

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS by Pastor Sharon

I'm sure many listening today have heard the name Charles Schulz.

Charles Schulz was widely applauded/known for a long list of achievements....

He was the creator of "Peanuts" comic strip. He was a "Pulitzer Prize" nominee, and his comics earned him an "Emmy", "Peabody" and "Congressional Gold Medal"

21 Years after his death in 2000, Schulz is still the third top-earning deceased celebrity, trailing only Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson. He even changed the way people talk, inserting phrases like "Good grief!" and "security blanket" into the national vocabulary.

BUT SCHULZ also revolutionized/changed his industry by using his comic strip to subtly raise religious questions about the Bible, prayer, the nature of God, and the end of the world

Schulz was a devout Christian...

Unshell the "Peanuts" and you'll find the fingerprints of his faith. By mixing Snoopy with his faith he made his readers laugh while inviting them into a depth of conversation uncommon to the funny pages.

In 1965, Charles Schulz, creator of Peanuts comic strip, was asked to create a Christmas special for CBS featuring the Peanuts characters.

He agreed with one requirement,

that they allow him to include the "true meaning of Christmas" which of course is the birth of Jesus.

Although the stations executives were hesitant and tried to convince him otherwise, Schulz was insistent. As a result, for over 50 plus years, millions of people, families, children, have watched a "CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS" and heard the story of Jesus and "what Christmas is all about.

Linus reads the story of Jesus's birth directly from King James Bible's in the Gospel of Luke (at that time, less than 9% of Christmas episodes and specials contained religious/Christian references.

Schulz became a Christian shortly after returning from a deployment in World War II, and the experience sparked a love inside of him for a love for the Scriptures. He became hungry and gobbled up the theological commentaries and in the margins of his personal Bible were filled with hand written notes. He was a long time Sunday School teacher at churches in the Midwest and California, even leading a group through a study of the entire Old Testament.

Sometimes the Bible references were clearly cited, while other times they were cryptic, more hidden.

When Linus asks Snoopy ,

“Does it bother you the Bible doesn’t speak very highly of dogs?”
The beagle replies with a reference to one of Jesus teachings,
“Sure it bothers me, but I just turn the other muzzle”

In a famous strip from 1959, Linus built a sandcastle that the rain washed away,

Linus concludes, “There’s a lesson to be learned here, But I don’t know what it is...” but many recognized the reference to Jesus’s parable about a man who built his house on sand in Matthew 7, and Schulz later said that this was exactly what he intended.

Schulz’s willingness to include his faith in his work cut against the grain of his era. As Schulz said in 1966

“Just the mere fact of quoting from the Bible, of course, for a long while was forbidden in comic strips because somehow they just didn’t want you to go near these areas..”

But according to Stephen Lind, author of
“A Charlie Brown Religion: Exploring the Spiritual Life and Work of Charles M. Schulz”...

“The cartoonist bravery, opened the floodgates” and other cartoonists soon picked up their pen to share spiritual thoughts as well”

When he had Linus ask,

“Do you ever pray, Lucy?” Schulz was nudging readers to reflect on their own prayer habits. (Schulz wrote 40 different comic strips that addressed prayer) When Charlie Brown confesses to Lucy, “Sometimes I wonder if God is pleased with me” Schulz was tapping into a common stirring among many to live a “Good life”... to examine themselves before a perfect loving God.

This next section is borrowed from Charlene M. Speer & “Christian Life Ministry”...

“It wasn’t until a few years back that I realized a “Hidden message” in the film “A Charlie Brown Christmas that Linus, a child who seems to have some insecurities as he carries a “security blanket” with him at all times...In Fact, Linus NEVER drops his blanket except ONCE!!

While sharing the message of “what Christmas is all about”
Linus drops his blanket at the exact moment he says the words, “FEAR NOT!”

In this seemingly innocent moment, Linus delivers a powerful reminder of the true meaning of Christmas. We are to “fear not”, for Jesus is born. We needn’t rely on material things for security, we have God with us.

“Immanuel” (Matthew 1:23), Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour..
The true meaning of Christmas...

A while back, someone informed her, indignantly so, that Linus picks up his blanket at the end of his speech... so maybe her interpretation must be wrong. Well the person was right, Linus does pick up his blanket at the end of his speech...However, he drops” it again later.

Amid big, bright, colorful, shiny artificial trees, Charlie Brown chose the least of these, a little, wooden tree with just a few branches. Shortly thereafter, Linus uses his blanket to wrap around the base of the tree and says

“Maybe it just needs a little love”

In that moment, the tree “awakens”, stands tall and firm. A reminder that no matter who we are, how many mistakes we’ve made, a “Little Love” can make all the difference.”

END OF QUOTE

“Little things we say and do in Christ’s name are like pebbles thrown into water... The ripples spread out in circles, and influence people we may know only slightly and sometimes not at all”

-Quote from Schulz

Let us strive to “fear not” (Luke 2:10) and “Love another” (John 13:34), not just at Christmas time but the whole year through!!! WOW can you imagine how different the world would be living this way.

John 3:16 says:

“For God so loved the World that He gave His One and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

What will you remember this Christmas? Once the presents are opened, we’ve filled our tummies with all kinds of delicious food and goodies... and long after the tree and decorations are put away... what will stand out in your mind...What is the greatest gift you received... Have you received the gift that Jesus came to give on the first Christmas so very long ago??

May you experience the peace, joy and love of the True Meaning of Christmas

After Service Song: Joy to the World

