

From Riches to Poverty for our Enrichment

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 December 2011

Preacher: Alex Cowie

[0 : 00] Now let's turn back to 2 Corinthians chapter 8, and we'll fix our thoughts around verse 9.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sakes, he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.

Thinking about Jesus from riches to poverty for our enrichment. We've embarked recently on a study around the advent, the first coming of the Savior, and I want to take this theme today as we look at that a little further.

From riches to poverty for our enrichment. Well, the subject of riches and poverty is very much in vogue these days.

We think about people all over the world who are either in abject poverty or poverty or who are in riches or extreme riches.

[1 : 25] And as you know very well, so much has been happening in recent times where manifestly the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

A few million in the world today have amassed great wealth. And hundreds of millions live in poverty.

Both young and old alike live in poverty. There are others, of course, who through the changes in the world economies and particularly in the investment scene have been reduced to poverty.

Or high poverty. It's only a few years ago back in 2008 when you had that major crash. And people who were managing very nicely, some were managing very well, suddenly found that everything they had earned was gone.

Or most of what they had earned was gone. Because of, I was going to say wheeling and dealing. That's maybe a bit blunt. But it probably is true.

[2 : 38] Much wheeling and dealing in the world markets. And suddenly many people were left like that. Well, eventually we thought that that was all behind us.

But we know now in 2011 it's not at all behind us. It's still happening. And the rich are getting richer. And the poor are getting poorer.

I don't mean to say that the rich are unaffected by what's happening. Because we know many famous people are a lot poorer than they were. Because they've invested heavily in this or that. And they too are feeling it. But we think about how all these things affect the ordinary lives of the majority in the world.

And people have discovered what it's like to be poor, to be poverty stricken and so on. Many people.

[3 : 36] Many people have become poor or they're in a precarious position financially because they simply have lived on what they haven't had.

Hard cash. Gelds, fondulags, whatever you like. They haven't had it. They've lived on credit. And they've crunched seriously.

But what has all this to do with the Advent theme of Jesus who was rich yet became poor for our enrichment?

Well, it has this to tell us. It reminds us that in relation to God we are debtors. We have no credit. We're in serious debt. If we want to know him and love him and serve him, we're not going to do it because we're in credit with him.

[4 : 36] We are debtors. And we are taught of God when we realize that we are debtors from the very womb itself.

We come into this world in debt. We are morally bankrupt. And we cannot in any way clear the debt we owe God.

We owe to his law's requirements this due. And you shall live. We simply are debtors. And when we are taught of God, we acknowledge that.

We can say daily we are debtors to grace and to God. We will never in all our service cancel the debt we owe.

What we owe to God we cannot render. But blessed be his name. He is the great creditor. And he has given of his riches freely.

[5 : 38] And he did it in this wonderful way. He did it by impoverishing himself for our enrichment. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor. Well, let's consider what this means to us today.

I want us to think about, first of all, what Jesus was and is. The Bible tells us here.

Paul tells us, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor. Now, not taking issue with the translation as such.

But just filtering in something that is far more significant. That though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor. It's not so much that he was rich and he ceased to be rich.

[6 : 45] Actually, the word in the original is far better translated. Who being rich. It's a present participle active for the grammarians among us.

Who being rich. Rich. He did not cease to be rich. He impoverished himself by becoming something.

And that's the wonder of this. When we think about him from riches to poverty, we're not suggesting that he ceased to be what he always was.

Who being rich. He continued to be what he always was eternally. The blessed God.

The eternal son of the eternal father. And that he continued to be. His impoverishment of himself.

[7 : 48] Came about in that he changed his status willingly. He became man. He took to himself something that he was not.

He was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary. And in a way that is far beyond our comprehension. He became what he eternally was not. He became man. He remained the eternal Lord of the universe. Now, this is incomprehensible to us.

We're not pretending we know it. But we affirm it. Because it's true. The Bible tells us so. It doesn't say understand it, comprehend it, fully comprehend it. It simply says this is the way it is.

Believe it. Receive it. Rest on it. And when people back off and can't accept it, the problem lies with themselves.

[8 : 57] Not with God's message. There are many things about God we simply receive and believe.

Because he tells us so. There are many things he could tell us that he hasn't told us. And what we've got here is we've got one who impoverished himself by becoming man.

The one who made the universe and to continue to hold it all together in a way that is beyond our understanding. No one was as rich as him.

No one continued to be as rich as him. And yet he impoverished himself by becoming man. By stooping down. By taking our frame.

The frame he made. And the frame he breathed life into. In Eden. In our first parents. He takes it to himself.

