Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Poverty that Made Us Rich
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:9
Code: 47-59

2 Corinthians 8:9

What a joy and privilege it is this morning to return to our study of 2 Corinthians. I want to encourage you to take your Bible, turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. We are in the midst of going through this great epistle and having just a wonderful time in the process. We find ourselves in chapter 8 this morning at verse 9, and we're only going to look at one verse this morning but we are going to look at that one verse fairly thoroughly, 2 Corinthians 8:9.

A wonderful story was told many years ago about a Persian monarch. We would call him a king and they would call him a Shah. This particular Shah reigned in Persia in a time of great splendor and magnificence and lived in the midst of all of that wealth and prosperity. But he had a heart for people who were poor and common, and so he decided that he would dress himself as a poor man, and that he would descend from the lofty heights of his splendor down to the commonest man that he could find and try to make a friend out of him. And such a man was a man whose job it was to stoke fires and prepare fires that could then be put into little containers and taken around the palace to keep people warm. He worked all the time in ashes and soot and smoke and filth, way, way down in a basement.

The king then put on the garments of a poor man, descended the dark, damp, cellar stairs and came down to where the man was seated in a pile of ashes, he was called a fireman, appropriately, and he was tending to his fires. The king sat down beside him dressed in rags himself, and began to talk. At meal time the fireman produced some coarse black bread and a little bit of water and they ate together and drank together. And then the Shah went away.

But he came back day after day after day after day, again and again because his heart was filled with sympathy that eventually was demonstrated to that man in this longing just to be there to share a little bit of his common and difficult life. He gave the man sweet counsel from his wisdom and experience. This poor man opened his whole heart and loved his friend, so kind and so wise, and he thought so poor like himself.

At last the emperor thought, "I can't keep this up, I have to tell him who I really am and so I'll tell him and then I'll ask him what gift he would like from me, now that we're friends." So he said, "You think I'm poor but I'm not, I am the Shah, your emperor. What would you like?" He expected the man to

petition him for some great thing but he sat, simply gazing in wonder and love. The king said, "Have you understood what I've told you? I can make you rich. I can make you noble. I can give you a city. I can give you anything. What do you want?"

The man replied according to the story, "Yes, my lord, I understand. But what is this you have done to leave your palace and your glory to sit with me in this dark place, to partake of my coarse bread, to care whether my heart is glad or sorry? Even you can give nothing more precious than that. On others you may bestow rich presents but to me you have given yourself, it only remains to ask one thing...and that is that you never withdraw your friendship."

Well that lovely story is analogous, is parabolic to the gospel. It is just what Jesus did, a King who came down to dwell among common men to give them His life and His friendship. That very thing is stated in verse 9 in most simple and profound words. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich yet for your sake He became poor that you through His poverty might become rich."

Here in this very ethical, very practical, pragmatic section of 2 Corinthians where Paul is talking about giving money to the support of the saints, right in the middle of this practical section is tucked this profound doctrinal verse. In fact, it's very much like chapter 5 verse 21 where that profound statement, maybe the profoundest of all statements ever made about the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ is just dropped in as a gem. Here is another one of those crystalogical gems, a diamond outshining all the other jewels around it. The wonder of this verse is captivating. Its vastness, its profundity, its reality, its impact certainly transcends with infinite glory the simplicity of its words, twenty one Greek words in verse 9, and they embrace eternity and time and eternity again. Twenty one Greek words and when translated into an English language like ours, even a child can understand their meaning. There are no difficult words. There are no confusing words. There really aren't any theological words. And though it can be easily grasped as to its simple straight-forward meaning, the fullness of what it says is incomprehensible. With one reading you understand what it says, but with an eternity you may never understand all that it involved.

It is a blazing diamond of truth and we're going to look at it this morning. To do it justice we ought to spend a series on it, but it does intersect with truth that we are aware of and so we'll take it just this morning, but don't miss anything. This is the story of Christ from riches to poverty. This is the story of every believer from poverty to riches. Christ is here in this verse revealed and so are we.

