

1. (This morning our focus is going to be a on a conversion story—a Christmas conversion story and one, I am sure, that you are quite familiar with. It is about a dastardly sort of fellow; one who had little joy—who even sought to extinguish the joy of others. He was a mean one and his story is well known to us as) How the Grinch Stole Christmas (He did his best to steal the joy and spirit of Christmas yet something happened to him along the way that changed everything. Maybe it is better if we let Dr. Seuss along with a little help from a friend (**Philip come on the stage**) tell the story.
2. **Me:** Every who down in Who-ville, the tall and the small was singing! He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming! It came! Somehow or other, it came just the same! And the Grinch, with his Grinch-like feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling: **Philip:** How could this be so? It came without ribbons! It came without tags! It came without packages, boxes or bags! **Me:** And he puzzled three hours, till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before! **Philip:** Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas—perhaps—means a little bit more!
3. A Little Bit More (Here is the where Dr. Seuss takes a step toward theology and what makes the Grinch story resonate still. Christmastime brings much with it—hustle and bustle of gift-buying; travel; decorations; celebrations; family and friends. It also brings with it desperation, loneliness, financial burdens, and often a superficial focus on the baby Jesus. We rush around trying to take it all in and then it goes away until next year. Maybe that is what the Grinch really was protesting. But as he discovered—once you get past all of that—the meaning of Christmas is a little bit more.)
4. The Spirit of Christmas is Christ (not in the sometimes cliché mean of “Jesus is the reason for the season” but in the very real little bit more part. At the very core of all the tradition—including the birthdate—that has built upon around this holiday—the real blessing is found in Christ. Beyond the gifts what people are really seeking—even if they do not realize it—is his peace and goodwill; the spirit of charity and benevolence; the joy of heaven embodied in that baby in a manger. This is how Christmas comes with ribbons and tags. Here are three short takeaways from the story of the Grinch.)
  - a. Discover freedom from the tyranny of things—Matthew 6:19-21
  - b. Learn how to discern what is of most importance—Matthew 6:33
  - c. Realize even the hardest hearts can change—
5. (Here is what it really is all about—why there was a manger—and why the spirit of Christmas still connects) “She shall give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”—Matthew 1:21 (without that—nothing else really matters)