

# Sermon Note: Accepting Christ's Invitation

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

### Introduction

As we conclude our Advent series, The Redemption of Scrooge, we celebrate the transformation that comes from accepting Christ's invitation. The text this week reminds us that life in the Spirit offers freedom from fear and adoption into a new family—a church family that shares in the joy and purpose of following Christ.

This week, we witness Ebenezer Scrooge's exuberance as he wakes up on Christmas morning, overjoyed by the chance to live a new life. His transformation from fear and greed to joy and generosity illustrates the freedom and belonging offered through Christ.

### Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YO17UOjcovg>

In this clip from George C. Scott's *A Christmas Carol* (1984), Scrooge wakes up on Christmas Day, rejoicing in his newfound life and expressing his joy to the world.

### Why This Video?

This scene captures the culmination of Scrooge's transformation. His exuberant joy and gratitude echo the themes of living by the Spirit, where freedom and joy replace fear and isolation. Just as Scrooge proclaims a merry Christmas and embraces a life of generosity, we, too, are invited to live fully into Christ's invitation with joy and purpose.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. How does Scrooge's reaction when he wakes up show his transformation?
2. What does Scrooge's exuberance tell us about the freedom he has found?
3. Why do you think Scrooge begins proclaiming joy and generosity to others?
4. How does this scene challenge us to celebrate and share joy in our lives?
5. What can we learn from Scrooge's newfound openness to the world?

### Romans 8:4b-17 (CEB)

<sup>4b</sup>Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness. <sup>5</sup>People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace. <sup>7</sup>So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's Law, because it can't. <sup>8</sup>People who are self-centered aren't able to please God.

<sup>9</sup>But you aren't self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, they don't belong to him. <sup>10</sup>If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God's righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives

in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through his Spirit that lives in you.

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. <sup>13</sup>If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. <sup>15</sup>You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup>The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup>But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with him so that we can also be glorified with him.

### Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What does Romans 8:4b-17 teach us about living by the Spirit versus living by the flesh?
2. How does Paul's description of adoption into a church family shape your understanding of belonging and purpose?
3. What fears or barriers might prevent someone from fully living into Christ's invitation?
4. How does this passage encourage us to embrace freedom and joy in our faith?
5. What specific ways can you live more intentionally by the Spirit this Advent and Christmas season?

### Weekly Action

This week, make time to celebrate Christ's invitation to live a new life. Attend one of our special services and invite someone to join you:

- **Blue Christmas Service** (12/21, 7:00 pm): A reflective and healing time for those seeking peace this season.
- **Christmas Eve Services** (12/24):
  - *5:00 pm Family Candlelight Service*: Celebrate with scripture, song, and an unrehearsed children's tableau. We'll conclude with carols and candles.
  - *7:00 pm Traditional Candlelight Service*: A service for all ages with music, scripture, an inspiring message, and a carol and candlelit conclusion.

As we proclaim the birth of the Christ child, let these moments remind us of the joy and purpose found in living by the Spirit—and let us invite others to experience this love and belonging.

### Prayer

Spirit of freedom and joy, thank you for inviting us into a new way of living and calling us to be part of a church family. Help us to embrace the freedom you offer, leaving behind fear and stepping fully into joy and purpose. Guide us to live by the Spirit, sharing your love and hope with all we meet. We pray in the name of Jesus, who transforms our lives and invites us to walk with him. Amen.

*Disclosure: This Sermon Note was created by LJUMC staff with the support of AI tools.*