Now let me review briefly where we are. Paul is addressing the Corinthians on the subject of giving. In specific as he traveled he asked the Gentile churches to take collections of money that could be taken back to Jerusalem for the poor saints in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem church, you remember, was very poor. Why? Because many of the people in the church were pilgrims who had been visiting the land of Palestine during the time of feasts and they were converted to Christ and they stayed and

never went back home, they had no jobs, no houses, no livelihood. And so those poor people, those pilgrims who stayed had to be cared for by the Jerusalem Christians. They had a problem though, because once they identified with Christ they lost their jobs, were put out of their family and therefore were poor as well. So the poverty of the Jerusalem church was very widespread. Most of the people were poor.

Early on in the life of the church the people who did have money sold what they had, took the money and gave to the poor and those were not resources that could be replenished and so many had become impoverished in that very process. In order to meet the needs of those poor saints, Paul was collecting money from all of the Gentile churches, including the Corinthian church. According to what we read in verse 6 and what we see in verses 10 and 11, they had already begun to give. They were the first to give. They started about a year before this letter was written, but they didn't finish their giving. And so in verse 10 he reminds them that they had begun to give and verse 11 he says now you need to finish it. He's telling them how to give.

Now remember back in 1 Corinthians 16 Paul even gave them the plan for giving. "On the first day of every week...verse 2 of 1 Corinthians 16...put aside and save as he may prosper, each one doing whatever he wants so no collections are made when I come." Do it weekly, during the weekly service when you come together for worship, take a collection set it aside so that when I come it will all be ready. They had apparently begun to do that, perhaps not continued it and he is here in this second letter encouraging them to finish their giving.

Now to stimulate them as to how to give...remember now, giving is whatever you want, whenever you want, the amount is not prescribed, the timing is not prescribed, that's from your heart. That's what free-will giving is all about, and we went into that in detail. But to stimulate them to be generous in the first eight verses he draws their attention to the churches of Macedonia. You'll notice in verse 1 he shows them what the churches in Macedonia have been doing. He doesn't talk about amounts, he talks about attitudes. And from verses 1 through 8 he shows them the generosity the Macedonian church has.

Now Macedonia was a northern part of Greece. There were three churches in Macedonia...Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. And all three of those congregations had been giving. As we went down through those eight verses we remember what they did in their giving. It was all highlighted for us. It was initiated by grace. Their giving transcended their very difficult circumstances. In other words, they weren't hindered by their difficulties. Their giving was with joy. Their giving was out of poverty. Even though they had little, they gave much. Their giving was generous, proportionate, sacrificial, voluntary. It was viewed as privilege, not obligation. In other words, they were eager and asked if they could give. Their giving was an act of worship. It was an act of submission to their pastors. It was consistent with other virtues. And finally, verse 8 says, it was evidence of the sincerity of their love. They really did love the Lord. They really did love the saints. And that was manifest in the

generosity of their giving.

So Paul here endeavors to stimulate the giving of the Corinthians by showing them the example of the Macedonians. People just like them, not even very far away. You ought to give the way the Macedonians give. They show their love in their giving, you need to manifest yours in your giving the way they did.

But as he thinks about that, as he thinks about how that love manifests itself in giving, his mind goes immediately to the greatest love and the greatest gift, and that involves the Lord Jesus Christ. When you talk about love you have to talk about Christ. When you talk about love that gives, no example is better than Jesus Christ. He had been speaking about the Macedonians and they were a human model for giving, but he goes way beyond them here to the most generous, the most gracious, the most momentous giver of all...the Lord Jesus Christ. If love gives, this is the greatest love because this is the greatest gift. Christ is the supreme example of giving. And so he says in verse 9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich yet for your sake He became poor that you through His poverty might become rich."

Jesus wanted to make us rich. And in order to make us rich He had to make Himself...what?...poor. That's magnanimous. That is generous. Rich people do help poor people but rarely if ever do rich people make themselves poor in the helping. Rich people give out of their riches, they don't impoverish themselves in the process normally. They normally give and are no poorer for the giving, but Jesus became poor that we might be made rich.

