

**Christmas at the Movies**  
***The Santa Clause***  
**December 19, 2021**

Today we're closing out our *Christmas at the Movies* series with *The Santa Clause* ... a smash hit which came out in 1994 and has become a true "Christmas classic."

I'm curious – how many of you have seen it?

One of the really good things about this movie is that while it *does* have a *few* tender moments, it's not nearly as emotional as the first two movies in our series.

I say that's good because, frankly, a lot of you were *crying* during my message the past two Sundays, and I know that made you really uncomfortable.

Not that *I* was ever crying or uncomfortable.

Anyway ... I'm really excited about what we're going to discover today because one of the great misconceptions concerning Christ and Christianity is that, if you want to be part of the movement that Jesus started (otherwise known as "the church") you first have to "clean up your act."

Or, to put it another way, Jesus and Christianity and the church are only for those who are perfect people; those who already have it all together and have it all figured out ...

## **A New Identity**

... which certainly does *not* describe the main character of *The Santa Clause*.

- He's experiencing a great deal of success in his career as an executive at a toy-making company.

- He's making a lot of money and he's held in high regard by the people with whom he works.

But his success *there* has cost him everywhere else.

- His marriage has ended in divorce.
- His son, Charlie, is living with his ex-wife, Laura, and her new husband, Neil – a psychiatrist who Scott despises.
- And Scott constantly lies and makes excuses for his failures to be a good father and husband.

He's a sharp guy and a funny guy but he's really not a *good* guy ... a truth which is not lost on Charlie.

It's Christmas Eve and Charlie is supposed to spend the night with Scott. Watch what happens when Laura drops him off.

### **Video Clip**

This is a kid who has figured out that his dad isn't all that interested in being with him. So, he reciprocates the feeling: "do I gotta' stay?"

But things are about to change between them and dramatically so.

Later that night after Scott and Charlie had just settled down for "a long winter's nap" ...

Up on the housetop  
There arose such a clatter  
They sprang from their beds  
To see what was the matter.

Down the stairs Scott flew like a flash  
Tore open the door ...

And here's what happened.

### **Video Clip**

And Scott *does* put on the suit. And the reindeer *do* know what to do.

... which is to fly him – and Charlie – all over the world in one night, magically delivering toys to children everywhere – just like Santa would do.

And when that task is finished, the reindeer and the sleigh – along with Scott and Charlie – arrive back at the North Pole where Scott is informed by head elf Bernard that *he* is now the *new* Santa Claus.

Check it out.

### **Video Clip**

Because he chose to put on the suit, all rights to

any previous identity are waived. Scott Calvin now has a new one.

He *is*, in every sense of the name, *Santa Claus*.

-----

And this is where the movie becomes so interesting (at least to me) from a spiritual point of view ...

... because what has happened to Scott is remarkably similar to what happens to any of us the moment we become a “Christian.”

And let’s be clear about that.

There *is a moment* when you become a Christian. I’m not sure everyone understands that.

- You’re not a Christian because you believe in God or a Higher Power.

- You're not a Christian because your parents had you baptized or took you to Sunday School when you were a kid.
- You're not a Christian because you go to church, or you read the Bible, or listen to worship music.

You become a Christian the moment you understand ...

- Who Jesus is – that He is God in the flesh, the true King of our world
- And what He has accomplished through His death on the Cross and in His resurrection – which is to provide forgiveness for *all* sin past, present and future ...

You become a Christian the moment you

understand who Jesus is, what He has done ...  
AND – and this is a very important “and” ...

... you *personally* say “yes” to Him, meaning that you decide to put yourself under His authority as *your* King and trust in Him as *your* savior.

**You say to Him something like ...**

- “Jesus, I believe you died and rose again to atone for my sin, and I receive you as my savior.”
- “I believe you are the King and I want to live as a loyal subject of your Kingdom. Please help me to do that.”

When you make *that* decision and *that* kind of declaration, *that* is the moment you become a Christian.

And, at that moment, something incredible happens to you that is remarkably similar to



what has happened to Scott Calvin at this point in the story.

**The Apostle Paul puts it this way.**

*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away – what is new has come!  
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NET)*

The moment you become a Christian you are “in Christ.” And you are a new creation. You’re not the same person you used to be. You have a new identity.

In fact, the language Paul repeatedly uses in many of his letters to describe this change of identity is, again, remarkably similar to what happens in this movie.

