

A great Saviour

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Preacher: Chris Fry

[0 : 00] So what might we consider today? This is what ministers of the gospel up and down the country are thinking about the last Sunday of the year what to talk about what subject matter to take and I believe we could do no better than this which is to consider the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ. The good news of and through Jesus Christ. Where would we be without the gospel of Jesus Christ? I caught the end of the seasonal film It's a Wonderful Life which is a great film.

And who's seen the film It's a Wonderful Life? James Stewart in it right okay. So here's the key character here is George Bailey towards the end of the film. He's given a sort of vision of what it would have been like if he hadn't existed.

And how awful the world would have been or in fact the little hometown in America where he lived. How different things would have been if he hadn't been there. If he hadn't made a difference.

We magnify that on an enormous scale. We think well what would this world be like if there was not a gospel? Jesus Christ had not come if he didn't have any good news to tell us.

[1 : 29] Without this gospel this church has no reason for being here at all. Be a vacant plot. Probably be a block of flats. We also have no future. We've got no reason to go into the next year. You know what is the point of doing any of our sort of activities if there is no gospel of Jesus Christ?

And the same could be said about us personally. On this matter hinges our life now and what happens after we die. Now this morning we're going to think of the topics on the screen here. We're going to think about the great saviour.

We're going to think of Jesus Christ without whom we have no gospel at all. Absolutely nothing. How great is the saviour? Next Sunday morning we're going to look at the subject. A great salvation.

What has Jesus Christ done for us? The text this morning is in the book of 2 Corinthians. It's chapter 8 verse 9.

It's a passage we've looked at on a couple of occasions recently as a church. We're back to it again today. Page 1163 2 Corinthians 8 verse 9.

[2 : 47] The context is the Apostle Paul is writing to a very mixed group of people living in the cosmopolitan seaside city of Corinth.

Very mixed bunch. Different backgrounds and experiences. But here they are gathered together as we are this morning in some sort of a gathering. And so he writes to them knowing that they'll receive this.

And he wants to encourage them. And he's encouraging them in the matter of being generous. They've kind of lost the plot and he wants them to get back to their initial enthusiasm to be generous.

And as so often he uses the very greatest motives for generosity. Verse 9. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor.

So that you through his poverty might become rich. There it is up on the screen. There it is up on the screen. How great is it when somebody becomes a Christian?

[4 : 15] How great is it when somebody becomes a Christian? Well it's as great as this. These are the Bible descriptions of what it means to become a Christian.

We move out of darkness into light. We move from death to life. And in a very vivid description we move from the power of Satan to God.

And this is the position of everybody in this building today who's a Christian. It doesn't matter what background you've had and what kind of experience you've had.

That is what marks you out. And here coming back to our text this morning. We can put this in these terms.

That you have become rich. We've become rich. The text doesn't actually say that we were poor. But it must imply that. Through Jesus' poverty we have become rich.

[5 : 19] That implies that we're poor. We are basically very poor. Now are you a poor person? Humorously we might say well after Christmas I'm a poor person.

I have less than I had when I started off the Christmas season. You may feel you're poor because of the state of your bank balance.

Or the fact that you don't own a house and you have to rent. Or you don't have some of the things that you'd like to have. You may feel you're poor in terms of your friendships. You might feel quite alone at this time of year.

And I don't belittle any of that. But the Bible's descriptions of poverty. The sort of poverty that Jesus Christ came to deal with. Rather touch a different level. And here are some of the descriptions that we might use from the Bible of poverty.

We're very poor when we have no friendly relationship with God. I use that phrase deliberately. No friendly relationship with God.

[6 : 25] Now there are plenty of people who have no relationship at all. But there are many people in the world who have some sort of relationship with God. And I do think of those in Islam and so forth.

Who have a relationship with God. But you could never dare to describe that as a friendly relationship. It's not a relationship which is warm and comforting and close.

And as the Bible would describe it. Childlike. You might find it extraordinary that we should even think in those sort of words.

But surely that's how the world was. God made man and woman. He walked with them.