In verse 9 he begins by saying, "For you know." The word "for" links us up with the prior verse. In verse 8 he says, "I'm not speaking this as a command but just to prove your love." In other words, I don't need to command you to do this because you know how Christ gave. I don't need to command you to give graciously, you have an example that supersedes any command I could give. Rather than doing it because I command it, do it because you see Christ illustrate it. In other words, the giving of Jesus Christ provides a greater incentive and motivation than the command of the Apostle. You know, he says, you're not ignorant about the giving of Christ. You couldn't be a Christian and be ignorant about that. Every Christian knows Christ came down and gave His life. Every one of us know that. That's the gospel. We all know that He was rich. We all know that He became poor in order that we might be made rich. That's not beyond our knowledge. We know that. And that should be the single greatest motivation, even more motivating than the model of the Macedonians though that teaches us much about how to give, is the example of Jesus Christ and His magnanimous self-giving. This, by the way, this giving eclipses all other giving.

So Paul has just said in verse 8 that love expresses itself in generous giving and Christ, he says in verse 9, is the single greatest example of that. And you know it, he says. Because everybody knows, everybody who knows the gospel, everybody who knows Christ knows His self-giving. That is

at the heart of the gospel.

Now would you notice that he says this, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." And again he identifies the giving that Christ did as grace giving. And I simply remind you that all free-will giving is grace giving. It is not duty. It is not obligation. It is not a fixed percentage. It is not a tithe. It is not an amount. It is spontaneous giving. Whatever is in the heart. It is grace giving, not compelled, not grudging, not of necessity but simply because we will to give it. And that's how Christ gave. Christ gave purely out of love, purely out of mercy, purely out of grace, purely out of kindness. It was unmerited, spontaneous kindness to undeserving sinners coming from pure and uninfluenced love. And it is the action of the Savior that defines grace giving at its highest.

So as Paul has this thought, he stops the flow of writing about the giving of the Macedonians and applying it to the Corinthians and he bursts out with this greatest example of giving in verse 9...the giving of Christ. He goes way beyond anything the Macedonians or any other people could do to this most momentous gift and giver of all. His infinite gift to us has made us infinitely rich.

Now as he says, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," just note that he uses the full name of the incarnate God...Lord Jesus Christ. The name to which He is entitled by His person and by His perfect work. He is Lord, He was given that name fully because He had accomplished the work that was given unto Him and name that is above every name, Philippians 2, and that is the name Lord. He was Jesus because He came to save His people from their sins. He is Christ the anointed Messiah and King. You know...you know the giving of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is common knowledge to all believers. You know.

And then he describes it in simple terms. "He was rich, He became poor that you might become rich." I want you to look at those three truths..those three truths. Number one, the riches of Christ...the riches of Christ. It's expressed in that statement that though He was rich... Now when we talk about the riches of Christ, what are we talking about? Are we talking about some earthly material wealth? No. What we're talking about here refers to His eternal glory. What we're talking about is the eternity of Christ or the eternality of Christ, or the preexistence of Christ. He is a member of the eternal trinity. And the eternity of Christ or the eternality of Christ, listen carefully, is the most crucial truth in all of Christology. Therefore it is the most crucial truth in the gospel. And what is that? That Jesus is eternal. There was never a moment when Jesus Christ did not exist. Not always, obviously, in human form but the second member of the trinity is eternal. That is the most crucial truth in Christology. And it is the most often attacked by the cults and false teachers who want to strip Christianity of its power and its truthfulness.

Attack the deity of Jesus Christ and you attack Christianity at its heart. He must be eternal or He is not God. If He is not eternal, then He is a creature that came into existence from another creature, or from God and therefore is a created being. False Christianity cults teach He is an angel, He is an

emanation, He is a demigod, a subgod, a human, whatever it is, anything other than that He is the eternal God is untrue. He is not created. There never was a moment when He did not exist. He is the eternal God, not dependent on any other for His existence, not even on God the Father. He is self-existent and eternal.

By the way, it is not enough to say He is preexistent. Arias the heretic said He was preexistent and not eternal. He is both preexistent, that is He existed before His incarnation and He is eternal. And arguments for the eternality and the deity of Christ are inseparable. He cannot be God and not be eternal. If He is eternal He is therefore God. Jesus Christ then was rich and He was as rich as the eternal God is rich.

