how long you have to wait. She might be working two jobs to make ends meet and is doing the best she can. Like the bumper sticker says, “Just Be Nice!”

About a month ago I got a call from my Alma Matter, Florida Southern. I’ll give you three guesses as to why they were calling. Yes, that’s right. They wanted money and I am always glad to give. I love Florida Southern. I had a wonderful college experience there. The year they called I was a sophomore at Florida Southern who is double majoring in biology and psychology. She didn’t tell me that. I asked her. In fact, we spent about twenty minutes having a great chat. I asked about her experience at the college and her future plans. It was a wonderful conversation. After giving me her credit card number, she said, “I wish all my calls were this much fun!” I replied, “They aren’t!” She said, “No. You would be surprised how nasty people can get when you ask them for money.” I said, “Nope. I am not surprised at all. You see, I am a preacher and I have to ask for money all the time!”

Remember the most important rule of all. It is pure gold: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” – Luke 6:31

And that leads us to the last ghost who visited Scrooge, the Ghost of Christmas Future. In this scene Scrooge gets to see what his community would be like if he died. He hears people say things about him – how he died alone – how no one would show up to his funeral – how he was a mean old man. The scene I’m about to show...