**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE**

**CHRISTMAS GENEROSITY**

**2 Corinthians 8:9**

**INTRODUCTION**

There are a lot of things to get excited about when it comes to Christmas, but the part of Christmas people get the most excited about is the presents. I vividly remember the excitement and joy I felt as a child when it was finally time to open presents.

Now that I’m older, what I get excited about is not receiving presents, but giving them. Giving away presents brings me way more joy than getting presents. Even if I didn’t receive a single present this Christmas, I would be completely happy if only I had the chance to give presents to others.

You may be thinking, “What? No presents on Christmas? That would be so sad! I wouldn’t be happy and smiling. I would be sad and crying!” I think at one point in my life, I would have been sad and crying too. But not anymore. Something inside me has changed. God has worked in my heart to love giving way more than receiving.

Do you know what the Bible calls a heart that loves giving more than receiving? It’s called generosity. God wants us to become generous people, people who care more about what they’re giving to others than about what they’re getting from others.

But how do we become generous people? How do we become the kinds of people who get more excited about giving presents at Christmas time than about receiving them? Here’s the answer: Christmas makes us generous people. Christmas not only gives us the chance to be generous to others. Christmas gives us the message we need to *become* generous people.

The Bible tells us a lot about some of the things that the Apostle Paul did. He preached the gospel, he started churches, he trained pastors, and he wrote a bunch of letters that we can read in the Bible. There’s one more thing he did that was very important, but we don’t hear about that often. He raised money for poor Christians in Jerusalem.

Paul wrote about this in 2 Corinthians 8. In that chapter, he’s writing to the Corinthian church, asking them to give generously to their poor brothers and sisters in Christ who lived in Jerusalem. As he does that, Paul tells the Corinthians that he asked the churches in Macedonia to give as well, and we learn that even though the Macedonians were very poor, they gave very generously to the believers in Jerusalem. In fact, they gave joyfully. Why was that? It was because they loved giving way more than they loved receiving. They were generous people.

Now Paul wants the Corinthian church to become generous people as well. How does he do that? He doesn’t just say “work harder at becoming generous”. Instead, he points them to Jesus and what he did for us on the very first Christmas when he came into the world as a baby boy. This is what Paul wrote:

“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.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Do you see the Christmas story in this verse? Jesus Christ was rich in heaven, living with the Father and the Spirit and the holy angels, but when he came into the world as a human being he became poor. That doesn’t mean that he had a lot of money in heaven but not a lot of money on earth. It means that Jesus gave up his divine glory as the Son of God when he took on human flesh. Why did he do that? So that we, through his poverty as a human, might become rich like he is rich when he shares his glory with us in heaven.

This is the key to becoming generous people, and this is what I want to talk to you about today. The more we see the generosity of our Saviour, the more we become generous people.

The title of this message is **Christmas Generosity**. We will spend some time looking at three parts of this one verse from 2 Corinthians:

1. “He was rich…”
2. “…yet for your sake he became poor,…”
3. “…so that you by his poverty might become rich.”

(1) “**HE WAS RICH…”**

What does it mean that Jesus was rich? When we talk about someone being “rich”, we usually mean they have lots of money, so much money that they can buy anything they want. The rich have nice cars, big houses, and fancy clothes. They go on exotic vacations, stay in the most luxurious hotels, and eat the most expensive meals. That’s what the world says true “richness” looks like, and many people devote their entire lives to becoming rich.

That’s not how Jesus was rich. It’s not even close. Money means nothing to Jesus. Everything belongs to Jesus, because he’s God! He made everything, so everything belongs to him. He doesn’t need money to get what he wants. He simply makes what he wants. When we make something, we still need to buy the materials to make it. We need bricks to build houses, and metal to build cars, and bricks and metal cost money. But when Jesus is making something, he doesn’t need to spend a penny, because he doesn’t need blocks and bricks to make things.

Unlike us, Jesus creates everything out of nothing. We need something to create something else, but not Jesus. Jesus doesn’t need anything. In fact, Genesis 1 says that all God needed to do to create the entire universe was to *speak*. “Let there be light!” and there was light. “Let there be plants and trees bearing seeds and fruit!” and the whole world was filled with vegetation. “Let there be fish in the seas!” and the oceans were bursting with life. Jesus creates whatever he wants out of nothing by simply speaking it into existence. So if Jesus ever wanted a fancy car, all he would have to do is say, “Let there be a Lamborghini”, and he would have it. If he ever wanted a big house, he could say, “Let there be a castle on a mountain by a beautiful lake”, and he would have it. Jesus doesn’t need to be rich with money to get what he wants. He simply creates what he wants with his words.

