

SCROOGE Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!

FRED Oh, uncle, really. There are lots of things that I'm sure have done me - good, as you call it, without me making a penny from them, Christmas among the rest.

There is agreement with what he says, and other moments of agreement as he goes on.

But, surely, Christmas - well, Christmas is different.....

SCROOGE Different?

FRED Yes. I've always thought of Christmas as a good time.

SCROOGE A good time!

FRED Yes, a good time. Oh, I know what you're thinking - you're thinking I mean a - a lazy, good-for-nothing time. But I don't mean that. I mean a good time - a time when you, when you feel good, when you make an effort, a real effort, to be pleasant and kind - and forgiving - and charitable. No uncle, you listen to me. It's the one time in the year when you open up - open up your heart; and - and you notice other people; doesn't matter what they're like - you realise they're alive, they're flesh and blood, they love and hate, and sing and laugh, and cry and suffer - yes, uncle, suffer. Just on this one day a year - one day - that's all, just one day, we have a thought for them as well as ourselves. And that's what Christmas means to me, uncle - just that. It may never have put a penny in my pocket, but I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good - and I say God bless it.

Stop

There is a moment's silence - then BOB CRATCHIT, who has been listening in the background, comes forward a little clapping. SCROOGE turns to him.

SCROOGE Let me hear another sound out of you, and you'll keep Christmas by losing your job. (To Fred.) You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into parliament.

FRED Uncle, don't be angry. Come, dine with us tomorrow. Come and spend Christmas with me and my wife and

SCROOGE I'll see you in hell first.