And that's all you really need to say about His riches. He is as rich as God is rich because He is the eternal God, the second person of the trinity, in every sense equal with every other person. Listen to what it says in Micah 5:2, "But as for you, Bethlehem," speaking of the village of Bethlehem where Christ would be born, "too little to be among the clans of Judah...just a small village...from you One will go forth to be ruler in Israel...speaking of Christ, but listen to this...whose goings are from long ago from the days of eternity." The child that was born there is eternal.

In Isaiah 9 he says, "Name that child the everlasting Father, the Father of eternity." In John 1 it tells us the Word is Christ and it tells us about the Word that the Word was with God and the Word was God. In Matthew...sorry, in John 8 and verse 58 Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born I am." In John 17 He says, "Restore Me to the glory...verse 5...I had with You before the world began." In John 10:30 He says, "I and the Father are one." In Colossians 1 He is the...He is the premier one. He is the supreme one. He is the one above all others who is called the image, or the representation of the invisible God. Colossians 2:9, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the deity." Hebrews 1:3, He is the express image of God.

So He is eternal God. And as eternal God He is as rich as God is rich. God owns everything. He owns the universe and all that is in it. He owns all power and all authority and all sovereignty and all glory and all honor and all majesty and all that is created and uncreated. The wealth of our Lord Jesus is beyond comprehension. It is boundless. It is infinite. He is infinite and His wealth is as infinite as His being.

Charles Hodge, the great theologian, wrote, "All divine names and titles are applied to Christ. He is called God the mighty God, the great God, God over all, Jehovah, Lord, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. All divine attributes are ascribed to Him. He is declared to be omnipresent, omniscient, almighty and immutable, the same yesterday, today and forever. He is set forth as the creator and upholder and ruler of the universe. All things were created by Him and for Him and by Him all thinks consist. He is the object of worship to all intelligent creatures, even the highest, all are commanded to prostrate themselves before Him. He is the object of all the religious sentiments, of reference,

love, faith and devotion. To Him men and angels are responsible for their character and conduct. He required that man should honor Him as they honored the Father, that they should exercise the same faith in Him they do in God. He declares that He and the Father are one, that those who had seen Him had seen the Father. He calls all men unto Him, promises to forgive their sins, to send them the Holy Spirit, to give them rest and peace, to raise them at the last day and give them eternal life. God is not more and cannot promise more or do more than Christ is said to be, to promise and to do," end quote.

He is rich in the sense that He is God and as rich as God is rich, possessing eternity and all that it contains.

Second point, the poverty of Christ. "Yet for your sake He became poor." For your sake, not for His, for yours.

What does this mean that He became poor? This has really been misunderstood through history. You can go back, for example, to St. Augustine. In calling on his readers to imitate Christ, Augustine listed the graces of Christ's life which the faithful could emulate. Among them he said is the grace of poverty and he supported that by quoting 2 Corinthians 8:9 and then urged Christians to live lives of poverty in this world.

A similar economic spin on this verse is heard in Augustine's use of this passage in a sermon where he said, "Let the beggars come for He invites them though He was rich for our sakes became poor," equating again the poverty of Christ with economic poverty.

Thomas Aquinas also looked at Christ, looked at this verse and said, "The appropriateness of the life of poverty which Christ led is based on the fact of 2 Corinthians 8:9. We too should take a vow of poverty because Christ lived such a poor life, as indicated in this verse.

Even John Calvin in writing his commentary on 2 Corinthians says, when he comes to this verse, "We see what destitution and lack of all things awaited Him right from His mother's womb and we hear what He Himself says...The foxes have holes, the birds of the air of nests, the Son of Man has not where to lay His head," Luke 9:58. "Thus He sanctified poverty in His own person so that believers should no longer shrink from it and by His poverty He has enriched us."

Well is that really what this is all about? Such a handling of this text and making the poverty of Jesus somehow a commentary on His economic status or His material circumstances is very common and even done today. This verse is often associated with that kind of perception. And you can frequently hear a preacher using this very verse to convey the impression that the moving and compelling force of the gospel is found in the dire poverty in which Jesus lived as if eliciting sympathy for His poverty had some redemptive virtue. A similar thing is often done when people preach on the crucifixion and

they spend all their time talking about the pain and the suffering and the agony that Jesus endured as if eliciting sympathy for agony somehow was connected with believing in redemption.

