

Christmas Day Service

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Date: 25 December 2020

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[0 : 00] I'm going to read to you a verse from 2 Corinthians chapter 8. You don't have to turn there. You can hear it. The Apostle Paul writes this. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

! Christmas is expensive.

You parents don't need to be told that. You know that already. All the presents to buy. All the food that you're going to eat this afternoon. All the travelling to be done.

Christmas is expensive. And I wonder what the world's most expensive Christmas ever is. What is the most expensive present? The costliest present ever.

I googled this week. What are the super rich buying in London this year? You can get a diamond necklace worth 1.5 million pounds. Bracelets for half a million quid.

[1 : 09] You can get a diamond encrusted tree hopper. What? Tree topper? It can't be a tree hopper can it? It would be a tree topper. Yeah that's right. For 615,000.

One of the adverts said this. Add some luck to a special someone's life. With Van Cleef and Arpels stunning vintage Alhambra bracelet. For £375,000.

Put into the stocking. Throw in a Cartier watch. Which is timeless in every sense. It's an exquisite choice for the woman who wants to be noticed.

£40,900. It's amazing people are buying these things isn't it? And then there's the family who live in Knightsbridge. Who spend £250,000 on Christmas decorations every year.

But they don't live in London. They live in Dubai. They don't even come to London for Christmas. Sometimes they spend 36 hours in London. But they might not come this year. Christmas can be expensive can't it?

[2 : 07] Terry's chocolate orange is now no longer 99 pence. But £125 in Liddle. And for some of you, we can laugh at it.

But Christmas will be expensive. But it won't be the most expensive Christmas ever. No matter what people spend this Christmas. It won't be the costliest present ever.

Because that record has already gone. And that record can never be beaten. The most expensive Christmas present ever. Is one that no one can buy it.

And yet listen to this. It's so expensive that no one can buy it. And yet it is offered to all today. Anyone can have it if they want it.

And that is because the one person who alone could buy it. Has bought it. And he wants to give it to you for free. How about that?

[3 : 08] That is what Christmas is all about. And so for just a few minutes. And I hope it is just a few minutes. I want to think about the true cost of Christmas. That verse I read to you.

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.

Christmas is about the richest person in the universe becoming poor. So that the poorest could become rich. The richest person in the universe is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was rich. Think about how rich he was. He was rich in person. What do we know about Jesus? We know that he was almighty God.

Philippians 2, the passage that Reuben read to us, tells us that he was equal with the Father. He was God the only Son.

[4 : 12] The supreme person in all the universe. Worshipped and served by countless angels. Adored by angels. He was rich in person.

But he was rich in position. The creator of the whole universe. And the ruler of the whole universe. Everything was made by him.

Therefore everything belongs to him. Everything the Bible says was made by him and for him. He owns it all.

You cannot get richer than that. And yet this great God of highest heaven. This mind-blowingly rich king of the universe.

Deliberately, intentionally, willingly becomes poor. Jesus became poor. He became a baby.

[5 : 10] He made himself nothing, Philippians 2 tells us. By taking the very nature of a servant. Being made in the likeness of man. Lo, within the manger lies.

He who built the starry skies. What a come down. What a come down. The creator of the universe came to live among the people he created.

And it was a willing come down. He wasn't forced. He became a man and he became a poor man. He was laid by his mother in an animal feeding trough.

He lived as a refugee, as a toddler. He had nowhere to lay his head as a man. He was poor. But there's more to his poverty even than that.

Being found in appearance as a man, Philippians tells us. He humbled himself and became obedient. Even to death. Even to death on a cross. He died.

[6 : 10] The author of life died. And he became poor. Not just any death. He died on a cross. The most shameful of deaths.

The most painful deaths. The Bible says he was a man of sorrows. Ridiculed. Despised by men. Mocked and flogged and stripped of his clothes.

And crucified. He died with nothing. In pain and agony. He was poor. But even there is greater experience of poverty for Jesus to know.

The son of God. Who knew no sin. Became sin for us. He is forsaken by his father.

Cut off. Suffering the anger of God for our sin. Forsaken. Forsaken. Abandoned. Enduring the anger of God.

[7 : 11] Jesus suffered hell on the cross. Hell is the worst poverty of all. And when Jesus died on the cross he became the poorest of the poor.

He went, if I can say it like this, from heaven to hell. And why did he do it? For our sake. For his people. Jesus became poor.

So that we might become rich. And we are poor. The Bible says that in our natural condition we are very poor. And the reason we're poor is not because of the state of our bank account.

Or how many gifts we have or are able to give. It is because of how we've treated God. We've gone our own way. We've cut ourselves off from God.

We've cut ourselves off from the riches of knowing him. We've rejected his rule and the result is spiritual bankruptcy. We are spiritual down and outs.

[8 : 11] We do not have the resources that we need to get to heaven. We are poor. And we are on our way to an eternal poverty. Away from God in hell. And we can't buy our way out.

We can't work our way out. We can't earn our way out. We are without hope. Poor forever. Unless. Unless someone comes and gives to us the riches that we need.

Unless someone comes and does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. And that is the wonder of Christmas. That is why it is exceedingly good news.

