

Scrooge at the Manger

<SONG 1 *Prelude/Overture*>

READER (During SONG 2): O little town of Bethlehem, out of you will come the Savior of ancient prophecy. And He will bring peace to all people. (Micah 5:2-5)

<SONG 2 *O Little Town of Bethlehem*>

Scene 1: Scrooge's office at the Inn

NARRATOR: A long time ago in the town of Bethlehem in the land of Judea, there was an inn owned by Ebenezer Scrooge. The inn was especially busy as the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, had declared that everyone had to visit the town of their birth for a census and taxing. We join Mr. Scrooge on the evening before the census was to begin. Scrooge is sitting at his office desk counting his money when Bob Cratchet interrupts him.

CRATCHET: Mr. Scrooge, there are two more guests that have arrived...

SCROOGE: What's the problem, Cratchet? Do these guests of Caesar's taxation need some special attention? Or do they have an issue with paying?

C: I don't know for sure, but they are in desperate need. The wife is pregnant and due any day...

S: Cratchet, can they PAY?!

C: I didn't ask that yet, the rooms are all full. I wanted to check with you to see if there was an alternative, they could stay here in your office, perhaps?

S: Cratchet, this is why I don't pay you to think! No, they cannot stay in my office. My own room is through that door. If she is as far along as you say, she will be up all night with chamber needs, food cravings, and who knows what else. If I don't get my rest, I can't properly wait on my customers. We're filled up, eh? Good, good.

C: Perhaps the lobby then? Sir, she looks as though she could go into labor at any time...

S: Look, Cratchet, a lot of people have paid good money to rest here tonight. While I would be glad for a few coins more, I don't want to have to refund money because they don't like the riff-raff hanging about in the lobby. Send them away!

C: But sir, they have been everywhere else already. There is nowhere for them to go.

S: I don't care and it's not my concern. Do whatever you want but they will not stay in my inn tonight! Go! Take care of them!

C: Yes, sir.

(Cratchet starts to leave, hesitates as though about to say something)

S: Is there something else, Cratchet?

C: Um, no sir. I will take care of them.

(Cratchet leaves and Scrooge prepares to retire)

S: <muttering to himself> Imagine the nerve! Stranger's in my office! People sleeping in the lobby! What is this world coming to? (Moves to bedroom set) Could I sleep with a woman screaming in labor all night?

READER (over the intro to SONG 3): The people who stumble in darkness will see a great light; those who dwell in the land of darkness, upon them will light shine. Their land is full of silver and gold. They worship the work of their own hands. But the day of the Lord will come upon everything proud and lofty.

And, in that day, a man will cast away his idols of silver and gold. Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord. (Isaiah 9:2, 2:5, 7-8, 12, 20)

<SONG 3 Good King Wenceslas >

NARRATOR (during SONG 3): Bob Cratchet decided that an alternative was available, but feared Mr. Scrooge would not allow it either. So he brought Mary and Joseph back to the inn's stable. He offered them a stall that wasn't being used. When they accepted Bob got his wife to look after their needs.

Scene 2: Mrs. Cratchet and Tiny Tim.

NARRATOR: After tending to the guests, Mrs. Cratchet returned to the room behind the front desk the Cratchet family called home. Her youngest child, Tiny Tim, was waiting for her. Tim was crippled from birth, unable to stand straight, and could not walk without his crutch. He climbed into his mother's lap and she rocked him to sleep.

<SONG 4 Lully, Lullay>

Scene 3: Angel of the Past.

NARRATOR: As Tiny Tim slept in his mother's warm embrace, Scrooge drifted off to sleep in his cold, dark room. Dreaming of the profit made that day, he was blissfully asleep when an angel suddenly appeared in his room.

<BELL TOLL 1>

ANGEL: Ebenezer! Ebenezer Scrooge! Wake up! I have something to show you!

SCROOGE: What is this? Who are you? Why are you here? You...you're glowing...are you a...a ghost?

A: No, Ebenezer, I'm an Angel. I'm here to show you something from the past.

S: Why? What's in it for me?

A: Perhaps your redemption.

S: Bah! A humbug! Redemption from what? I've broken no law!

A: No law of man, that is true. But there are higher laws you have forgotten.

S: Higher laws?

A: Come with me. I have something to show you that will help you see.

(Focus changes to the video screen. On it the a young Ebenezer plays with other children)

A: In your childhood you were happier. You had so little but yet you found joy in simple things.