[10 : 03] He splatters and gasps at birth. Like any little child. He impoverished himself. And this is to help us.

It is true. And we are to affirm it. Who being rich became poor. Second thing is.

And I want to just elaborate on something you touched on there. What Jesus became. He became poor. Who being rich. Says Paul. Yet for your sakes.

He became poor. It's true. And we remind ourselves. Those who were brought up on the Catechism. The Westminster Catechism.

He was born in a lowly condition. He was born into a poor situation. His parents.

[11 : 09] Inverted commas. His mother Mary. And Joseph. His legal father. So to speak. Were not wealthy people. They were poor people.

You remember how in Luke's Gospel. In chapter 2. At verse 22. When the time came. For Mary to go up. Because of the laws of purification.

They went up. Also. To offer. Their firstborn son. To the Lord. That was what the law required.

The firstborn son. Would be offered. To the Lord. And they went up. And when they offered. Their. Statutory.

Sacrifice. They offered. Simply. Pigeons. What the poor offered.

[12:08] There was one step down. Some meal. But the next step up. Still the poor. They offered the pigeons. To the poor. To the poor. To the poor. So the whole context.

Into which he came. He impoverished himself. Into a few like. Was a poor. Ordinary situation. It was his decision.

To do it. Of course. And he did it. Willingly. But. As we said. A moment ago. The very fact.

That he was ready. To. To. To become man. To. To. To quote Wesley here. To abhor not. The virgin's womb. Is a thing. Most marvelous.

It's part of him. Making no account. Of himself. Of stooping down. For us. He became poor. Paul has an interesting.

[13:03] Angle on that. Being born. Of the virgin. Or being conceived. In that. And then born. In due time. In Ephesians 4.

And verse 9. He asks the question. Who is this. Who ascended. But he who first. Descended. Into the lower parts.

Of the earth. That's a really interesting. Expression. For those who are into theology. Because. When he descended. Into the lower parts. Of the earth. It's not just.

About him. Coming from glory. Into this world. The expression. The lower parts. Of the earth. Is used. In Psalm 139.

And verse 15. With reference. To David. Being wrought. Curiously. In the lower parts.

[13:58] Of the earth. In other words. Inside. His mother. And Paul uses that. With reference. To the son of God. Who is he that ascended.

But he who first. Descended. Into the lower parts. Of the earth. So that is part. What I'm saying is. That is part. Of his self. Impoverishment. All he undertook.

In becoming man. All that he undertook. As man. Was absolutely necessary. For our. Enrichment.

And I want to think. Thirdly. And finally. On why Jesus. Became poor. Well he tells us. That you. Through his poverty.

Might be made rich. Or might. Become rich. For your enrichment. People don't.

[14:59] Really think. Even those. That would. Give a passing nod. To the view. That God exists. They don't really think. About. About the goodness. And the mercy.

Of the Lord. To people. They take for granted. What they have. The only wench. When it's gone. The saying. Is true.

We never miss the water. Till the well runs dry. That's true. Generally. People don't acknowledge. The goodness of God. Those of you. Who are giving out. Tracts. On the harvest.

Theme. You're talking to people. About harvest. They never think. Much about it. Very few.

Acknowledge. God is the giver. And yet. The Bible tells us.

He gives seed. To the sower. And bread. To the eater. And that. Can be. The principle there. Can be spread. Right across the board.

[15:54] In all aspects. Of food. And clothing. And shelter. He provides. The wherewithal. To make it all happen. And people don't.

Acknowledge. The goodness of God. In these ways. But you see. More particularly. People don't.

Acknowledge. God. As the giver. Of the capacities. We have. People tend to say. If a person is very able. Intellectually.

Or. Or. Academically. Or so on. They'll say. Well. Oh. His granny. Was a very. Very. Bright.

Intellectual woman. Or something like that. Or. His dad was this. Or. Something to do with the parents.

And therefore. It's in the genes. That's it. But there's plenty. Plenty. Examples. Of people. Who came from nothing.

[16:51] Backgrounds. And. They're astonished. We're genius. Time doesn't permit us. To. To go into this. But there's plenty. Evidence of it.

You probably know some. Yourselves. Men and women. Who are outstanding. I recently saw something. About a. A.

A. Child. Protegy. A musician. Brilliant. Three year old. No background in it. Mathematics.

Physics. You name it. It happens all the time. God is at work. In his. In his. In his enriching people. And no one lays it to heart.

Or few lay it to heart. A bodily. Strength. And other good things we enjoy. God is. Ought. God rather. Ought to be acknowledged.