Because it is precisely what Jesus has done. It is precisely the gift of God at Christmas. God himself comes and becomes a baby.

A man. And he lives a perfect life for us. He dies the death that we deserve. He takes our punishment on the cross.

[9 : 13] He becomes poor for our sake. So that we through his poverty might become rich. He comes, if I can put it this way, from heaven to hell.

So that we might go from hell to heaven. We can become rich. Because of the work that Jesus did on the cross. And we know that what Jesus did on the cross worked.

Because do you remember that reading? We're told that God raised him. And exalted him to the highest place. It worked. And because of that, today, you can become rich.

All is not hopeless for us. When we trust in the Lord Jesus, we become rich beyond our wildest dreams.

Jesus gives us wealth that we cannot even begin to calculate. He gives us his perfect life, his righteousness, in exchange for our sin. He gives us forgiveness, instead of condemnation.

[10 : 21] He gives us friendship with God, instead of separation from God. He gives us heaven, instead of hell. He gives us eternal life, in exchange for eternal death.

And so that we're no longer his enemies, but his children. We are heirs with him. And we have all the privileges of being part of the family of God.

And we don't deserve it, do we? We don't deserve it. But that is what God, in his mercy and his grace, holds out to you this morning.

He offers to you his son. But it cost him everything. The most expensive Christmas ever was the very first Christmas.

And the most expensive, costliest Christmas present was the very first Christmas present. The indescribable gift. Jesus and the salvation that he offers.

[11 : 23] Christmas is about the rich God becoming poor. So poor that sinners, and people like you, and like me, might become rich.

And that is the real cost of Christmas. And so what do we do? How do we respond to that, this Christmas day?

First of all, grace. If you've been here before, you might have heard me say that grace, it's spelled G-R-A-C-E. God's riches at Christ's expense.

I want to change that slightly this morning for Christmas Day. Because I think what we see is that we can get rich at Christ's expense. We get rich at Christ's expense.

And so we take that gift of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we get rich at Christ's expense. I'm not talking about financial. I'm talking about real wealth.

[12 : 30] Of being rich towards God. And maybe you've not realised that is what Christmas is about. I've known people in churches all their lives. They've been in church all their lives.

They cannot remember a year when they didn't know the Christmas story, and yet they've never understood its true meaning. That Christmas has never become real in their life.

They think it's about gifts and family, which of course it is, and they're good things. But they've never truly known what it is to know Christ. They've never done anything about it.

They've never put their trust and given their life into the Lord Jesus' hands. And if you haven't done anything about it, I want to encourage you to do something about it today.

To receive God's gift. To receive the riches God offers you in Jesus. What will happen after the service?

[13 : 31] Or what will happen this afternoon when somebody from your family comes and gives you gifts and you say, you shouldn't have. You shouldn't have. You really shouldn't. You didn't need to. You didn't need to.

I'm not worthy. And then you take it and enjoy it. Unwrap it. And God the Father offers you his son, the Lord Jesus, and you say, oh, you shouldn't have.

I'm not worthy. You need to take it. You need to take it. Without God's gift, you are poor. It's humbling, isn't it? It's so, so humbling to admit I'm poor.

None of us want to admit that. And so Christmas for you, I hope, will be about receiving and about taking. It will be about receiving the gift that you really need, which you know you need, which is to be forgiven.

And to be given eternal life. And Jesus has paid it all and he offers you. It's as if Jesus is holding out, if I can put it like this, it seems wrong to put it like this, it's as if Jesus is holding out a check to you this morning and saying, my life for your sin and the mess you've made of your life.

[14 : 45] He says, my goodness for your badness, my riches for your poverty, it is yours if you want it. Will you take it? Will you take the gift? Will you repent and believe?

I think I tell you this every year, but my oldest brother, David, you might think this sermon is far too long for Christmas Day. I can assure you growing up that it was like 45 minutes listening to these unbearable sermons.

But my brother amazingly became a Christian on Christmas Day. He took the gift because he realises that's what he needed. He'd sat in church all his life. And so trust in Jesus today and get rich in Jesus this Christmas if you haven't already done that.

But if you have, and wonderfully there are so many of us here this morning that we have joyfully received the gift of the Lord Jesus, haven't we? And I want to say to you this morning, you are rich. You are rich where it counts. You are rich towards God. But you must remember, and I must remember today, it is at Christ's account.

[15 : 57] And when you get that, when you know that, when you really know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that changes you. And it changes you from being a grasping, greedy, selfish person into a giving, other-centred person.

Because a giving saviour should have giving disciples. And so Philippians chapter 2 says, our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, other-centred.

And we as God's people should be the most generous of all, shouldn't we? Because we are children of the most generous heavenly Father.

We are to be people who give, who give of our money, of our time, of our possessions, of our energy, and give our lives to others. But we need to constantly remind ourselves of the real reasons we do that.

We don't do that reluctantly or begrudgingly, but willingly and gladly because of what God has done. Not in order to be noticed or praised by others, but simply to live lives of gratitude for God's glory and his honour.

[17 : 07] And for the honour of Jesus. We don't give to earn God's favour because the message of Christmas is we already have that.

We already have God's favour in Jesus Christ. Give thanks for God's indescribable gift. For you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you, by his poverty, might become rich.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together.