

Has the Grinch Stolen Your Christmas?

[Isaiah 9:2-7](#), [Luke 2:1-20](#)

We have survived the beginning of another Christmas season! We have decked the halls, rocked around the Christmas tree and gone from Tennessee to Pennsylvania in search of homemade pumpkin pie. We have baked and cleaned and cooked and wrapped until we can't see straight. We have endured long lines at the mall and navigated packed parking lots full of angry people, trying to find the perfect Christmas gifts for everyone in spite of the downturned economy. We have personally endured the pains of Christmas! *Has the Grinch stolen your Christmas?*

We have sat up late at night working on tight budgets of time and money to make this year's treats and events even more spectacular than last year's. We have mastered exterior illumination! We have petitioned Santa baby for everything

from a sable to a yacht, and we have come to hate those notorious words, ‘some assembly required’. *Has the Grinch stolen your Christmas?*

We have been planning a white Christmas, a blue Christmas, a holly, jolly Christmas, or a rockin’ Christmas complete with all the bells and whistles. At this point in the game we are exhausted, stressed out, and NOT enjoying the season at all. *Has the Grinch stolen your Christmas?*

It seems we have gotten a little bit away from what Christmas is all about. God has presented us with an incredible gift through the birth of God’s son Jesus. There were no parades or fanfare, no royal welcome. Just a humble couple in a lowly place bringing God’s blessing into this world.

Our scripture lesson from Luke tells us about the shepherds in the fields receiving a visit from a score of angels. In the

ancient world, shepherds were the lowliest of the low as far as social rank is concerned. As Jews they were considered continuously unclean because they had to sleep with the animals in order to protect them. As a group they were not landowners, hence they had no status or social standing whatsoever. Clearly, Jesus' arrival was going to change things dramatically.

Heavenly hosts greeted the social outcasts of the world with the news of good tidings of Great Joy. Not just good joy, or so-so joy – good tidings of Great Joy.

So how do we take back Christmas? We could stand in a circle and start singing, “Bah, who, dores” – does anyone know what that means, anyway? In our own way, let us recapture our Joy.

- God did not abandon us to a world of hopelessness and despair. *That is Great Joy.*

- God provided a path to eternal life - *That is Great Joy.*
- God serves as our partner in our Christian walk - *That is Great Joy.*
- As we encounter difficult times we can count on God for comfort and strength and endurance - *That is Great Joy.*
- The light of God has come to our world - *That is Great Joy.*

Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known to the world as the beloved Dr. Seuss, was born in 1904 on Howard Street in Springfield, Massachusetts. Ted's mother, Henrietta Seuss Geisel, often soothed her children to sleep by "chanting" rhymes remembered from her youth. Ted credited his mother with both his ability and desire to create the rhymes for which he became so well known. His first book that he both wrote and illustrated was *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*. Getting that book published required a great degree of persistence - it

was rejected no less than 27 times before being published by Vanguard Press. And the rest, as they say, is history. By the time he died in 1991, Ted had written and illustrated 44 children's books.

Here these words from Dr. Seuss from the book that I allude to in the title of my sermon (and I have to admit *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* is my favorite Dr. Seuss book): “It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. Maybe Christmas didn't come from a store. Perhaps, just perhaps, Christmas means a little bit more.” *That is Great Joy.*

There is a contemporary Christian song out now by Amy Grant that says, “After this crazy day, I need a Silent Night.” Take a deep breath. Enjoy the season you have worked so hard to prepare for. Be thankful to God for God's gift to us – a

Savior who is Christ the Lord. When you can find that gift of peace and assurance awaiting you, then perhaps you, too, can “find the strength of 10 Grinches, plus 2!” Once again, quoting Dr. Seuss, “Christmas day is in our grasp, so long as we have hands to clasp. Christmas day will always be, just as long as we have we. Welcome Christmas while we stand, heart to heart and hand in hand.”

Merry Christmas! Amen.