But Jesus doesn’t want the same things that people generally want like fancy cars and big houses. He wants far greater things. He wants light to shine in the darkness. He wants vast galaxies full of stars. He wants a million different species of bugs and huge sea creatures who live deep in the ocean. And he wants people like you and me to know him, and to become more and more like him.

So when the Apostle Paul says that Jesus was “rich”, he’s not talking about money, and he’s not talking about things. Jesus wasn’t rich because he had a lot of stuff. So how was he rich?

Have you ever been outside on a beautiful winter day, when the air is cold and crisp, there’s white, powdery snow on the ground, and the sky is a rich and deep blue? There’s not a cloud to be seen, and the sun is shining high up in the sky at noon. Have you ever noticed that sunlight looks different on days like that? It seems thicker and heavier, almost golden, like you could reach out into the air, grab some of that golden light, and wrap it around yourself. And as this golden light reflects off the white snow and the rich blue sky, the whole world seems to be illuminated in brilliant, golden light.

The beauty of light is meant to remind us of what the Bible calls God’s *glory*. When Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments in Exodus 24, the Bible says,

“[T]he appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.”

The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 5 that when Israel saw God’s glory on the mountain, they were so afraid that they thought they were going to die. The brilliant light of God’s glory was so strong, so powerful, so magnificent, that they actually thought that it would eat them up.

And you know what? It would have eaten them up, if God wanted it to eat them up. God says that “no one may see me and live” (Exodus 33:20; NIV). We know that the light from the sun is so powerful that, even though it travels millions of miles to earth, it can still burn our skin. The closer you get to the sun, the more powerful the sun’s light becomes, until it’s so strong that it makes you completely melt. God’s glory is like the light of the sun, except it’s a thousand times stronger.

So when we picture Jesus in heaven before he became a man, we need to picture him like this, with the very glory of God shining out from him. This is how Jesus was rich. Jesus shone with such glory that countless angels, who are themselves more glorious than anything human beings have ever seen, worship him for his infinite, incomparable glory. It’s a glory that Jesus shares with no one except God the Father and God the Spirit. Together, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – three persons in one God – illuminated heaven with the brilliant light of their divine glory.

(2) **“…YET FOR YOUR SAKE HE BECAME POOR,…”**

Christmas changed all this. When Jesus took on a human body in Mary’s womb, he chose to hide his glory so that he could appear just like you and me. He didn’t look like God any more. He looked like a man, because he became a man. It’s not that he stopped being God. It’s just that he added humanity to himself. He had both a divine nature and a human nature, two natures in one person. But while he was on earth, first as a baby and then later as a grown man, he chose to hide his divine nature and live like an ordinary human being.

This is what the Apostle Paul is talking about in the second part of 2 Corinthians 8:9 when he writes, “Yet for your sake he became poor.” Jesus, who was once rich in the infinite beauty of his divine glory, emptied himself of that glory and became poor, so that he could become one of us.

Jesus lived a human life just like any of us. He spent nine months in his mother’s womb. He passed through her birth canal in order to be born. He nursed at his mother’s breast. He depended on his parents to protect him, clothe him, and shelter him. He had to grow his first teeth. He had to learn how to walk and how to speak. He had to grow up just like any of us.

And when he grew up and became a man, the Bible tells us that Jesus wasn’t a particularly good looking man. In fact, he became the plainest, and most ordinary of men. The prophet Isaiah wrote that the Christ “had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.” (Isaiah 53:2). Can you believe that? The most beautiful being in the universe suddenly had “no beauty that we should desire him.” Jesus gave up all his glorious beauty when he came into the world as a plain, ordinary man.

He was ordinary not just in his appearance, but in every respect. He experienced the same weaknesses and emotions that we experience every day. He grew tired and hungry. He had moments of joy and moments of anger. He was tempted to sin like we are, he fought against the devil’s lies like we do, and he grew in the intimacy of his relationship with God in the same ways we do, by spending time in prayer and by reading and applying his Word. He was like us in every respect, with one exception: he never sinned.

This is why so many people didn’t know who he truly was. In Jesus Christ, God himself walked among us, and we didn’t even know it. The Apostle John wrote,

“He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” (John 1:10-11)

This really is an incredible miracle. The fact that Jesus became poor by becoming an ordinary man is the most wonderful miracle of all. Pastor and author Mark Jones puts it this way,

“The incarnation is God’s greatest wonder, one that no creature could ever have imagined. God himself could not perform a more difficult and glorious work. It has justly been called the miracle of all miracles.” (Knowing Christ, p. 25)

The incarnation is God’s greatest wonder, the miracle of all miracles, but you know what? It wasn’t just a miracle. It was also a gift.

