

Christ our Treasure

Christmas Morning '09

2 Cor 8:9: For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

And we are going to take that verse in 3 parts.

The Grace of Jesus Christ

When a toddler first learns to walk, they have to take the first step. Well, the first step in really understanding the miracle of Christmas is to understand the grace of Jesus Christ in making himself poor for us.

And sometimes we struggle to understand what grace is. We struggle to get it straight in our brains. So we're going to try and do that this morning. So, these 4 words are all jumbled up. Only one of them spells grace. Take a good look and then put your hand when you think you know which one it is.

But being able to spell grace isn't the same as knowing what grace is. Knowing there is such a word as grace doesn't mean we know what that word means, or know the power of God's grace in your heart. So what does grace mean? What is grace? We have three dictionary definitions here but only one of them is the right one. Only one of them tells us what grace is.

So grace is the undeserved, unearned, unmerited favour of God. It is God treating us way better than we deserve.

When John wrote the opening chapter of His gospel, that tells us about Jesus Christ, he says that Jesus 'was full of grace.' Jesus Christ was full of this attitude, this desire, this intention to pour the favour and the blessing of God on those who don't deserve it, but who will simply receive it by faith. He was full of this willingness to be gracious towards people like us and not treat us as our sins deserve.

And Jesus showed that grace to us that first Christmas when despite the fact that he was the eternal Son of God he came into our world and was born as a baby.

Though He was rich, He became poor

In what ways was Jesus, the eternal Son of God rich? What does it mean that when Jesus was in heaven, before he was born as a baby, He was rich? Does it mean that He had more money in his bank account than Bill Gates, the richest man in the world? No. But it does mean that everything in the world, including your and my and Bill Gates' bank accounts belong to Him. Does it mean that He lived in a big, fancy house? No. But it does mean that the heavens themselves, the whole universe, cannot contain him. Does it mean that He was as powerful as President Obama. No. But it does mean that He is all powerful, and every other little power comes from Him. Does it mean that He had lots of famous film star friends. No. But it does mean that for all eternity past He enjoyed a relationship of love with God the Father. God the Father cherishing the Son, God the Son loving the Father for all eternity.

So Jesus was rich. Not because of money, or houses, or friends or political power. But because He was the eternal son of God, because the whole universe and everything in it is His, because he is the all-powerful, omnipotent God, and because God the Father loved Him. He was rich beyond all splendour the Christmas carol says.

But it was because he was full of grace and wanted to pour his favour into our lives that He became poor for our sake.

Now does anybody know who this lady is? It wouldn't be Christmas day without her majesty. For the Americans this should be your head of state. Now here are two houses. Which of these houses is the Queen's? This modest little pile in central London, or this rather imposing apartment? Which will she choose?

Now whilst you wouldn't expect to find a queen in an apartment, Jesus Christ, the eternal king, who was rich beyond all splendour, went even lower. And He came as a baby. The eternal Son of God, he who created the heavens and the earth, who sustains the universe by the word of his power, whom the highest heavens cannot contain, became a human baby, growing in a young girl's womb. What was impossible for us to do with the toilet rolls, trying to fit something big into something small, God does in sending his son as a baby. That is what it means for Jesus to become poor.

God born as a human, born in a stable, with a feeding trough as a cot. As he grew up he became a carpenter, a manual labourer. In his life he had no place to lay his head. In his death just the clothes he wore. He died the death of a criminal, crucified on a Roman cross, taking our place, and His dead body was laid in a borrowed tomb. He who was rich beyond all splendour, became poor for us.

And the grace of Jesus Christ is that He did all this for us. He left the glory and the riches of heaven to come as a saviour, to seek us out, to die in our place. So that we, through His poverty might become rich.

So that you might become rich

Now when Paul says that Christ became poor that we might become rich what does he mean? Does he mean it's going to be Christmas everyday? A Christmas stocking or presents under the tree, every day of the year?

No, he's talking about the riches of grace. The riches of having our sins forgiven, the riches of being redeemed from our past lives, the riches of being rescued from the wrath of God that we deserve. But it's more than just that. It is more than what we have been delivered from. It is what we have been delivered to. You see, the riches of Christ are Christ himself. He is the treasure. That's why Paul can talk about 'the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my lord' (Philippians 3:8). Nothing comes close in value to Christ, his worth surpasses them all. He is the treasure hid in the field that when the man stumbles across it in his joy he sells everything to buy that field, to possess that treasure. And out of his sheer grace, the Eternal Son of God was born as a baby, born into poverty and grew up as a man, died in our place, that we might come to know and treasure Him all our lives.

Today you are likely to receive gifts from friends and family that express their love for you. And that is wonderful. If you're not yet a Christian I want to encourage you this morning to receive the greatest gift: the gift of a Father who loves you: the gift of Jesus Christ, the greatest treasure. And for all of us, enjoy this Christmas day, and above everything else, treasure Christ, who has made you rich by his coming.