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# ❖ Restoration Village ❖

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December 2011

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Then, as Christmas is a time in which, of all times in a year the memory of every remediable sorrow, wrong, and trouble in the world around us, should be active with us, not less than our own experiences, for all good, he laid his hand upon the boy, and, silently calling Him to witness who laid His hand on children in old time, rebuking, in the majesty of His prophetic knowledge, those who kept them from Him, vowed to protect him, teach him, and reclaim him. (Charles Dickens, *The Haunted Man*)

## LORD KEEP MY MEMORY GREEN

I have read some quotes that refer to Charles Dickens as the inventor of Christmas. And it is a piece of history that the first known Christmas card was printed the same year as *The Christmas Carol*, 1843, but Dickens is not the inventor of Christmas. Five years earlier Dickens had written a chapter that became a chapter in the *The Pickwick Papers* a story of a grave digger, Gabriel Grub who encounters goblins on Christmas Eve and just may have been the first fictional character to say “Ho Ho Ho.” The legacy of Dickens writings and the well known characters and what they represent, especially Scrooge and the lame child Tiny Tim, have brought metaphor and human figures to coalesce imaginative concepts to us all.

It was *The Pickwick Papers* (chapter 29) where the gravedigger was shown the image of a once happy family suffering the death of a child and other horrors (the goblins that beat him) that introduced us to a man in need of redemption. *A Christmas Carol*, his most enduring book, was written because of his outrage at the maltreatment of children. Biographers say that in his Christmas book *The Haunted Man and The Ghost's Bargain* (1848) and the autobiographical *David Copperfield* (1850) that Dickens “faces up to his past” – and his feelings about his past – “and works through them.” Michael Slater who wrote an acclaimed biography of Dickens says that the book *The Haunted Man* “doesn't have the humor of the ‘Carol’ but it's a very Victorian idea that you can't feel real compassion for other people unless you yourself have suffered.” *The Haunted Man* drew me in with the story line of a professor who broods over wrongs done him and grief from his past life as I thought of the lives that have crossed the portals of Restoration Village and chose to read this particular Christmas story. I am glad I did.

Professor Redlaw is offered a chance by a phantom to “forget the sorrow, wrong, and trouble you have known...to cancel their remembrance... forever” under one condition: the gift of forgetfulness will also be given to those he meets along the way of life. Eventually, Redlaw loses his human kindness and he experiences anger and a bitterness that he cannot explain. The only people during the memory loss time of the story that are not affected by Redlaw's curse are Milly (who is the essence of kindness and patience and whose only child had died) and a nameless beggar child that was immune to the soul destroying Redlaw because he had no soul to destroy. It is Milly who presents the moral of the tale: “It is important to remember past sorrows and wrong so that you can then forgive those responsible and, in so doing, unburden your soul...” that he begins to change from an alienated man to one redeemed by love.

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Milly speaks softly to her husband and Professor Redlaw: “When I think of all these hopes I built upon it (speaking in regards to the dead child), and the many times I sat and pictured to myself the smiling face upon my bosom that never lay there, and the sweet eyes turned up to mine that never opened to the light, I feel a great tenderness. “ She continues, “For poor neglected children, my little child pleads as if it was alive, and had voice I knew, with which to speak to me. When I hear of youth in suffering and shame, I think that my child might have come to that...and I will meet in Heaven a bright creature that will call me Mother!”

Redlaw falls to his knees, with a loud cry: “O thou who through the teaching of pure love hast graciously restored me to the memory which was the memory of the Christ on the Cross, and all of the good who perished in His cause, receive my thanks, and bless her.”

It has been 150 years since Dickens penned his immortalized books and stories, and yet their message is still valid to our society today. Dickens often wrote his stories because children were treated as imperfect half pint adults that needed their imperfections beat out of them and education (if they got any) beaten into them. Dickens went to work at the age of 10 and was cruelly treated as a boot black. It is said that he never forgave his mother who did not want him to quit the factory work at his father’s request. Children in Dickens era were treated as “losers” – a stage of life that no sane child or adult would want to live in any longer than necessary. This is the same treatment that children received when they were presented to Jesus (the blessing of the children is presented in all three synoptic gospels and in the same context, all prior to Palm Sunday and Good Friday) and Jesus rebukes the adults for their treatment of children and bids the children to come. One of the remarkable things about the Grace of God is that Jesus uses the children to remind us again, He came for losers, the last, the least and the dead, for such is the kingdom of heaven. And immediately after rebuking the disciples, and blessing the children comes the man who worships “success” that will give up anything to be a bigger success and Jesus told him to become a loser, give up everything, and the ruler went away “sad.”

