

He Came! – The Rich Becomes Poor, the Poor Become Rich

2 Corinthians 8:9

Reading: Luke 2:1-7

Bethany Baptist Church (a.m. service)

December 15, 2019

December 16, 2012

...pray...

In late **54 A.D.** the church in **Corinthian** had determined to *lead the way* in giving to a *famine relief offering* for the saints in **Judea**. But there were some *challenges*:

- Corinth was a long ways (*as the crow flies*) from Palestine!
- And the Corinthian Christians (*Gentiles*) were a long ways (*culturally*) from the poor, *once Jewish*, believers in Judea...

Well, **FF** into the *middle* of **2 Corinthians**...*twelve months had passed*, & their gift was still **nothing** *more* than a *good intention*.

Let's catch-up w/ the **Apostle Paul** as he tries to *resuscitate* the Corinthians' *generosity*...

Read 2 Cor 8:1-11 (focus is on v.9).

...He became poor...you...become rich...

So is this a **giving** message, or a **Christmas** message?

Beloved, it's *both*! Christ is the *Giver*...and the *Gift*!

So let's consider...

Four questions that evaluate the wealth & poverty of Jesus' coming.

- 1. What did it mean for Christ to be rich?**
- 2. What did it mean for Christ to become poor?**
- 3. What does it mean for you to be poor?**
- 4. What could it mean for you to become rich?**

Beloved, **don't dawdle** in a world of *spiritual good intentions*, & **don't leave** this place this morning in *spiritual rags*!

Christmas reminds us that Christ came to make you rich!

Our text (9) begins: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich. What did it mean for Christ to be rich?*

1. The Corinthians *knew*. **We** know! Because Christians (by *defn*) know the Gospel, we *know* the wonderful truth that Paul unfolds here (9)! And to start w/, we know that *Jesus' coming* was all about **grace**.
 - a. **Defn:** “Grace” is the undeserved favor that God pours on you, simply because He loves you, and **that** favor from God results in your spiritual life & spiritual vitality (**i.e.** in your spiritual wealth).
 - b. Grace is inseparable from Jesus - The Lord Jesus Christ. When the NT writers use His full title, they want your attention! **Lord** – King (Master) of everything. **Jesus** – man (perfect) & Savior (“You shall call His name...”). **Christ** – promised & anointed One, *Messiah*.
 - c. Jesus is immeasurably gracious, and He was immeasurably **rich!**
2. We **mustn't** let Paul's vocabulary confuse us! *Rich & poor* here are **not** economic indicators! This is **not** a proof-text for the *faith & prosperity heresy*. We are **not** tallying *silver & gold*, and *denarii & dollars* in v.9.
 - a. Certainly, God *created* everything (you), *owns* everything (you!); the *cattle on a thousand hills*. He has *no needs!*
 - b. And as we read in **Psa 50** – *Everything that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all it contains. ...* But that's **not** really *Paul's point...*

3.) But the *bottom line* of Christ's *wealth* is simply this: **He was God.**

3. But the *bottom line* of Christ's *wealth* is simply this: *He was God*. Jesus' *wealth* is understood in His *deity*. *Is* Jesus God? Is *that* what the Bible teaches? Let's *explore* that for just a minute...
- a. **Phil 2:5-6** – *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although **He existed in the form of God**, did not regard **equality w/ God** a thing to be grasped (we'll return here in a few min.)*
 - b. **Col 2:9** – *In Him (Jesus) all the **fullness of the Deity** dwells...*
 - c. **Heb 1:1-3** - *God's Son. Heir of all things. Agency of creation. Exact representation of God. Upholds all things (Sustainer). Who does these things? Only **God!***
 - d. Perhaps the *greatest single indicator* of Jesus' *deity* is that He is *eternal*. To be *eternal* means no one *created* Jesus –He has *always existed*. Think of this: *eternality & deity go hand in hand*. I.e. to be *eternal* is to be *God*.
 - i. **John 1:1** – *In the beginning, was the Word was w/ God, & the Word was God. → The Word already was when the **beginning began**... Then in **v.14** - **And the Word became flesh & dwelt among us**. The *eternal* and *incarnate Word* is God...is *Jesus!**
 - ii. Here's how Jesus *summed it up* for His enemies (**Jn 8**) –
 “*Before Abraham was... **I am.***”
4. Every Christmas we read in **Matt 2** that the **magi** (*wise-men*) filled the streets of *tiny Bethlehem* with an *oriental caravan* laden with **gifts – gold, frankincense, & myrrh**.
- a. But the **magi's wealth** was **nothing** compared with the *glories of heaven!* ...to the *mysteries & privileges & riches* of Christ's Deity.