In the cool of the evening. He related to them. It's a friendly relationship. God.

[7 : 28] God. God. We're very poor if we don't have that. Because we've been made to have a friendly relationship with God. We're very poor if we have no comprehensive forgiveness in our lives.

One of the repeated descriptions of Nelson Mandela. Is of this man who had this ability to forgive. He was able to inspire others to forgive as well. Reconciliation. Wonderful to see that. And it's wonderful when people are able to forgive others.

And even to forgive themselves. Didn't use to hear about that. But it's a very sort of popular thought these days isn't it. Are you able to forgive yourself? Or are you living with the crippling burden of your own guilt and frustration of the past?

Are you able to forgive yourself? I don't belittle any of that. It's very precious and important as well. But comprehensive forgiveness.

[8 : 42] Has to do with more than our relationship with ourselves or with other people. But our relationship with God. God who sees absolutely everything about us.

The forgiveness that the world can bring and offer. Is bound to be superficial. Who can see inside the human heart?

You don't know what I really think about each one of you. Nor do I know what you really think about me. But God knows.

And the pure and holy God. Whose standard is perfection. He sees all our thoughts. You've been bumping into people all over Christmas.

And some of that's been good. And maybe some of that's been frustrating. And some of the people you got tired of. And so forth. And this is a sort of common way of things as well. So you've had all sorts of thoughts and feelings over the last few days.

[9 : 45] Maybe even as I raise that. There's some sort of little nagging thing within you. Somebody that you feel it's so hard to forgive. They don't know about it.

Only you know about it. But God knows about it. God sees it. And it's a wonderful, wonderful thing.

To have God's forgiveness in your life. But you're desperately poor. If you don't know the comprehensive forgiveness of God. We're very poor when we don't have a lasting purpose.

Is it fair of me to say to you. What is your purpose in life? What are you looking forward to? What are your goals and your ambitions? What are your ambitions? It's all good.

It's good. We need to have goals and ambitions. It would be a very sad thing if around this room. None of us went into the new year with any goals and ambitions about us.

[10:58] But if you were to test those goals and ambitions in the light of your death.

And what happens after that? Well, you know, how solid. How lasting. Is your goal and ambition. We were made for something better.

We were made for a lasting purpose. And we're very poor if we don't have that lasting purpose in our lives. We're very poor if we have no power to change.

No power to change fundamentally. I was quite struck by something I saw on TV the other day. And it was just a commentary about the fact that human nature is unchangeable.

That was a comment. Human nature is unchangeable. Every generation deceives itself because of progress. Technological progress.

[12:00] Industrial progress. Societal progress. We deceive ourselves. And we constantly have to be reminded. Normally by some very painful experiences. That the world is frequently a dark place.

And when people's true characters sort of come to the fore. We recognize that for all our immense abilities. Our possibilities of grappling with the world around us.

And so forth. We have real problems. Getting on with ourselves and getting on with other people.

We have real problems of relation. Relationships.

Isn't it tragic to see all the ethnic conflicts that are taking place in the world at this time? Conflicts which have so often in the past been sort of buried under dictatorships.

Where these conflicts haven't been allowed to rise. But you see it in Iraq. In Afghanistan. In most of the African countries. These ethnic conflicts.

[13:07] Which are suppressed. You know. When the suppression is removed. Then these conflicts come to the fore. Again. And it's human nature. It's human nature. There's a veneer of civilization.

But. It's not hard for that to be broken down. We're very poor. But we don't have the power. To change. We're very poor.

We have no awareness of that poverty. That's the biggest poorness of all. Not even to be aware. That we have any sort of poverty. So that we just carry on.

In the same old way. Do these issues matter? Is it right to think in those sort of big terms about life? I believe it is.

And this is what the Bible does for us. This is what God says to us. Says yes. You should be big thinking people. I've made you to be big thinking people.

[14:13] So we're very privileged as we come here today. To be able to think of these big issues. Like that. Now Jesus Christ makes us very rich.

My point here is that. This isn't only a deprivation. But it's a very dangerous place for us to be. It's very dangerous for us to be. Without. This list here.

