

Wonder of Grace

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Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[0 : 01] Well, good morning again. We are continuing in our series on the incarnation of Jesus as we are getting closer to next week, the day that we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior.

We're still in the book of Philippians. If you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, we can be turning to Philippians chapter number two. We've been spending time with the who is Jesus, but today I would like for us to spend a little bit of time looking at the why of the incarnation. Why did Jesus leave heaven, leave the glory of heaven, take upon himself human form, the nature of a human being, in order that he might live and then die on the cross one day?

And if we ask the question, what is it about Christianity that separates Christianity from all the other world religions? What would you say that is? What would you say that separates Christianity? Empty tomb? Okay. A number of different things we might be able to say separates Christianity from other religions. A number of years ago, there was a discussion going on in a British conference, and there were theologians, there were many there who was discussing that very issue. What makes Christianity different from other world religions? And in walked a gentleman into the room while the discussion was going on, a guy named C.S. Lewis, and he asked, what's all the, what's all this about? And they said, this is what we're trying to figure out, if there's anything unique about Christianity. And C.S. Lewis, without even thinking, says, oh, the answer to that's easy. It's one word, grace. There is no such thing as grace in any other world religion as it relates to their God or whoever that God is doing something to human beings that human beings do not deserve to provide them life, salvation, on and on and on and on. And it's because of God's grace that we have an empty tomb. It's because of God's grace that we have a Savior who became a human being to take our place. So it's all about God's grace. So all of these things that fit around Christmas, around the birth of Jesus Christ, we can look back and say, really, it's all about grace. And I hope that as God's people this morning, that we would not yawn in the face of grace, that anytime we think about God's grace and what God's grace provides for us, that we would never lose our wonder at that. So as we think about incomprehensible grace, I would like us to look at Philippians chapter 2, verse 8. And in there, I think we will see three moves, so to speak, that Christ makes to give us a picture of his incomprehensible grace. And we go to verse 8.

And as we're looking at this mind or this attitude of Jesus Christ, in verse 8, it says, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of a cross. And what we see here in Philippians chapter 2, verse 8, is the first move, so to speak, that Christ made. And that is, he went from exaltation to humiliation so that we might be exalted. Went from exaltation to humiliation so that we might be exalted.

[4 : 12] And as we see that, what we're seeing here is this verse says that Christ humbled himself. And notice that it's an action that he took. Jesus Christ was not humbled. There are a lot of things in this life that humble us. You know, we make a mistake and we do something and it humbles us.

But Jesus Christ was not humbled. He humbled himself. Nothing happened to him that caused him to be humbled. He took that upon himself. The Bible says he humbled himself.

Now, I want you to hold your place here in Philippians chapter 2, verse 8. And what we're going to do is go back to the Gospel of John chapter 10. We've been spending some time in the Gospel of John these past few weeks.

But I want you to see that what happened to Christ on earth, the humiliation that he experienced, it wasn't an accident. You know, and people can't say, Oh no, what's going to happen? Oh, they arrested him. Oh no, this is terrible.

And oh no, they're crucifying him. And oh, no. That's why he came. He did it. He humbled himself in order that these things might take place.

[5 : 35] Let's look at John chapter 10 and verse, starting with verse 17. We'll look at verses 17 and 18. Verse 17, Therefore my Father loves me because, what does he say?

I lay down my life. They didn't take it from him. I lay down my life that I may take it again. Notice what he says. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down to myself.

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from my Father. Do you hear what Jesus is saying?

No one humbled him. He humbled himself. Now what does that mean for Christ? That he humbled himself. He took upon himself human form. We've been going over that the last couple of weeks. He took on the nature of a servant. He became a slave to his creation. But I want us to think even deeper than that, even deeper than the fact that Jesus became a human being, we'll see that he humbled himself even further.

[6 : 48] There's a picture of him going from the highest exaltation to the lowest humiliation. And I want us to look at that on two different levels.

The first one is, he was subject. He subjected himself to his creation. Here's a creator of the world. Here's a creator of everything.

He was not even recognized by his creation, the Bible tells us. One whose glory is known throughout the universe. But he is seen as a common human being by those around him.

He came into his own, but his own received him not. They did not recognize him as the Savior, as the Messiah. Recognize him as just a man. You remember Matthew 13, where he came back to his hometown?

And what did people say about him as he was revealing the truths about himself? They were thinking and saying to themselves, in kind of the modern vernacular, hey, he's just a hick from us from a little hick town, Galilee.

[7 : 53] That's basically what they were saying. He's just like us. We knew him growing up. We knew him as a boy. He's not special. We know his family. And he subjected himself to his creation.

He became subject to his creation. His creation mistreated him. Yet he still humbled himself by subjecting himself to them.

Then on another level, we see his humility. Not only did he subject himself to his creation, but also we see on a different level, he was submissive to the Father.

He was submissive to the Father. Not only was he subject to his creation, but he became submissive to the Father. We see Jesus over and over again saying, I am doing the will of my Father.

I'm not doing this on my own. I'm doing this because of him. Let's look first at John 3, 17. John 3, 17 says, For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

[9 : 05] It's God the Father that sent Jesus the Son. Look at verse 34. For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God.

Again, God sent him. For God does not give the Spirit by measure. Here we see all three members of the Godhead being submissive. We see chapter 5, verse 19.

So who sent the Son into the world? The Father. God the Father did. We see it even clearer in chapter 5, John 5, 19.

Then Jesus answered and said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do.

For whatever he does, the Son also does in like manner. So Jesus the Son is showing that he is completely dependent on the Father.

