

The People of Christmas

The Indescribable Gift

2 Corinthians 9:15

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The Indescribable Gift

Scripture

For the next few weeks of advent and Christmas, I plan to share a series of messages on “The People of Christmas.” The substance for this series comes from a book that was authored by the late James Montgomery Boice titled *The Christ of Christmas*.¹

Christmas is a time of exchanging gifts. Most of the gifts that we give each other can easily be described. But, occasionally, we cannot describe the gift we have received. Perhaps it is because we are overcome with emotion so that “words fail us.” Or perhaps it is because we cannot identify the gift (like the toddler who gives a drawing to his parent who has no idea what the drawing represents). Or perhaps we don’t care about the gift given to us so that we don’t even bother describing it. Other people, of course, are usually able to describe what we might not be able to describe.

So, what could possibly make a gift indescribable? Since all our gifts are describable, the only thing that can possibly make a gift indescribable is if it is more than human. It has to have something of God mixed with it. And that is exactly what Paul had in mind when he wrote 2 Corinthians 9:15. He had been thinking of very human gifts: the gift of money that the Corinthians had sent to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. And the subject of giving had turned his attention to the greatest of all possible gifts, and so Paul exclaimed in 2 Corinthians 9:15 (*New International Version*):

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Introduction

A week ago the officers, staff, and their spouses had a

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Christ of Christmas* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009).

Christmas dinner at the Pebble Creek Club. After dinner we played “The Newlywed Game.” That’s the game where you have three couples each guess how well they know their spouses. Well, the men were out of the room, and when they returned, one of the questions put to the husbands was, “What is the most romantic gift you have ever given your wife?” One husband gave the right answer. The second husband got the answer wrong. And the third husband had no idea what the right answer was. Boy! Did he ever turn fire-engine red when his wife said it was a romantic negligee!

I suppose that was for him an “indescribable” gift! Even though he might have thought of the gift, he did not want to say what it was in front of all these people. But, did his wife have the same measure of indescribability? Oh no! She was more than willing to share what was obviously a very meaningful gift to her!

When the apostle Paul speaks about Jesus, he describes him as God’s “indescribable” gift. In what ways is Jesus indescribable?

Lesson

In this lesson I want us to see several ways in which God’s gift of Jesus is beyond description.

I. God’s Gift Is beyond Description Because of the Nature of the Gift Itself

First, God’s gift is beyond description because of the nature of the gift itself.

The gift is Jesus Christ. In order to describe this gift we must be able to describe *fully* who Jesus is and what he has done. And that cannot be done.

Think of *who* Jesus is. Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity. He is fully God. Who can fully understand the nature of God? Of course, no one can. While there is much about God that he has been pleased to reveal to us, there is vastly more about God that we simply do not know because we are finite and he is infinite.

But Jesus is not only fully God, he is also fully man. Even here, we have difficulty describing Jesus. Who can fully understand and explain the Virgin Birth and incarnation of Jesus? Or who can fully explain the two natures of Jesus—his deity and his humanity? Again, God has revealed much to us, but there is so much that we do not understand and cannot describe.

And then, think of *what* Jesus did. Jesus was primarily born to die, in order to provide salvation for his elect by his sacrifice on the cross. Can we adequately explain Jesus' sinless life? Or what took place when the Father forsook the Son? No, we cannot fully explain it. It is indescribable.

And so, God's gift is beyond description because of the nature of the gift itself.

II. God's Gift Is beyond Description Because of the Grace by which It Is Given

Second, God's gift is beyond description because of the grace by which it is given.

The gifts that you and I give usually have nothing to do with grace. We give gifts because the recipients of our gifts have some claim upon us: they are family members, co-workers, or people who gave gifts to us last year. Even when we give gifts to an organization like Angel Tree, we do so because we know that they are less fortunate than we are.

But God's gift to us is completely different. God is God, and we are his creatures. We have sinned against God. We are in rebellion against him. We are his enemies. And yet it was "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Think about it. God was rightly angry with us. We deserved nothing but his wrath and punishment. If God sent every one of us to hell, we would praise him for his righteousness. And yet, God gave us what we did not deserve. He gave us his Son. He gave us new life. He gave us his grace. That is indescribable.

And so, God's gift is beyond description because of the na-

ture of the gift itself. And it is beyond description because of the grace by which it is given.

III. God's Gift Is beyond Description Because of the Effects It Produces

And third, God's gift is beyond description because of the effects it produces.

I don't have time to elaborate on the effects it produces, but I do want to list some of the effects. These effects are:

1. Forgiveness of sins.
2. Justification by faith.
3. Adoption into God's family.
4. Co-heirs with Christ.
5. The indwelling Holy Spirit.
6. A divine peace that transcends all understanding.
7. The fruit of the Spirit
8. A home in heaven.

I could go on. These are just some of the effects that are produced in us because of the gift of God. And they are beyond full description. Even when we get to heaven we will not be able to describe our salvation as fully as possible.

And so, God's gift is beyond description because of the nature of the gift itself. It is beyond description because of the grace by which it is given. And it is beyond description because of the effects it produces.

Conclusion

How shall we respond to God for his indescribable gift to us? Paul tells in 2 Corinthians 9:15. He says, ***"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"***

Thank God for Jesus. Thank God for the nature of the gift. Thank God for the grace by which the gift is given. And thank God for the effects produced by the gift. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributor_profile.asp?ContributorID=11181
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PRAYER:

Our Father in heaven, thank you for the indescribable gift.
Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior.

Thank you for the nature of the gift.

Thank you for the grace by which the gift is given.

And thank you for the effects produced by the gift.

And for all of this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.