Without the friendly relationship with God. That's a very dangerous place to be. Doesn't just mean you don't have a spiritual life. But it means that you're under God's.

Opposition. God's anger. God is not pleased. That you do not have his forgiveness. God is not pleased.

To see the mess of your life. God is not pleased. To see the spiritual death within you. That's a very dangerous place to be.

[15:17] Because God's displeasure. Is sort of masked by the measure of his grace. We're given another day. We come here again. Another Sunday. We look back on a year that's flown by.

But we're all here. We're here. We're alive to tell the tale. But it's a serious point to make. Is that what does God think about us? In our poverty.

Well a very real part of God's thought about us. Is that God is angry about this situation. The world that he made so perfect. Has been so badly spoiled by us.

Are we in a state to meet with our God. Now. The Bible says you're in a very bad way. If you have that poverty about you.

To become a Christian. Is to become very rich. I've struck through all those no's. Who's been away.

[16:18] Been made aware of our spiritual poverty. And we've come to Jesus. To deal with our poverty. We can say. Thank God. We have. A measure. A friendly relationship with him.

And that we know what it is. When we spoil and mar that friendship. We know what it is to be able to come back. To him. And receive his forgiveness. We do have a lasting purpose.

The lasting purpose. Is to bring glory. To Jesus Christ. We should be able to do that. Forever and ever. And there is power to change.

There really is power. By the power of God's Holy Spirit. For us. To be a changed people. Now. What else does this verse.

Have to tell us. How do we become so rich. We become so rich. Because of the grace. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Please look at that. In that text there.

[17:19] For you know. The grace. Of our Lord. Jesus Christ. It's the grace. It's a free gift.

Of Jesus Christ. He has saved us. From our poverty. And he's brought us. Into richness. He is therefore. The saviour. And we're encouraged here. To think about Jesus Christ.

We're not encouraged. To look anywhere else. And I want to. Draw your attention. To two. Very simple ideas. The first is that. It's something.

That he has done. Something that he has done. It's not just words. Jesus didn't just talk. About the idea. Of being saved. But he did something.

So that he is the saviour. For most people. The baby in the manger. Says and does. Nothing.

[18:17] So much noise. And babble. And excitement. At Christmas. But the baby in the manger. Says nothing. There's nothing to say. He's just there.

But Jesus Christ. Is not like that at all. His parents. Were told. You should call his name Jesus. Because he will save his people.

From their sins. Do you look at Jesus Christ. In that way. A saviour who does something.

And it's not just about. His life on earth. The verse goes on to say. Though he was rich. He became poor.

Again for most people. They think of Jesus at all. They see him as a man. Who was born and died. 33 years later. But as important. And crucial. As that life was.

[19:19] We could never. Properly appreciate. Jesus Christ. And the grace of Jesus Christ. Without recognizing. That he existed. Before.

He came to earth. This is what this verse. Reminds us about. Christian. You need to think about this. People who are not Christians.

Need to think about this. It is the trap. And the tendency. Of the world. To box Jesus Christ.

Into a life. A human life. And not to see him. As one who had. A pre-existence. In order for us. To become rich.

Very rich. He had to become poor. Very poor. Here's a mighty contrast. I want us to think about. Some of those contrasts. This morning. Firstly.

[20:15] Something changed. For him. Something changed. For him. He who is God. Became a man. Not a super man. A man.

Not a pretend man. But a real man. He had known. Nothing but. Absolute power. And authority. Wisdom. And knowledge. But he set all this. To one side. He did not lose it. But he voluntarily. And willingly. Set it. To one side. And instead. He embraced. Need. And dependence. And vulnerability.

And growth. Physical. And mental. And spiritual. So in Luke. Chapter 2. Verse 52. It says of him. Jesus. Grew in wisdom. And stature.

[21:16] And in favor. With God. A man. Philippians 2. Verses 6 and 7. Says.

Have the same mindset. As Christ Jesus. Who being. In very nature. God. Did not consider. Equality. With God. Something to be used. To his own advantage.

