



Making Mankind Our Business



“The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel.” When the ghost, Jacob Marley, came to Ebenezer Scrooge, the ghost labored with the long chain. “‘I wear the chain I forged in life,’ replied the Ghost. ‘I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it.’” As the ghost laments his life of misguided focus, Scrooge falters, “But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.” “‘Business!’ cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. ‘Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!’” While he lived, Jacob Marley, from Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, attended to the “dealings of [his] trade.” He failed at loving mankind. As a ghost, his misery was he “sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever.”

As we celebrate God coming among us, we are called to love one another—to make our business mankind. During this season we celebrate the greatest expression of love: God sending his son into the world that we might live through him. By asking his son to become flesh and walk this earth, God blots out our transgressions for his own sake. The Apostle John tells us that this expression—this beautiful act of redemption—calls for a response: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

In our daily work at Pepperdine, we often see what Henri Nouwen calls the “simple exchanges of love” exhibited in “fleeting moments of peace, kindness, friendship, and compassion.” We affirm our love for one another in deep, countless, and meaningful ways. We recognize the value and dignity of each individual. We love and care for our students; we concern ourselves with their well-being. We care for our colleagues not only as employees, but as people. We unite as an institution to serve those in need and marginalized across the globe. We pray for one another. We rejoice with one another. We mourn with one another. And, we forgive one another. After his ghostly encounters, it was always said of Ebenezer Scrooge that “he knew how to keep Christmas well.” I believe the same may be truly said of us. May God bless you this season.

Phil E. Phillips
Vice President for Administration