Our Lord Jesus, eternal in the heavens, was rich!

Then v.9 continues: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor. What did it mean for Christ to become poor?*

1. “*Incarnation*” means “*God becomes man.*” *Incarnation* is the *theology* of Christmas. But not only *theology*, “*Incarnation*” is the ***economy*** of Christmas! *Christmas* is wrapped-up in, “*He became poor.*” Friend, here is the *jewel* of our precious text: *He became poor!*
 - a. Again, *rich* & *poor* are **not** financial terms, but indicators of His *deity* & His ***humanity***. And His *humanity* embraces both His *birth* & His *death*.
 - b. *Christmas* is in Christ’s *poverty*, as His *deity* became veiled in His *humanity*. What did it mean for the *Word* to *become flesh*? What did it *cost* Jesus’ to become a man ...?
 - i. *Incarnation* meant being completely ***dependent***. There were years in *Bethlehem* & *Egypt* & *Nazareth* when the *King of Glory* depended on the *wisdom* & *love* & *hands* of His *young mother Mary* & *carpenter step-father Joseph* to meet His needs.
 - ii. To become *man* meant *hunger...thirst...fatigue...hardship*. **Lk 9:58** – “*The foxes have holes & the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*”
 - iii. It meant being the *target of malicious gossip*. Jesus’ enemies *taunted* Him for what we know is the miraculous *Virgin Conception* (**John 8:41**): “*We were not born of fornication.*”
- c.) But not only did Christ’s *poverty* meant *Christmas*, it also meant *Easter*...

- c. But not only did Christ's *poverty* meant *Christmas*, it also meant *Easter*...
- i. *Betrayal. Mocking. Pain. Beatings. Scourging...Crucifixion – a criminal's death on the cross- in our place, for our sins.*
 - ii. **Turn** w/ me to **Phil 2:5-8**. Jesus *wealth (deity)* is in **v.6**. Our Lord's *poverty (incarnation)* is in **vv.7&8**: *not grasping, emptied Himself, bond-servant, likeness of men, humbled Himself, ... death on a cross.*
- d. Yet Paul's *focus* here is not simply what it meant for the Lord Jesus Christ to *live & die* in His "*Incarnation-poverty.*" The Holy Spirit wants us to adore that *grace-soaked act*, the *moment* of Christ **generously** abandoning His *wealth* and embracing (*stepping into*) the *poverty of frail flesh*.

*What wondrous love is this, O my soul...O my soul?
What wondrous love is this, O my soul...?*

What wondrous love is this, ...

...that caused the Lord of Bliss, to bear the dreadful curse, for my soul...for my soul.

...to bear the dreadful curse, for my soul...!

2. And so, we mustn't *race past* those crucial **three** words in the middle of Paul's inspired text: "*for your sake.*"
- a. It was for *you*, "**for your sake**," that Christ, *being rich, yet became poor.*
 - b. "*For your sake*" points us to our next **two** questions...

What does it mean for *you* to be *poor*?

1. The *reality* of your *spiritual poverty* is only *implied* here in Paul's words, but it is *clearly & necessarily* implied. If you & I were **not** *poor*, then Christ had **no cause** to *leave Heaven* and become *man*.
2. "*Spiritual poverty*" describes your complete lack of *resources* to *pay-off* the just *penalty* levied by the *Judge of All the Earth* against your sins.
3. The Bible teaches our *complete sinfulness (total depravity)* a lot of different ways so that *grace* can be pounded thru our ***thick heads*** & into our ***calloused hearts***; all men & women are...
 - a. ***Overtaken by spiritual darkness*** – *men loved darkness rather than light, for their deeds were evil.*
 - b. ***Sick (Jesus)***–"*It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to all the righteous, but sinners.*"
 - c. ***Slave (2 Tim 2)*** – *you were slaves to Satan....and thus to sin.*
 - d. ***Child of wrath (Eph 2)*** – *we were children of wrath, even as the rest.*
 - e. ***Dead (again, Eph 2)***– *You were dead in your trespasses & sins. You were dead in your transgressions.*
 - f. ***Enemy of God (James 4)*** – *Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*
4. *Tally that all up; the ledger is clear, we are destitute – spiritual impoverished.*
5. The ultimate *outcome* of *spiritual bankruptcy* is eternal *foreclosure* on your *soul*, with no further *opportunity* for *recovery* or *bailout*!