Rather. He made himself. Nothing. By taking. The very nature. Of a servant. Being made. In human. Likeness. It's an extraordinary thing.

It's so extraordinary. That the church. Wrestled. For centuries. With this idea. And it took. A great deal. Of prayer.

And research. And discussion. For them to come to. This amazing conclusion. That the second person. Of the Trinity.

[22:14] Came down to this earth. And became a man. He who had not been a man. Became a man. He who had never changed.

Changed. He who had never known. Any beginning. Had a most. Powerful. Overwhelming. Change. And in that change. He did not become. Less of God.

Than he'd been before. He didn't strip himself. Of being God. But he became.

A man. Became the God man. He didn't lay aside.

[23 : 11] His Godhood. But he laid aside. The privileges. And the attributes. Of his Godhood. So it is a remarkable thing.

When we read that. Verse in Luke 2. Where it says. Jesus grew. In wisdom. And stature. Well we could just about. Get our heads around. That idea.

That he should grow. Physically. But that he should. Grow in wisdom. It's an extraordinary idea. Isn't it? God who made everything. And by whom. Everything holds together. Who is described. In the Bible himself.

As wisdom. That he should actually. Grow in wisdom. He made himself nothing.

[24 : 06] He laid it aside. He laid it aside. He laid it aside. He looked at all that he was. All that he had. He laid it aside. And I think we could say that.

Throughout those 33 years. Of his life. He was always. Laying it aside. Laying it aside. And we were only allowed. To see something. Of his. Godness. When the father.

Allowed that. To be revealed. So when the voice. Came from heaven. At Jesus baptism. This is my. Son in whom. I'm well pleased.

As it were. Heaven was opened. It was a bit of a revelation. Taking place. A bit of an exposure. Of the reality. Of what was going on. And on the mountain top.

With the disciples. With Moses and Elijah. When his face shone. Where. There was a veil removed. There was something.

[25 : 05] The reality. Was seen. The reality. Had always been there. But he laid it aside. He says at one point. Himself. Don't you know.

I could call upon. Twelve legions of angels. I could do that. I could do that now. There's absolutely. Nothing. To stop me. Doing that now.

Except the fact. That I've laid that aside. Right. Well it's amazing isn't it.

That he should. Do that. Deliberately. Willingly. Purposefully. He should lay aside. His majesty. Lay aside. His authority.

Lay aside. His wisdom. Lay aside. His insights. So that he should. Grow as a boy. And learn wisdom. What a mighty contrast.

[26 : 09] Rich to poor. Rich to poor. In his circumstances. Psalm 24 verse 1 says. The earth is the Lord's. And everything in it. What belongs to Jesus Christ?

Answer. Everything. Absolutely everything. Everything. The things that we know about. And the things that we don't. The things that we see. And the things that we can't see.

Everything belongs to him. No one else has it. No one else has title deeds. Not like a game of Monopoly. Where he's just sort of.

Trying to get hold of more and more places. That he can own. He has it all. As the children's song goes. He's got the whole world in his hands. It all belongs to him.

It's his by right. He brought it into being. He sustains it by his powerful word. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

[27 : 09] That includes you. You belong to him. Colossians 1.16 and 17.

Let's look at that together. Colossians 1.16 and 17. It's on page 1182. For by him all things were created.

Things in heaven and on earth. Visible and invisible. Whether thrones or powers or rulers. Or authorities. All things were created by him. And for him. He is before all things.

And in him all things hold together. Great description. Broad description. Of the greatness of Jesus Christ.

But he was born poor. His parents went to the temple to dedicate him. They paid. That which was appropriate.

[28 : 11] For the poorest people. They weren't asked to pay anymore. Because they were that poor. Foxes have holes.

Birds of the air. Have their nests. But the son of God. Has nowhere to lay his head. He really identified himself.

With the poor. He became poor. It is a bit surprising isn't it. That was a measure.

And the detail. And the thoughtfulness. Of the poverty of Jesus Christ. That he chose. To become. A poor person. As he lived his life.