It isn't. And sympathizing for someone suffering terrible pain on a cross or sympathizing for someone living in a poor life pattern is not the issue of the gospel. In fact, is irrelevant to His redemptive work.

Second Corinthians 8:9 says nothing about Jesus economically. It says nothing about His material condition in this world even though such discussion does tend to move people's emotions. And people of comfortable circumstances have been plunged into pity and plunged into feelings of guilt and remorse by the vivid accounts of a straw crib or a turtledove offered at the dedication, or an itinerant life and no where to lay His head and dividing His one meager garment, as it were, among the soldiers. And they say even the cross wasn't His own, the tomb wasn't His own. And all of that exaltation of the condition of earthly deprivation has nothing to do with this verse. It has nothing to do with redemption.

Jesus...listen...didn't make us rich by becoming economically poor. The gospel of salvation can no more be equated with the financial situation of Jesus than it can be equated with His pain on the cross. Those are not the issues. They may tug at the heart of human emotion but they misplace the point of the true impoverishing of the Lord. It isn't that He had to live in lowly circumstances. It is that God had to become man, that's the impoverishing. There's no salvation through the economic sacrifices of Jesus. In fact, if that were the case we would have expected Him to be a lot poorer than He was. In fact, if I may be so bold, He was perhaps not even classified in any sense among those in His society who were poor. There's nothing to indicate in the life of Jesus that He was poor. He lived a common ordinary life like many other people did.

You say, "Well wait a minute, even His birth Luke describes that He was born in a pile of straw in a stable." Listen, that does not indicate the poverty of Joseph and Mary, that indicates the crowded conditions of Bethlehem. It says they went to the inn and they didn't stay there because they had no money? No, because there was...what?...no room. These are not beggars. Joseph was a carpenter. He is called, is Jesus, the Son of Mary and He Himself is called by Mark in chapter 6 the carpenter. He had a trade. Jesus even did in His later life. His father had a trade, he was a builder. He built perhaps yoke for oxen. He built perhaps furniture for houses and doors and window frames and did brick work. He had his own business in Nazareth. He would not be numbered among the abject poor. And the fact that Mary for the purification offered the simplest birds instead of a lamb doesn't mean that she couldn't afford a lamb, it certainly was provided for those who couldn't, but could be given perhaps by others.

During His Galilean ministry He said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air of nests, the Son of Man has not where to lay His head," that's because He left His home. There was a home in Nazareth. There was a place and family business. But He became an itinerant preacher. And so He didn't have

a place to stay. They didn't have any mobile homes in those says, nothing to take with you. So what happened? He had to stay with friends which is precisely what evangelists, itinerant evangelists all over the world today still do and have done in our country in decades and centuries past. He was not in dire economic circumstances. The cost of His itinerant ministry and the support of His own life and His followers was obviously taken on by well off sympathizers, many of those sympathizers had been healed by Jesus. You can check on that in Luke chapter 8. And I'll tell you, if you were healed by Him, you'd support His ministry. And they did. A number of women came alongside as well to do things that they needed done and make provision for them. Hospitality was always provided for traveling preachers, that was an age-old Jewish custom and certainly Jesus enjoyed that hospitality in a number of homes and especially that of Mary and Martha.

But in no sense can we conclude that He was an impoverished beggar. He lived no poorer than most first-century Palestinian Jews and better off than a lot of them who had to beg. In fact, they had to have somebody in charge of the money, namely Judas to keep the bag. And they even, according to John 12 and 13 were able to use some of their money to help other people. So they had a little bit of surplus.

When you're talking about Jesus became poor you don't want to get off into this material realm, it's talking not about Him giving up material things but giving up immaterial things. He's referring to rich and poor in the spiritual sense as...by the way, Paul used the two words back in chapter 6 verse 10, there he says this of himself, "As poor yet making many rich." He's not talking economically there either, he's talking spiritually. He's talking about the terrible deprivations that Paul had to suffer and endure to get the gospel to people which made them so spiritually rich. Paul had his own sort of condescension from the loftiness of his education and his great leadership ability, he became a scourge and an off scouring to get the riches of the gospel to other people. And that was the poverty of which he speaks here regarding Jesus.