S: My father worked hard, but foolishly. He rarely made enough to put anything aside.

A: He chose a job that paid the bills and allowed him time with his family. You knew you were loved.

S: But he would die a pauper. In poor health too, because of that job.

A: He did what was best for his family. You didn't complain then.

(Video changes to a graveyard where a teenaged Ebenezer stands at a grave)

S: Bah! I was just a child. I didn't realize the consequences. But when he died I did. I swore on his grave that I would not repeat his mistakes. I would be sure my family could live in comfort.

A: That brings me to another memory.

(Video changes to a young woman)

S: No, Angel, do not bring me here! I wish to never remember this!

A: You must. This was Belle, your fiancée. Do you remember why you never married her?

(Video shows a happy Ebenezer and Belle walking and talking (or something))

S: I was still an apprentice when we met. When I took the chance to take on my own business, I asked her to marry me. But the business took time to get established. I couldn't put her in the same situation my mother was in, never having enough money to buy the nicer things. I needed time to get things going, to make the money I needed for her and the family we were going to have.

A: For a long time, she barely saw you. She finally gave up.

(Video (during Scrooge's next lines) shows Belle waiting along. Finally Ebenezer arrives and they talk briefly, then Belle returns her engagement ring to Ebenezer. He stands looking after her but not following)

S: I had work to do! Do you think a business runs itself? I built the finest inn here in Bethlehem! That didn't happen by spending all my time on trivial things...I mean...I...it was all for her! Then she left me! She called money my mistress!

A: The niceties in life meant nothing to her if it meant not having *you*.

S: (to himself) You fool, why didn't you go after her? (turns to angel) Why do you grieve me, Angel? There is nothing here I can change.

(Video fades and lights come up on front desk of inn)

A: This is earlier this evening. Note the couple entering your establishment.

(Mary and Joseph walk to the desk and are greeted by Bob Cratchet. They talk briefly and Cratchet leaves.)

A: Bob has just left to ask you if they can stay somewhere.

(Mary clutches her stomach, obviously labor is starting)

S: I...There was no rooms left. (Gets defensive) What was I supposed to do? My guests pay to not be disturbed!

A: These people had a greater need. Bob saw that and tried to tell you but you wouldn't listen. Here he comes now.

(Cratchet returns with a smile on his face. He leads the couple around the back to the stables)

S: Where is he taking them? Cratchet! What do you think you're doing?

A: They can't hear you, Ebenezer, or see you. He's taking them to the stable to spend the night. It's no fancy room in an Inn, but it will do.

S: I told Cratchet to get rid of them!

A: You said they could not stay at the inn.

S: Cratchet always had a soft spot for hard luck cases. The stable, very...enterprising, Bob. I'm impressed.

(The Angel starts to lead Scrooge back to the bed)

A: This couple is not just any 'hard luck case,' they could have been your most important guests ever, but you didn't want them.

(Scrooge starts to climb back into bed)

S: Humbug! What's so special about them?

A: In good time, Ebenezer, in good time.

<SONG 5 God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen>

READER: For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given. And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 6:9)

<SONG 6 Hark the Herald Angels Sing>

Scene 4: The Birth

NARRATOR: Scrooge fell into a fitful sleep. Disturbing dreams of a woman screaming in the pains of labor while lying in the street prevented his rest. People in the dream passed him by saying things like "You kicked them out" and "You couldn't find any room at all?" He tossed and turned until he was awoken again.

<BELL TOLL 2>

ANGEL: Ebenezer! Wake up! I have more to show you!

SCROOGE: You again? Haven't you put me on enough of a guilt trip for one night?

A: This time I have something to show you from the present. A Child was just born. Come with me to your stable. The Cratchets are already there.

S: The woman from earlier this evening! Is she all right?

A: Yes, she is. I want you to come and see.

(They move to the stable)

S: I see Bob and his wife, and their son, Tim I believe his name is. Who are all these other people? They look like shepherds!

A: They *are* shepherds. I just got back from inviting them to come and see this.

S: So what *is* so important about these people anyway? You said you would tell me.

A: The Child is who is so important. They are going to name him Jesus.

S: This little baby? Humbug! Why is he so important?

A: This little baby is the promised Messiah – the Son of God.

S: This little child – he's just...the Son of God...so tiny...and I couldn't make any room for Him.

A: People pay you good money to keep the riff-raff away.