He was born poor. And he lived poor. His suffering. Sorry. His circumstances.

[29 : 14] That was that one there. And now his suffering. From universal. Love. Admiration. And respect. That's a picture of heaven isn't it. That's all that Jesus Christ had ever known.

The worship. The adoration. Instant obedience. The obedience. The loving service. The prompt willingness.

Of all those about him. The gaze of angels. This is all true. Of Jesus Christ. Before he came to earth. And. He changes all that.

For. Widespread rejection. And mockery. And hatred. He did have a loving. Family. But even those were a bit fickle.

Gave way. And. It says in the Bible of him. He's a man of sorrows. And acquainted with grief. Rejected.

[30 : 20] Misunderstood. Failed by his friends. Mocked. Spat upon. Misinterpreted.

Misjudged. Hated. Hounded. To death. It's an extraordinary thing. How that would have. Hurt him. And how he embraced. That. Unknown knowledge. That unknown experience. How he willingly embraced that. It's part of his poverty.

And. In his death. As well. He who'd lived in the realm of holiness. Accepts the presence.

And the burden of sin. Personal. And total identification. Is recorded in 2 Corinthians. 5. 21. 2 Corinthians.

[31 : 16] 5. 21. Says this. God made him. Who had no sin. To be sin for us. So that in him. We might become.

The righteousness. Of God. He whose Trinitarian relationships. Had been. From. All eternity. Marked by intense.

And precious. Closeness. Accepts the loneliness. And the desolation. Of forsakenness. Behold the pain. Of searing loss.

The father. Turns. His face. Away. You ever thought.

Of Jesus Christ. In that way. Before. This is what we're. Encouraged to do. As we read this.

[32 : 13] Verse this morning. He who was rich. For our sakes. He became poor. That poor. And so.

A response. A personal response. Is needed. And indeed. It's. Demanded. We firstly suggest. We have here. A saviour. To admire. And adore.

Jesus is not small. This saviour. Is not small. He is a mighty. Mighty saviour. We can. And should be. Immensely proud.

Of Jesus Christ. We can boast about him. Jesus shall take. The highest honour. Jesus shall take. The highest praise. So the passage.

We read in Philippians. It says. At his name. Every knee shall bow. Every tongue confess. That Jesus Christ. Is Lord. God. And here's a saviour.

[33 : 11] For us to speak about. A saviour. That we can have confidence in. So we can speak about him. Mine are riches. From your poverty.

Mine forgiveness. By your death. For me. Child of sorrow. For my joy. We really do have. A prosperity gospel.

Because we have been so poor. Have been made so rich. And the richness. That we have received. Is a richness. Which is offered. With great.

Largesse. With great willingness. With great generosity. God offers this. To the whole world. A saviour.

We can be proud of. A saviour. That we can speak about. I'm glad. That we find this text. In the book of Corinthians. Because. Of all the churches.

[34 : 09] That Paul was associated with. I feel in some ways. That Corinth. Is most like. The place. Where we are set here. It's a place of. Enormous diversity.

And extremes. And people types. And at one point. In writing to them. He talks about. Some of the things. They've been involved in. In their past.

And he says. Well such were some of you. You were involved. In that sort of stuff. There's things. We don't need to mention. From a platform here. But. Goes on in Brighton.

And it's to these people. That Paul says. I want to tell you. Of the grace of Jesus Christ. He became.

Poor. So that you. You. You. Through his poverty. He might become rich. This gives us.

[35 : 13] Great confidence. You can say. Well there's no. No. No go areas. For the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. In the city. Of Brighton. Hove. There's nobody.

That we can think of. Nobody you can think of. We could say. Well. I just don't think. That Jesus Christ. Is very appropriate. For them. Really not.

In the right place. To receive Jesus Christ. Now. This is a wonderful. Savior. That we can speak about. With gladness.

We preach. A Savior. Who is worth telling about. A Savior. For every circumstance. For every age. For every experience. And every culture. Now. We need confidence.