That's what it means for you to be *spiritually poor*! (But fortunately, that's *not all* that this verse means...)

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 through His poverty might become rich. What could it mean for you to become rich?

1. *Have you ever dreamed of being rich?* Did you really think that last *Powerball ticket* would have done it for you!?! ☺ Christian, the Bible promises that Jesus has already made you *rich*!
 - a. *Psa 23:1 – The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want...*
2. **Here** is “*rich*” in God’s *economy*: **all your sins forgiven (2x)**. (PAUSE)
Do you remember what the *angel* said to *troubled Joseph* (Mt 1)? “*She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*”
3. **But wait...there’s more!** Here, in part, are the “*riches*” of God’s Kingdom:
 - a. *New nature* (→ “*born again*”).
 - b. *Reconciled to God - peace*. (No longer *enemies & prodigals*.)
 - c. *Adoption as God’s sons & daughters*.
 - d. *Inheritance* (*co-heirs w/ Christ*).
 - e. *Holy Spirit* (*living in you; never to leave you!*)
 - f. *Fruit of the Spirit* (*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*).
 - g. *Spiritual gifts* (→ *Serve one-another*).
 - h. *Effective prayer* (*boldly approaching God’s throne of grace*).
 - i. **More prayer** (*Jesus interceding for you from the throne of grace*).
 - j. *God’s wisdom* (*God’s word*). (You lack? Just ask!)
 - k. *Power* (*you can do all things that God requires of you through Christ who strengthens you*).
 - l. *Purpose* (→ *to become like Christ; share the Gospel; reach heaven*).
 - m. *Eternal Assurance* (*guarantee*). Jude 24-25.
 - n. **Eternal life**. **Psalm 23:6 – I will dwell; John 3:16 – shall not perish**
4. John MacArthur sums up our text like this: *The central truth of Christianity is that Christ’s voluntary poverty makes the spiritually poor...spiritually rich!*

Beloved, you’ve hit the jackpot! Throw away your Powerball ticket; you are already rich! Christ became poor – you can be rich!

Paul reminded the Corinthian believers of Jesus' *wealth & poverty* to motivate them to *sacrificial good deeds*.

If we don't recognize that before we go, we haven't fully *exegeted* the apostle's words. So I want to make **2 applications** from **v.9**.

1. *First*, how should it *change your life* that Christ became **poor** for your sake?
 - a. The Spirit doesn't intend for this text to **end** w/*warm, Gospel gratitude*. Not even at Christmas! (**Gratitude** is the *start*, not the *end* of Paul's intent!)
 - b. The point is that your *gratitude /joy* should *overflow* into *generosity*. Did you notice **v.11**? *Finish! Desire (fueled by joy in Christ's gifts) → completion* (of generosity towards *one another*).

2. *Second* (fundamentally), how do you **become rich** through *Christ's poverty*?
 - a. If you are **w/o** the Lord Jesus Christ this morning, you are *destitute*.
 - b. Jesus offers you **riches**. →
 - i. See yourself as **bankrupt**. Turn to Christ.
 - ii. See His **poverty** – dying on the *Cross, for you sins, in your place*.
 - iii. You must also trust in His *resurrection* – God raised Jesus on the **3rd** day to prove our sins are fully paid for & eternal life can be ours.
 - iv. What does God ask of you? **Turn** to Jesus, **believe** Him, **follow** Him.

3. Beloved, **don't dawdle** in a world of *spiritual good intentions*, & **don't leave** this place in *spiritual rags*! **He came** to make you *rich*!

Thanks be to God...**He came!** ...*pray*...

87 – Joy to the World!