What was the poverty of Jesus? The incarnation. That's how the rich became poor. When He was born of a woman, Galatians 4:4, when He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, Romans 8:3, when He had to come to the cross, Colossians 1:20, when He needed to descend from David, Romans 1:3, when the Word became flesh, John 1:14, when He was made for a little while lower than the angels, Hebrews 2:7, when He was manifested in the flesh, 1 Timothy 3:16, that was the issue. He laid aside the free exercise of all of His prerogatives. He left being face to face with the Father, took on human form and no where is it better explained than in two passages, the first being Philippians chapter 2 and verse 6. "Who...speaking of Christ Jesus...although He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." There He was in the trinity in perfect equality with God but He didn't hold on to it. "But emptied Himself," He emptied Himself, "taking the form of a slave and being made in the likeness of men." That's the poverty of Jesus. "And being found in appearance as a man He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." He came all the way down to humanity. He suffered all that men suffer. "He was in all points tempted

like as we are, yet without sin." He has been touched with all the feelings of our infirmities. He went all the way to death. It's that that's on the mind of Paul when he says He was rich and He became poor.

His riches was the glory He had before the world was made. His riches was being in the form of God and being equal with God, being God a very God. His becoming poor was emptying Himself. And in the Greek, by the way, the words translated "poor and empty" are so similar in meaning they are on occasion used interchangeably. The poverty of Christ is His incarnation. And He came all the way down, all the way down to death and the most ignominious death, death on a cross.

Look at Ephesians for a moment in chapter 4 and verses 8 to 10 because here you have another view of this impoverishing of Christ. In verse 8 Paul starts by quoting from Psalm 68:18, a prophecy regarding Christ, "When He ascended on high He led captive a host of captives and gave gifts to men." He's picturing a triumph here, we talked about that back in chapter 2. A triumph is where the conquering general ascends the hill at the end of the battle and he brings with him all the captives and he comes and he brings his captives and he gives out the spoils. It's a great and glorious event. He's conquered another nation. He comes back with all the riches of that nation, all the captives that have been liberated. He ascends the hill as the conquering hero, dispenses the gifts. That's a picture of Christ.

Verse 9 then says, "Now this expression He ascended, what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth. He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all the things." The point he makes as he comments on Psalm 68 is you can't ascend until you descend. He can't come back with His captives, He can't come back with all the spoils unless He went down, and He went down the lower parts of the earth, simply speaking of the degradation, the humiliation of Christ all the way down. Peter says He went all the way down, 1 Peter 3, into the very pit where the demons are and proclaimed His triumph over them.

"When He ascended on high" depicts then a triumphant Christ returning from the battle on earth. He comes back into the glories of heaven with all the captives that He's set free from the domain of darkness and He gives gifts and they're all through the giving of the Holy Spirit who then dispenses all the rest of the good gifts to His own.

So the eternal God rich becomes poor, humbled into human flesh, killed, executed at the cross. That's His poverty. Although free and sovereign over all the created powers of the universe, He Himself comes under the powers, tastes the full measure of their thrust even to the cross. And for our sake He did it, for our sake He did it. It reminds me of 1 Corinthians 11:24 where Paul has that thought regarding Christ, "My body which is for you."

And that takes us to the third point. We see the riches of Christ, the poverty of Christ, and thirdly the purpose. The purpose, clear, "That you through His poverty might become rich." All of that for you, for your sake. And this, by the way, explains what "for your sake" means. To make poor sinners rich. Materially rich? No. Spiritually rich? Yes. Eternally rich? Yes. Rich with what riches? Rich with the same riches that He possessed and possesses. Rich in salvation, forgiveness, joy, peace, life, light, glory, rich in honor, rich in majesty. We are so rich we are called joint heirs with Christ. We are promised an inheritance incorruptible and defiled that fades not away, laid up for us in heaven. We are rich, we are as rich as He is rich and we were really poor. That implies our poverty. In fact, we're so poor that we have to come as beggars. Matthew 5 tells us in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, the beggars." We have nothing to commend ourselves. We are as poor as poor can be. We hunger and thirst for the basics. And He came to make us rich, to make us as rich as He is rich.

