

Hom2 Advent B 2017

In his book, *The Power Within You*, Pat Williams of the Philadelphia 76ers tells a remarkable story.

It was a hot Sunday afternoon in 1980.

A young cerebral palsy victim named Cordell Brown was walking through the clubhouse of the then World Champion Philadelphia Phillies.

Cordell walks with great difficulty. He talks with great difficulty. Feeding himself is a very difficult task.

When people see Cordell coming, they usually turn the other way or pretend not to see him. That's what some of the Phillies were doing as Cordell made his way through the clubhouse.

What was Cordell doing in the Phillies clubhouse? He had been invited there to speak to the players in a pregame chapel service.

What could Cordell possibly say to stars like Steve Carleton and Mike Schmitt, who were at that time so far removed from his world of pain?

Some of the Phillies were asking the same thing when they sat down to listen to him.

Cordell began by putting the players at ease. He said, "I know I'm different." Then, quoting 1 Cor. 15:10, he added, "But, by God's grace I am what I am."

For the next 20 minutes Cordell Brown talked about the goodness of God in his life.

He concluded by answering the question, What could he say to famous superstars like Steve Carlton and Mike Schmitt, who were so far removed from his world of pain?

Cordell said in a loving way: "You may hit three-fifty for a lifetime and be paid a million dollars a year but when the day comes that they close the lid on that box, you won't be any different than I am. That's one time when we'll be the same.

"I DON'T NEED WHAT YOU HAVE IN LIFE, BUT ONE THING IS FOR SURE: YOU NEED WHAT I HAVE, AND THAT IS JESUS CHRIST."

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We just heard about John the Baptist in today's Gospel and what is it exactly that John is trying to say? John is trying to turn people toward Jesus Christ. John says: "I am not fit to untie the strap on his sandals." Jesus is greater than I. Listen to Jesus. You need him.

Remember the character Scrooge in Charles Dickens' story *The Christmas Carol*. Ebenezer Scrooge was a miserable, miserly, selfish old man. Three ghosts appear to show Ebenezer his life story and Ebenezer finally realizes that there is more to life than money. He realizes that there is an entirely different way of living in the world than what he has been doing and if truth be told it is the Way of Jesus Christ. I guess Charles Dickens, the author, thought it was not necessary to tell people directly that the Christmas Story is all about Jesus. But the Christmas Story is really all about Jesus.

So Charles Dickens was doing the same thing that Cordell Brown was doing and John the Baptist was doing---pointing people to Jesus.

Jesus offers us a new way of living in the world. This world is passing away. The Kingdom of God has come. Christianity is not always given credit for the powerful influence it has had over our culture and the freedoms we enjoy.

You can't feed someone who is not hungry.

Ebenezer didn't even realize that his soul was starved for the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that enlightens Ebenezer's mind and moves his heart to love and make sacrifices and share what he has.

Parents seize this wonderful season to tell your children about Jesus. God has come to earth in Jesus his Son.

Pull up the Christmas Story on your TV screens and watch it together as a family. Then take a good look at the three ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Future and Christmas Present. Isn't "Ghost" just another word for "Spirit?" It is the Holy Spirit who enlightened Ebenezer Scrooge. The Holy Spirit is real and the Holy Spirit is with us right now as I speak. Ask the Holy Spirit to take you on a journey and show you what your life might be like in the past if you never loved Jesus? What would your life be like in the future if you never loved Jesus? What could your life be like right now if you did not know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

You know ---I think the Christmas Story by Charles Dickens is not really about Ebenezer Scrooge finding Jesus but about us finding Jesus. Remember the story I began my sermon with, the story of Cordell Brown? I hope we could all say to our friends:
"I DON'T NEED WHAT YOU HAVE IN LIFE, BUT ONE THING IS FOR SURE: YOU NEED WHAT I HAVE, AND THAT IS JESUS CHRIST.

Ebenezer Scrooge saw some major changes in his life once he found the Holy Spirit of Christmas.

Pray that the same Holy Spirit may be manifest in each of our lives.
 Let me end with a poem it's written as a letter of love from Jesus.

If you look for me at Christmas,
 You won't need a special star
 I'm no longer just in Bethlehem,
 I'm right there where you are.
 You may not be aware of me amid the celebrations—
 You'll have to look beyond the stores
 and all the decorations.
 But if you take a moment
 from your list of things to do
 And listen to your heart,
 you'll find I'm waiting there for you
 You're the one I want to be with,
 you're the reason that I came,
 And you'll find me in the stillness
 as I'm whispering your name. (Printerest)