**For example, to the Colossian Christians he wrote:**

*You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put*

*on the new self that which is  
being renewed in knowledge in  
the image of its Creator.*

*Colossians 3:9 (NIV)*

In other words, in becoming a Christian you've "put on the suit" of a new identity in Christ, which is amazing.

But something even more amazing happens. This new identity, Paul says, is being "renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

That's pretty dense language but what it means is this: it means that our new identity of "Susan in Christ" or "Bob in Christ" or "Rick in Christ" begins to grow *so that*, eventually, we look more and more like Jesus – the One who created it our new identity.

We look more and more like Him in our character – in our attitudes, in our relationships, in our finances, our priorities ... in everything

we are and do.

And the movie illustrates this idea so well.

After Scott is informed that he is, in fact, the new Santa, Bernard also tells him that he has 11 months to go back home and get his affairs in order ...

... because he will need to be back at the North Pole by the next Thanksgiving to assume his Santa duties.

And the rest of the story is what happens during that period time; specifically, how Scott's new identity grows and literally begins to take over his everyday life.

Check it out.

### **Video Clip**

We'll come back to *why* he's in trouble in just a

bit but one more thing I want to point out before we move on.

Scott has done nothing to obtain his new identity.

- He didn't arrange for Santa to be on his roof at just the right time.
- He didn't have to prove he was "worthy" of being Santa.

Instead, the opportunity literally dropped into his life without any effort on his part. All he did was read the card and then take the step of faith of putting on the suit.

Furthermore, and not to be morbid, for Scott to have this new life, someone had to die – in this case, the old Santa.

Same thing is true in Christianity. You and I

don't do a thing to merit a new life.

Instead, Jesus died on the cross in our place so that we can have it simply by taking the step of faith of receiving Him as our Savior and our King – putting on the suit, so to speak.

**This is what Paul is describing when he writes:**

*You have been saved by grace through believing.*

*You did not save yourselves; it was a gift from God. It was not the result of your own efforts [trying to clean up your act], so you cannot brag about it. God has made us what we are.*

*Ephesians 2:8-10 (NCV)*

And the phrase translated “what we are” in the original Greek language is often used in describing an artist’s masterpiece or the handiwork of a tradesman.

It means that God will use every tool at His disposal to shape us and form us so that our new identity in Christ begins to displace the old.

## **Three Challenges**

Of course, that kind of artistry takes time which means that, even as the new identity begins to take shape, the “old self” is still very present and active.

And this, too, is so well-illustrated in this movie.

The minute Scott Calvin puts on the suit on that very first Christmas Eve, he *is* fully Santa – legally so (according to the “clause”) and even biologically so (as we’ve seen).

However, the *old* Scott is still very much in him ... which is obvious as he makes his rounds on that first Christmas Eve.

Check it out.

## **Video Clip**

Talk about a snarky Santa!

Even though all the attributes and abilities of Santa are fully present in him as soon as he put on the suit, Scott's old nature is clearly in control ...

... which is what sometimes happens in the life of a Christian. Sometimes our "old self" is in control, and we don't act anything like Jesus.

However – and this is critical to understand – *who we are* in Christ doesn't change. Our *new* identity doesn't go away just because we sin.

That's why it's normal for Christians to struggle at times to do the *right* thing and to *keep from* doing the *wrong* thing.

**Paul puts it like this:**

*I want to do what is right, but I can't.*

*I want to do what is good, but I don't.*

*I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.*

**SLIDE:**

*But if I do what I don't want to do, I [meaning my new identity in Jesus] am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me [my old identity] that does it.*

*Romans 7:18-20*

*(NLT)*

There's a battle and sometimes you win, sometimes you lose.

That's just one of the challenges of being a



Christian.

So don't freak out when it happens!

Just confess your failure to God and anyone you've hurt by your sin and then rejoice in the fact that you have already been forgiven of all your sin – past, present and future.

**Or as Paul so wonderfully reminds us:**

*There is now no condemnation  
for those who are in Christ Jesus.  
Romans 8:1 (NIV)*

... for those who have “put on the suit.”

-----

Now, before we move on to why Scott is in “big trouble,” I want to show you one more scene because it illustrates so well another challenge all Christians face at some point.

- Scott is still at the North Pole having completed his first night of delivering toys.
- It's been made clear to him that he really *is* Santa.
- And he's ready to settle down for the night *but something else is bothering him.*

Let's watch.

### **Video Clip**

Even though Scott *sees* Santa's Village; even though Scott has actually *experienced* being Santa for a night, he still has doubts.

And that's part of being a Christian, too.