S: I didn't know...

A: "I don't care and it's none of my concern."

S: Angel, you use my words against me!

A: You have made your own end by your words, your decisions, your quest for wealth.

S: Am I destined to live that out?

A: You still have choices you can make. See? Tiny Tim is making a choice right now.

S: (Curiously) What is he doing? (Incredulously) He's giving the baby his crutch? Bah! What foolishness! Humbug! He... he needs that and his parents can't afford to replace it!

A: Watch!

NARRATOR: As Tiny Tim knelt and placed his crutch at the side of the baby, he suddenly stood up straight! His parents cried in wonder and the shepherds marveled as he ran unaided back to them!

(The angel leads an astonished Scrooge back to his bed)

S: The Son of God...He must be! What is to become of this child?

A: The child will grow to be a man. I will show you more later. Go back to sleep.

(lights stay up on nativity scene as Tiny Tim sings)

<SONG 8 *What could I give Him*>

***The reader's part at the beginning of song 8 is now out of continuity with the second scene. I'm already moving Tiny Tim's song out of order to accommodate the chronology. Could it be changed to a scripture about healing the lame or something?**

<SONG 7 *Once in David's Royal City*>

****Can we do without this song? It doesn't really fit!**

<SONG *Past Three O'clock*>

Scene 5: The crucifixion

NARRATOR: Scrooge's sleep was even more fitful than before. Visions of being condemned by the child who had become king now filled his dreams. There was no escape for him. He sat up in bed in a cold sweat.

<BELL TOLL 3>

ANGEL: Awake already, Ebenezer? Come, I have one more thing to show you.

SCROOGE: Angel, am I without hope? If I have made my own end, what is the point in continuing?

A: That remains to be seen. What I have to show you is of things yet to come and of the possibility of your redemption.

S: Lead on then, Angel.

(Angel takes Scrooge to the Crucifixion (Video on the screen))

(Video: Jesus hangs on a cross, beaten and wearing a crown of thorns)

S: What is this place? And who is that criminal?

A: Read the notice above his head.

(Video zooms in to note above Jesus)

S: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." No, it can't be. (Looks at the crowd and recognizes Mary) No, it is! Angel! How did this happen?

A: He was betrayed by a friend. Judas was his name. Someone much like you, who saw an opportunity and took it to gain a few extra coins at his friend's expense.

(Video switches to show Judas receiving payment, as he turns to leave he faces the camera and reveals himself to be Ebenezer)

S: No! Angel! This Judas...he *is* me!

A: I said he was very much like you. (Sarcastically) Truly a kindred spirit.

S: But if He is the Son of God, why doesn't he just...do something?

A: Because through His death here, he will bring redemption to all who will accept it. Even those like you.

S: What of Judas, His friend who betrayed Him?

A: (Saddened) He...he could not bring himself to accept the forgiveness.

S: Angel, I have seen enough. Please, let us go back.

A: Ebenezer, what about you?

S: Angel, how can He forgive me? He should have been born in my finest room! I was willing to let him be born and die on the street! What man could forgive me for my selfishness?

A: None could except by God's grace - and His Son's. Yes, Ebenezer, even though you let the Son of God be born in a lowly stable, He is willing and able to forgive you. Listen:

JESUS: Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing!

A: See? Even as He dies, he offers forgiveness to his executioners. Are you so far gone?

S: I...Angel, am...am I?

A: Ebenezer, you are not. No one is unless they choose to be.

S: I...I ask for forgiveness. My actions have been wrong and centered only on myself and the money I could make. Like the friend who betrayed this man, this Son of God, I have betrayed my fellow man.

A: It's time to return, Ebenezer.

S: Am I forgiven, Angel? Has He forgiven me?

A: As soon as you believed, Ebenezer.

NARRATOR: When Scrooge awoke the next morning, he rushed out back to the stable. There where Mary and Joseph and the baby, just as he had seen them in his dream. He immediately escorted them into the inn and put them up in his own room. He gave them all the food and amenities they needed. He told the Cratchets to fix a feast and to make sure they all were in attendance.

Having his soul redeemed, he was a changed man after that night. While he never again was visited by the angel, he never forgot the night he found forgiveness. He made sure he did right to his employees, and even made Tiny Tim his apprentice. He was known from then on as a man who sought to serve God and his fellow man.

<SONG 10-12 *Finale Medley*>

Invitation