As we go into. The next year. Because it's easy. To be cowed. By the. The rhetoric. And the pressure. Of. The voices. All around us.

[36 : 14] But as we look at. The text like this. We. Are made to feel confident. Because we see. The greatness. Of our Savior. There's a Savior.

To follow. A Savior. To follow. He gave. So that we give. Don't forget. That the whole reason. Why this little. Little passage.

Is included here. Was just about. The issue of giving. Paul is saying. To the Corinthians. I want you to. I want you to give. Because Jesus Christ gave.

And so I say. To this congregation. I say to the church. Jesus Christ. At Calvary. Well give. Because Jesus Christ gave. How did Jesus Christ give?

He gave himself. Wholeheartedly. How are you and I. Going to give ourselves. To following Jesus Christ. In the coming year. There's actually. There's only.

[37 : 13] There's only one answer. To that. And that has to be. Wholeheartedly. There isn't actually. Another route. There's no other model. To follow. There's only one. Imitation.

That we can. Safely take on board. And it's to be. Imitating Jesus Christ. It's an astonishing thing. Isn't it? You know.

These Corinthians. They're very flawed people. Just like you and me. Had lots of failures. Lots of. Hang ups in their lives. Lots of burdens.

That they're bringing. Into their Christian experience. Lots of inadequacies. Lots of problems. In their. In their relationships.

With one another. Lots of besetting sins. Lots of troubles. And difficulties. In their lives. And they're just like us.

[38 : 07] They're just like us. And so. Paul comes to this. Very imperfect people. And.

He says to them. Well. Just do your best. He doesn't do that. He actually sets. Before them. An amazing standard.

And he says. What you need to hear about. What you need to know about. And who you need to follow. Is this Jesus Christ. This perfect one. Who gave himself.

So completely. And he doesn't lower his standards. For the Corinthians. With all their problems. He says. The one I want to present to you.

Is Jesus. And he is the one to follow. So I challenge you. This morning. As you go into this. These next 12 months.

[39 : 04] I challenge you. To be a follower. Of Jesus Christ. I challenge you. To have his mindset. In you. Challenge you. To have that total generosity.

In your relationship. With other people. I challenge you. To have that. Element of sacrifice. In your own life. I challenge you. To be able to accept.

Some of the suffering. That Jesus himself. Went through. For the sake of faithfulness. I challenge you.

To learn obedience. By the things. That you suffer. Just as he learned obedience. By the things. That he suffered. I challenge you. To do the hard thing. Which may be.

Picking up your phone. And saying sorry. To somebody. Or writing a letter. To them. I challenge you. To deal with the things. That have just. Been a millstone. Around your neck. For too long.

Challenge you.

[39 : 57] To deal with those. Besetting sins. In your life. Which have just. Held you back. And you know. That your ministry. As a Christian. Is being crippled. By your unwillingness.

To change. I challenge you. To put your hand. Into the hand of Jesus Christ. And to follow him. Rather than. Tentatively putting your hand. One way.

And putting your other hand. In the hand of. Of those who've got. A different message. I challenge you. To see Jesus. As a comprehensive. Saviour. Who really can deal.

With the whole. Of your life. Not just the bit. That you find. When you come here. On a Sunday. I challenge you. To be bold. In your relationships.

With your children. And with the rest. Of your family. To be saying things. To them. And to be demonstrating. Things to them. Which are counter cultural. Challenge you.

[40 : 53] To be honest. In your workplace. Because many aren't. I challenge you.

To be thoughtful. About the weak. And the needy. And not to pass them by. On the other side. I challenge you. To have a conversation. With someone. You've not had. That conversation with. For a long time.

Because they're not your type. I challenge you. To be a part of. A family of God. And not to stand. On the periphery. And outside that.

Because there isn't. Any other way. Of living life. I challenge you. On the basis. Of the example. Of Jesus Christ. Love so amazing.

So divine. Demands my soul. My life. My all. Here's a small challenge.

[41 : 55] For us. We're going to sing this unaccompanied. It is a small challenge. I'll lead you off.

Please stand. Let's go. Thank you.