Last month we purchased a marker to be placed in the Memory Garden for a 22 day old child who was murdered by his mother. The stories and revelations of adults and people in authority who failed to protect children in the Penn State situation are appalling. The continuous maltreatment of children around the world (child labor, sex trafficking, lack of educational opportunities, etc.) reflect that Dickens books are still as valuable to awaking our awareness as they were in the 1800’s. You and I are not fundamentally the sum of our past experiences and our present does not have to be defined by the past. We can awaken to a new dawn and throw open the shutters and yell out loud for all to hear, “Merry Christmas to all.” We can share of faith in Christ, and share of ourselves in love and grace to all we meet and invest our resources in the future, especially to protect children. And like Scrooge at the end of the *Muppet Christmas Carol*, sing a song after his encounters with the spirits entitled “Thankful Heart”, a song written by Paul Williams. Part of that song goes: “ With a thankful/ With a endless joy/Every girl and boy/Will bring love, hope and peace to me/ And every night will end/ And every day will start/ With a grateful prayer/ And a thankful heart/ With an open smile and with open doors/ I bid you welcome/ What is mine is yours.../ I will hold you close in a thankful heart/I will hold you close in a thankful heart/ In a thankful heart.”

The Last lines of the book *The Haunting* are “Lord keep my memory green” and that is my prayer for you this season of the year. The way we treat children reflects what type of people we are: selfish, striving for success or unselfish and sharing of ourselves in love.

Have a blessed Christmas season,

*David Engle*

You and I are not fundamentally the sum of our past experiences and our present does not have to be defined by the past.

## Village News

THE ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL is the announcement of the beginnings of the seasons of the celebrations of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Former residents, current residents and this year some special guests from Decision Point joined the afternoon for games, hay rides, horseback riding, and good food on a near perfect weather day. Thank you to the volunteers, Cross Church ladies, Gypsy and her lemonade stand, and especially to Teri for putting the festival all together for the mummies and babies.



For children face painting is an important part of the festivities.



Teri is the one in the back as the next load of children prepare for a hay ride.



Horseback riding for many this year was a "first" for most residents.



Gypsy and her lemonade, cotton candy mobile unit has been a popular item for years at the fall festival.

LAST MONTH IN THE VILLAGE NEWS I incorrectly replied that we were placing a 6<sup>th</sup> memorial marker at the Memory Garden of murdered children of Benton County since January, 2000. Regrettably it is the 10<sup>th</sup> marker in memory of an innocent young child.

The annual report of Restoration Village along with contribution accounting will be mailed to all contributors to the Village during the third week of January 2012. We are most grateful to all that have given so unselfishly and in compassion this year towards giving mummies and their children an opportunity to begin restored and anew. You are a marvelous group of people that walk along beside us making a difference in the lives of others.

“This is a fair, dear and precious assurance to troubled and tormented consciences laden with sins, that to them and to us all a Child is born who will rule and vindicate, who will help and not destroy, murder, strangle or kill.

The Christian faith is foolishness. It says that God can do anything and yet makes Himself so weak that either his Son had no power or wisdom or else the whole story is made up.

God does not even send an angel to take the devil by the nose. He sends, as it were, an earthworm lying in weakness, helpless, without his mother, and he suffers him to be nailed to a cross ... So spoke Caiaphas and Pilate, ‘He is nothing but a carpenter,’ and then in his weakness and infirmity he crunches the devil’s back and alters the whole world. He suffered himself to be trodden under the foot of man and be crucified, and through weakness he takes power and the Kingdom.

If I had come to Bethlehem and seen it, I would have said, ‘This does not make sense. Can this be the Messiah?’ This is sheer nonsense. I would not have let myself be found inside the stable.”

- Martin Luther-



*The staff and residents of Restoration Village  
Thank you for sharing of your resources this  
past year and extend to you a desire for a  
blessed Christmas Season.*