- Even though we remember the moment we said "yes" to Jesus ...

- Even though we've experienced incredible blessings and answers to prayer ...
- Even though our life is better because knowing Jesus has made us better at life ...

... there are still times when we doubt that it's all real.

We wonder things like ...

- Did Jesus of Nazareth even exist?
- Did He really rise from the dead?
- If God is good, why do so many bad things happen in this world?

Add to that the fact that being a Christian doesn't mean your life is going to be easy and without pain. You don't get a "get out of trials

and tribulations free” card just because you believe in Jesus!

- Everyone suffers in some way.
- Everyone has to walk through the valley of the shadow of death.
- Everyone’s faith is challenged at some point.

And when those things happen, it’s natural to doubt. It’s just one of the challenges we face.

It’s one of the reasons why at least once a year I do a series on those kinds of things.

Doubt is normal and doubters are welcome.

So don’t freak out when it happens to you.

-----

OK, now let's talk about Scott's "big trouble."

Scott realizes that more he *looks* like Santa, the harder it's going to be to go back to his former life. He's just too different and, quite frankly, too strange ...

... which is going to have an impact on his relationship with Charlie.

One day while watching Charlie's soccer game, it's obvious to everyone around him that Scott is "special." As we'll see, to some that's a very good thing. To others, not so much.

Check it out.

### **Video Clip**

The kids see *Santa* in Scott. More importantly *Charlie* sees Santa in Scott.

But Laura and Neil can only see *danger* in Scott. And, eventually, they take him to court where a judge suspends Scott's visitation rights.

Scott's new identity – putting on the suit – is costing him dearly.

Jesus said the same thing would sometimes happen to those who believe in and follow Him.

### **Slide**

*“Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you.”*      *John*  
*15:20 (NLT)*

If you're a Christian, the more you look like Jesus and less like your old self and the rest of the world, the harder it will be to go back to your former life.

... because some of the people you've been running with are simply going to be uncomfortable with how you're changing and who you're becoming and they're going to shut you out – or worse.

Of course, *knowing* that Jesus said that rejection and persecution might happen doesn't make it any easier when it does. But it does reassure us that it's normal and even to be expected.

More importantly, it confirms that the transformation from old to new truly is taking place.

**So, at this point, Scott has had to face three challenges to his new identity as Santa.**

- The battle between his old nature and his new one.
- Doubting the reality of what he has seen and experienced

- Rejection and injustice because of his new identity

... which, again, are three of the biggest challenges that Christians often face.

## **Who You Are**

But, for Scott, it's now Thanksgiving and his 11 months to get his life in order are up.

However, it's been such a struggle that he's ...

- Just about to conclude that he must be crazy ...
- And just about to give up ...

... when encouragement comes from an unlikely source.



Let's watch.

## **Video Clip**

Charlie knows who his dad really is and he reminds him – *strongly*.

And, if you're a Christian, you need (and I need) that same kind of reminder, too.

A lot.

You need people ...

- Who encourage you not to give up when you lose the battle with your old nature.
- Who encourage you to keep believing in spite of your doubts.
- Who encourage you it's worth it to follow Jesus when the people around you reject you.

That's why the New Testament is filled with exhortations for Christians to meet together regularly.

If you're a Christian, you need to be connected with other Christians who remind you who you are in Christ, who help you remember that God is doing a work of transformation in you.

This is why we are always pushing anyone new to NHCC to go to our Orientation Class as your very FIRST step.

If you're new, you need to be connected. But before you're connected, you gotta' know what you're connecting to.

It's also why we encourage everyone who is part of NHCC to be in a small group.

And we know it's sometimes hard to find a group which is why we started Pivot, which is a

short-term group that is always open to anyone.

And both of those are scheduled to run again in January. Details are in the program and on our app.

-----

Anyway ... following Charlie's exhortation, Scott *does* remember who he is. He returns to the North Pole to prepare for Christmas.

And when he comes back on Christmas Eve, it's apparent that he truly is a different man.

Watch what happens when Charlie ask to go with him on his worldwide journey.

### **Video Clip**

Scott *really is* Santa Claus and not just legally or biologically.

In nature and in character, he has become more

Santa than Scott. He's not perfect and he will still have his struggles, but his new identity is shining through for all to see.

And if you're a Christian, that's God's end game for you. You'll still have your struggles, and you won't be perfect, but there will be no doubt that you're a new person.