[17:46] In these things. But far. Far more important. Is that. God himself. In his goodness. And mercy. Impoverished himself.

He became man. For our enrichment. For the salvation of all. Who would by faith. Receive Jesus. A natural tendency. To. When we look at. Enrichment.

Is to look at. Material things. I remember saying to somebody. He. He'll not mind me. Referring to this. But I was. On holiday.

And I was listening to. The former minister. Of Dow and Vale. And he was. He at one point.

[18:41] He was talking about. He was preaching. On acts of the apostles. And he was preaching. On. Ananias. And Sapphira. And how they tried.

To deceive God. They had plenty. Wealth. They didn't need to cheat. On the land they sold. And then. In. In a moment. Of passion.

The preacher. Began to talk about. People. Who professed to be Christians. Who have two. And three. And more houses. And wealth. And. He was letting them have it.

He obviously. Felt. They needed to think. A little bit. About. How much. Trust. And store. They put. In their material things. Well. That's true.

I think. If we're honest. We do tend to put. Too much. Store. On our material things. We like. The security of it. And so on. But you see. Far.

[19:38] Far. More important. To us. Is to. Be. Enriched. Through. The salvation. That Christ. Has accomplished. Jesus.

Himself. Said. Knowingly. What shall it. Advantage. A man. If he gains. The whole world. And he. Loses. Himself. Where will he be.

He'll be regretting. Being in a lost eternity. Forever. That's where he'll be. And. Therefore. We are to. Place. Great. Store. On.

The redemption. On. The gift. Of eternal life. Purchased. By Christ. At the cross. Of Calvary. When he was made. Sin.

For us. Who himself. Knew. No sin. That we might be made. Immeasurably rich. That we might have the. Righteousness of God. Given to us.

[20:36] So. Here we are then. Back to where we started. We are to see ourselves. As. Debtors. In.

Abject. Spiritual. Poverty. Having. Nothing. In our hands. To bring. To one. Who. Wonder of wonders.

Impoverished himself. For our enrichment. And if we really value. What he has done.

Then it will be because we come. As debtors to him. With nothing. With no claim. Except that he bids us to come to. As poor debtors.

To grace. And to God. And when we do that. And we receive him. And we receive. To quote the character. Christ and his benefits.

[21:39] Christ and his wealth. Christ. That brings us. Into the family of God. Then we have got something. To talk about.

Then we have something. To give thanks for. My dear friend. Recognize today. What riches it is. To be. A brother. Of Christ.

To see him. As our elder brother. To see ourselves. As joint heirs. Of Christ's.

Father's. Kingdom. To see what it is. Through faith in him. That we are made. Children of God. A son or a daughter.

Of the living God. To think about. The riches. In terms. Of the glory. He has given. Attached on this. The other week. The glory.

[22:33] That Christ. Gives his people. There's glory to come. I know. But there's glory. He is. There's glory here. He has given us. A firm foundation.

Before God. We have. Access to God. Through. The Lord Jesus Christ. It is riches.

To have a spirit. Working in us. It is riches. To have the legal right. To. Have an answer. To pray. To pray. For Jesus.

For Jesus. To have an answer. To pray. For Jesus. For Jesus. For Jesus. There's all. Sorts of strands. Here. That time. Forbids us. To develop. Whereby. We are. Enriched. In Christ.

[23 : 34] Lives. And when we see it like that. By his grace. By his grace. Then. Then. We have a care. For his cause. Then.

We want to. Do what we can. To fund it. And I'm. I'm not saying here. I'm impressed. To have to say. This year. With the figures. That. The congregation. For all its. Weakness. Numerically. Has given so well. But. But there's always room. For us. To see. More. Of the why.

We give. To the Lord's cause. And how we can give. To support. Its extension. And one of the best ways. Is to. Think about it.

The way Paul gives it. As he. Meditate. On the riches. Of the Son of God. Who.

[24 : 29] Empoverished himself. In this way. He became. Man. For our. Enrichment. In the things.

That will never perish. And because. By faith. We receive him. And are made rich. In him.

We count it. A privilege. To serve him. With our time. And our energy. And our means. As well. And of course.

This context. We're looking at. Is all about. The Corinthians. Who meant well. They meant to gather. A good sum.

And send it up. To Jerusalem. So that it could be. To the poor. Believers. The Jewish believers. Most of them. Who were.

[25 : 28] Disinherited. And who were. Kicked out of their jobs. And so on. And who had nothing. No social security. And all that. But they didn't.

The Corinthians. Didn't get the job done. And Paul takes this. August. Verse. And he says. Think about this.

And act. The way you should. Amen.