In fact, if His riches is in being God, then our riches is being made like Him. The very life of God dwells in us. We live and yet Christ lives in us. We don't know where we end and He begins. We are the possessors of the eternal life of God. We will be made like Him. We will reflect His glory. We will own His heaven. We will possess the eternal glory of the new heaven and the new earth and all that it contains and we will possess the new Jerusalem, the crown jewel of eternity.

Listen to what Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1, "I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus that in every way you were enriched in Him." Every way conceivable. Even the material, whatever the material is of the eternal state will be ours. And the immaterial joys and glories will be ours.

First Corinthians 3:22, "For all things are yours...all things are yours in the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." Everything is ours. We are the rich. We have all riches, and we'll see more of that in chapter 9. We are joint heirs, we reign with Him, we sit on His throne, we are rich in position, we are rich in privilege. We are rich in relationship. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Everything there is that can bless, we are given.

And, beloved, you can never forget that it was by His self-imposed and willing poverty that Jesus made us rich. This self-emptying, this self-sacrificing love by which we are so blessed and for which we are so thankful is exactly, Paul says, the reason why we need to give to others. As he stooped to be poor to make others rich, so must we. What a standard...what a standard. That is a very, very strong concept and that is exactly what Paul is saying. Paul is saying I don't want you to give, I want you to follow the Lord's example and I want you to give until you are impoverished. That's the way Christ gave.

Can we eagerly receive all that the poverty of Christ gives us and divest ourselves of nothing on behalf of someone else? I don't mean by that we need to be beggars. Jesus wasn't. But we need to be ready to meet anyone's extremity even if we suffer loss in the meeting. The Lord has created a community of people who share their life and their resources, who are willing to become poor to make someone richer.

Fred Cradick(?) back in 1968 in a journal called, "The Interpretation Journal," wrote this, "There's nothing mundane and outside the concern and responsibility of the Christian. There are not two worlds. There is one. Money for relief of those who are poor is as spiritual as prayer. The offering for the saints...he writes...in Judea was for Paul a definite implication of the incarnation. It is no surprise that the discussion of the one should bring to mind the other. The offering, in fact, provided an occasion for teaching the meaning of Christology and Christology informed and elicited the offering," end quote.

In other words, Paul saw the offering as an expression of the central truth of Christianity and that is that Christ made Himself poor to make somebody else rich. How about you? How about you?

A poet summed it up. "O Thou wast crowned with thorns that I might wear a crown of glory fair, exceeding sorrowful that I might be exceeding glad in Thee. Rejected and despised that I might stand accepted and complete at Thy right hand. Wounded for my transgressions, stricken sore that I might sin no more, weak that I might be always strong in Thee, bound that I might be free, acquainted with grief that I might only know fullness of joy and everlasting flow. Thine was the chastening with no release that mine might be the peace, the bruising and the cruel stripes were Thine, the healing was mine. Thine was the sentence and the condemnation, mine the acquittal and full salvation. For Thee reviling in a mocking throng, for me the angels' song. For Thee the frown, the hiding of God's face, for me the smile of grace. Sorrows of hell and bitterest death for Thee, all heaven and everlasting life for me." That's it.

He who was rich became poor that we might be made rich. And that is the pattern and the model, Paul says, for how we treat those around us among the saints who also are poor. Are we willing as He was? Let's bow in prayer.

Our Father, again this morning the Word cuts to our hearts and we struggle to find our equilibrium and our balance and know how You want us to respond. On the one hand You've given us all things richly to enjoy. On the other hand You have said that the very one who set the example whose example we must follow if we say we abide in Him, we need to walk as he walked, was willing to divest Himself of whatever it took to meet the needs of those He loved. And that's the key. Lord, may we be eager to sacrifice to meet the needs of those around us who are Your children who cry out to

us. How can we say we love You and close our compassion to those around us? Help us to find that balance between enjoying all that You have made, enjoying all the richness that You provide and holding it ever so lightly that it might be shared with those in need. Lord what a stewardship we have of everything we possess. And may we use it, enjoy it, give it in any case and may we demonstrate the sincerity of our gratitude to You and our love. May You know by what we do with all that we possess the priorities of our hearts. Thank You for the good things, the richness of life, the bounty. But, Lord, give us a tender heart toward those in need so that we may be truly sons of God. We pray in the name of Christ. Amen.

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