**As John Newton, the author of "Amazing Grace," once put it:**

I am not what I ought to be  
I am not what I want to be  
I am not what I hope to be in another  
world;

But *still* I am not what I once used to be.  
By the grace of God I am what I am."<sup>i</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Now, I've spent almost all my time today

speaking to those who are Christians. And, if you are a Christian, I hope this has been helpful to you in some way.

But I know that we have more than a few folks who join us every week here on campus or online who are not Christians.

For you, I hope this movie and this message has illustrated what I said at the beginning of this message:

*That one of the great misconceptions about Christianity is that to join up – to be part of the movement that Jesus started – you first have to clean up your act.*

The truth is exactly the opposite.

The truth is ...

- Like a Santa suit that just happened to show up in Scott Calvin's front yard, God is

already showing up in your life. That's why you're here or watching online. He is drawing you to himself *just as you are*.

- And just like Scott was not exactly the guy anyone would choose to become Santa, God is willing *to take you* just as you are not as you should be (which is a good thing because you'll never be as you should be).
- And God is inviting you to put on the suit: to say "yes" to Jesus and receive Him as your King and your savior.
- And he will give you a new identity. He will make you into a new creation.
- And eventually, He will begin to change you as you cooperate with Him.

That's the truth. That's how it works.

Whoever you are right now, whatever you're like, you can become the best possible version of yourself – the person you were meant to be – as you trust in Jesus and follow Jesus.

And after the first of the year, I'm going to do a series called *Made for More – becoming the person you were meant to be ...*

... and I'm going to go into a lot more detail on how that works and how North Heartland can help you.

But, for today, I want to give you the opportunity to have that moment I talked about before: the moment where you cross the line of faith.

So, let's pray together. And as I say these words, you say them to God.

- “Jesus, I believe you died and rose again to atone for my sin, and I receive you as my

savior.”

- “I believe you are the King and I want to live as a loyal subject of your Kingdom. Please help me to do that.”

Amen.

## **Christmas Blessing**

I hope you’ve enjoyed this year’s edition of *Christmas at the Movies*. Maybe we’ll do it again next year.

But as we close out this morning, I want to shift our focus just a little bit.

Christmas is right on top of us – less than a week away – and, for a lot of us, it’s about to get really crazy.

So, when we planned this service, I felt like we



needed to have a moment of reflection; a moment where we simply blessed everyone's experience of Christmas and this upcoming week.

So, I asked Hannah if she would sing one of my favorite Christmas songs to do that.

So, I'm going to stand down for a few minutes so she can do that. And then I'll come back for a closing comment.

Friends, it is my sincere desire that you will have a merry Christmas this week, whether it's little or big.

And I also want to commend you for helping a whole lot of other people to have a merry Christmas.

Since we set up the giving tree on the weekend before Thanksgiving ...

**You all have provided over 1,000 Christmas gifts ...**

... that will be distributed this week to needy families in our church as well as families and children recommended by our community partners.

That's pretty amazing. So, thank you!

In addition, you have made it possible for us to meet needs that are more substantial than Christmas presents.

This week we received some thank you notes from people who were on the receiving end of our Hopeful Blessing – money we collect for the purpose of helping people pay medical bills, rent, utilities and debt.

One person wrote:

This hope fund gift is such a gift for us as

we need it so very much at this time.

At the close of this past week, we are at the bottom of our extra funds that have been holding us for the past three months.

We didn't know how we were going to get through to the end of this month and cover these bills. You (actually God) came through for us just as we needed it.

Another wrote:

I was a little skeptical when I received your letter in the mail ... but I reached out to my boss, and he confirmed that he did share our situation with his church.

My wife has had a series of medical issues and it has been a challenge. I do my best to juggle work with home, but I can't do both fulltime.

As you can imagine, this letter of help from your church has come at a very good time. We are truly grateful for your help this Holiday season.

Now, last Sunday Andrew mentioned that we've given away close to \$13K from our HOPE Fund for this purpose ...

... and we're probably going to give away more soon, as January through March is when we typically receive the most requests for help.

Up to this point, we have collectively given a little over \$9K towards replenishing the HOPE FUND - which is awesome.

But if you'd like to help us fully restock, you can do that by going to the giving tab on our home page or our app and selecting HOPE Fund from the dropdown list.

Many years ago, our family decided that we

were going to give a percentage of our annual Christmas spending to this effort and I hope you'll consider doing the same – especially if you are a Christian.

-----

Ok, that's all for today. I hope to see you at one of our Christmas Eve services on Friday and again for regular services next Sunday.

---

<sup>i</sup> [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/John\\_Newton](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/John_Newton)