We see that in our verse today, where Paul writes, “*yet for your sake* he became poor.” Jesus didn’t become a man just to see what it was like. He didn’t become poor for his own sake. He became poor for ours.

Everything he experienced as a human being, he experienced for our sake. From the weakness of his body to the rejection he suffered from his own people, all of it was done for us. He veiled his divine glory and appeared as a plain, ordinary man, not so that he could serve himself, but so that he could serve us.

(3) **“…SO THAT YOU BY HIS POVERTY MIGHT BECOME RICH.”**

But how did he come to serve us, and what did he accomplish by serving us? This leads to the third part of our verse: “so that you by his poverty might become rich.”

Jesus became poor so that we might become rich. This is an amazing truth. It doesn’t mean that Jesus wants to give us lots of money. After all, money doesn’t mean anything to him, so why would he give us something that is worthless to him? Jesus became poor to give us something far greater than money and “things”. He came to give us his own glory. When we’re with Jesus in heaven, the Bible tells us that Jesus will share his divine glory with us. Can you believe that? Plain and ordinary human beings like you and me will shine with the same intense and brilliant light that Jesus had even before the world was created. That doesn’t mean that we become gods like he is God. His glory will always be greater than our glory, and our glory will always come from him and not from ourselves. But when we’re in heaven with Jesus, we will shine with the glory of God himself.

But how does Jesus do that? How does his poverty make us rich? He does it by dying on the cross for our sins. This is the most important reason for why Jesus came into the world. It’s the real reason for the season. Our sins were so great, and the judgment we deserved so vast, that only a divine savior could pay our penalty. But how could God die? God can’t die. He is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. Nothing can kill him, because nothing is greater than him. God can’t die. But a man could. So what does God do? He loved us so much that he becomes a man in order to die for our sins, so that poor people like you and me could become truly rich.

All God asks of us is our trust. If we trust in Jesus, believing that we could never be good enough to make ourselves rich, believing that we need Jesus’ death on the cross to save us and bring us back to him, then God promises us that he will take us home to heaven to live with him forever, where we will be truly rich as he makes us more and more like him.

Jesus made himself poor to make the poor rich, but if we don’t trust in him, then we will never be truly rich. We may have money and fancy toys in this lifetime, but once this life has passed, all those things will pass as well, and we will be left with nothing for an eternity in hell, where we will have no joy, no peace, no love, and no God.

But if we put our trust in Jesus, depending on him and not ourselves to save us, change us, and lead us through life, then we’re already rich! God has promised it, and what God promises is as good as done. Nothing can take it away from us.

These are the truths that free us to become truly generous people, because for those who are rich in Christ, our riches aren’t found in our bank accounts. Our riches are waiting for us in heaven. When we don’t know Jesus, we don’t want to give away our money, because that means giving away what makes us rich. Instead of giving it away, we hold onto as much of it as we can, as tightly as we can. But once Christ enters our lives – once we understand and believe the Christmas truth that Jesus became poor for our sake to make us rich – then money doesn’t mean anything to us anymore. It’s still important, and we still need money to care for ourselves and our families, but we don’t hold onto it any more. We give it away freely and joyfully, because our true riches are waiting for us in heaven.

This is what true generosity looks like, and it comes from the generosity that Jesus showed to us in the very first Christmas when he laid aside the riches of his glory to make himself poor, so that we could have the true riches of knowing him and becoming like him.

**CONCLUSION**

Opportunities to give:

Local

* Pregnancy Care Centre Toronto - Supporting Parents Facing Unexpected Pregnancies (<https://pccfriends.ca/>)
* Safe Families Canada - Providing temporary foster care during family emergencies (<http://safefamiliescanada.com/>)
* The Gospel Coalition Canada - Equipping churches in Canada with gospel-centered content and resources (<https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/>)

International

* Sovereign Grace Churches - Advancing the Gospel through Church Planting Around the World (<http://www.sovereigngrace.com/>)
* Michael and Kenean Granger - Church Planting in Ethiopia (<https://www.globaloutreach.org/giving/missionary-details/michael-and-kenean-granger>)
* Covenant Mercies - Providing practical and spiritual care for orphans in Zambia, Uganda and Ethiopia (<https://covenantmercies.org/>)