

The Gospel According to the Grinch

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“In spite of himself, the Grinch felt something warm swell in his chest. What was it? Can you guess? No one is quite sure, but the Whos think it might have been his heart: his cold, hard little Grinchy heart just might have started to grow.”

It is a cute story, a happy ending. It has become one of the most popular of all Christmas TV programs; and now a huge Hollywood movie. The message of Christmas—so it says-- is about celebrating life, family, unity and love for others—not about material things—not about bows and ribbons and toys. The original and the movie slightly differ about who needs to get the message. In the original, it is the Grinch that needs the ‘gospel’. In the movie, it is primarily the Whos who have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas. The antagonist to Christmas is the Grinch. On the surface, he was huge, green, deformed, hairy and just plain mean. You know the tune,

You’re a mean one, Mr. Grinch, You really are a Heel, Your as cuddly as a cactus, as charming as an eel, Mr. Grinch, You’re a bad banana with a greasy black peel”.

But the movie explains why he was so mean. It goes deep inside the psyche of the Grinch—why he was so evil—why he was so different. The original just said that he his heart was too small. That was how he was born! But the movie explains why his heart was so small. It was his environment. He had come to Whoville as an infant in a basket after an inexplicable wind blew in. He was obviously different. And so as kids would do, he was ridiculed, made fun of until he could stand it no more. And in a rage of embarrassment, shame and anger, he left Whoville with a vengeful heart. His heart must have shrunk. He was a victim of society. He was misunderstood and unloved.

It is really a modern lesson on ‘tolerance’. There is a question asked by the narrator, “Maybe he wasn’t so bad, just maybe.” The heroes of the movie will be the two characters most disenfranchised, the victims, and those laughed at and treated ‘inwhomanly’ who will prove to be the ‘true-whos’.

The Gospel according to the Grinch. Are you being treated ‘inwhomanly’? Are you misunderstood? Have you been laughed at? Abused? Ridiculed? Treated as an outsider? Bullied? Bigotry? Prejudice? And of course are you feeling the fruit of those things? Anger, resentment, grudges, desire for payback? What you really need is one person—just one sincere persevering soul to identify the real you, deep beneath the green hairy exterior. You are like a locked box—all pent up inside, waiting for the right person to come along. And then, your small heart expands 5xs. You are no longer a helpless victim of society. You forgive the past, you gird your loins and move forward with a leap in your step. And so from this stretched heart, you say, with the Grinch, “I am the Grinch who stole Christmas. And I am sorry.” Wouldn’t it be great? I really wish it were true. The world would be a much better place. The Movie Grinch is the very best of humanism and tolerance training. You know, if we were all alone on the planet—if this

is it—than this is good stuff. You know, lets do the best we can. Lets try real hard to find the good in people. Lets try real hard to just get along. Lets accept people as they are. Very shallow in the light of 9/11. Not really good news to people who have known great loss, rape, betrayal, injustice.

But there is an alternative to the Gospel according to the Grinch. Its claims are huge!!! Unbelievable really. Foolishness—on the surface. According to the Bible, my heart is not just too small, it is hopelessly corrupt. Mark 7. My problem is not that it is 3 or 5 or even 10 times too small-- my heart is made of the wrong stuff. I am not naturally good, way down deep. Way down deep, I am a Grinch. I have a little Grinch-heart deep within me. Given the right circumstances, it will erupt in selfishness and self-protection. It does not naturally love—with the noticeable exception of self-love. But even that is shallow. Self-hatred is epidemic in our day. It feeds on anger, vengeance, and criticism of others-- divisiveness. It will kill. It is a cesspool full of guilt and shame. Our hearts share the inability to love and be loved-- to forgive and be forgiven.

Biblicalloy, I need a new heart. Doesn't that make sense if you listen to the news – read the paper?

The movie and the original ends with the Whos and the Grinch hand in hand around the Christmas tree singing a song of unity and celebration. It is a moving scene. Maybe all that is needed is a new song—new lyrics.

And so boys and girls and Grinches and Whos
The paths are before you, you must choose
Do you choose new life, new heart, love unmeasured, untold
Or surface tweaks and bends and buffing up the old
Do you carry on in your own effort, trying even harder yourself
Or can you rely and trust on somebody else

He offers forgiveness, full acceptance and grace
He takes away your shame and guilt without trace
'There is now no condemnation' he cries
There is nothing else, 'It is finished' he sighs.

Its free, no bangles or bobbles afford
You only need to confess Him savior and Lord
Repent of your sins and come as you are
Bring your Grinch heart to him from near or from far

Pastor Seuss