[10 : 11] Now let's go to chapter 6. John chapter 6, verse 38. For I have come down from heaven, not to do what? Not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

Same thing here. In fact, over 30 times in the Gospel of John, Jesus talks about how he was sent by God the Father.

30 times! You think it was a point he was trying to make? I'm not here of my own accord. I was part of the decision because I'm part of the Godhead, but as I became a human being, I subjected myself to the will of the Father, even as I subjected myself, even being lower than the angels, and taking upon the form, taking upon the appearance, taking upon the nature of a human being who got hungry, who got sleepy, who got tired, was able to get his feelings hurt, was able to cry, was able to have emotions, just like us.

So we get a picture that Jesus was God in the flesh, ultimately doing everything according to the will of the Father. So as we draw closer to getting this picture of Christ, that's one of the pictures we see in the Incarnation.

That's just a fancy word that means God became human flesh. Jesus took upon himself human flesh. So now we've got the whole picture.

[11 : 38] Jesus subjected himself to creation. From exaltation to humiliation, we see that also that we might be exalted.

Now what does all this mean? Well, it means his incarnate position. His incarnate, his human position as the Son of Man makes possible our eternal privilege as sons of God.

The Bible calls us sons and daughters, if you will, of God. Now I want us to see how the Incarnation is not just a cold doctrinal truth.

Because you see, some people can take God's word and say, well, you know, this is theology. And as we incorporate, you know, or as we look at theology from the beginning to the end, and as we fit all this together, it can become academic.

But remember, grace is never academic. And what Jesus Christ did in the Incarnation is not just some lifeless, cold doctrinal truth.

[12 : 52] It means the world to us. Because it impacts and it affects us. Now we see that some in Philippians 2, verse 8, saying, being found in the appearance of man, humble himself, became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

And as we go continue into verses 9 through 11, that we're going to look at next Sunday morning, this coming Sunday morning, we're going to see even more clearly that God exalted him to the highest place.

Remember, he was subject to the Father. He became subject to his very own creation. But that one day, or that he was saying, one day that God would exalt him above every name.

And one day, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. So Jesus Christ was humbled to the extreme, but he is also exalted to the extreme as well.

And because he went from exaltation to humiliation, you and I can sit here this morning as well and know that because of his incarnation, we now, as children of God, as the sons and the daughters of God, we as well can be exalted.

[14 : 21] Let's look at 2 Timothy 2, verses 11 and 12. If you're still wondering, well, are we going to be exalted? 2 Timothy 2, verse 11, This is a faithful saying.

For if we died with him, did we? Yes, we did. We are identified with Christ. When Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary, he was representing us.

He took our place. Our sins were laid upon him. Him who knew no sin became sin for us. In our baptism, we are identified with Christ in his death and signified by his burial, and we are raised again to walk in newness of life, signifying his having been, the empty tomb, his having been resurrected from the dead.

We shall also live with him. If we endure, we shall also do what? Reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us.

Let's go now to the book of Romans, chapter 8. Romans, chapter 8, verse 16, The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs.

[15 : 41] Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together. Paul went on to say, Think about it.

No amount of suffering in this world can even begin to compare to the weight of glory that we will experience one day in the eternal state. I know they're going through difficulty.

It's painful on earth. It's painful to everyone who goes through problems and turmoil, difficulties, whether it be financial, whether it be physical, whether it be emotional or relational.

But Paul says, I consider the sufferings of this present time aren't even worthy to be compared because they are so lightweight in comparison to the weight of glory that we will experience one day.

They don't even stack up. One day we're going to be able to share in his glory. So the first move that Christ made is he went from exaltation to humiliation so that we might be exalted.

[16 : 55] The second move that he makes that we see is Jesus went from life to death so that we might live. Jesus went from life to death so that we might live.

The second move that we see in the incarnation. Now we're getting into the heart of the incarnation. We're getting into the... We're plumbing the depths. We're getting deeper into the why of the incarnation.

Now, we remember John 1. We looked at that our first week together. In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. And verse 4. In him was life. And that life was the light of men. The picture is life when we think about Jesus in his incarnation of who Christ is.

He is life. He's the author of life. He, as part of the Godhead, spoke life into existence. Everything about him is life.

[18:03] Eternal life. But when we get to Philippians 2, verse 8, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death.

Even the death of a cross. From death to life. Why? So that we might be able to have new life, eternal life, with him.

And it's at this point that I think we need to take a few steps back into the Christmas story to talk about, or to look at, the implications of the story about the birth of Christ.

You know, when we think about the magnitude of the birth of Christ and everything that surrounds this period of time, we think about how he came to reveal God to us. What was he called?

What was one of his names? Emmanuel. God with us. You want to see the face of God? Look at the face of Jesus. It's literally what he said.

[19:07] His coming, his birth, but we have to remember, we celebrate the birth of Christ, Christ. But that's just part of it. Because think about it.

His birth didn't save us. Nothing that Jesus did in his life saves us. There is no redeeming power in Jesus giving truth.

There is no redeeming power in Jesus healing the blind or making the lame to walk again. There was no redemptive power in him calming the waves and calming the sea.

All those things were part of his purpose, but those only served the greater purpose. And what was the greater purpose? That he would die for us.

And it was his death, his sacrificial death for us, that secured our salvation, that took care of the wrath of God and by his resurrection it proved that God was satisfied with the penalty that he paid.

[20:09] He did all these things, but ultimately it was this, his death on the cross that completely fulfilled his purpose and his subsequent resurrection. Jesus Christ was born in a manger so that one day he would die on the cross.

And here's the reality. Jesus went from life to death so that we might live. The reality is he was born to die. He literally was born to die.

Not born to die like we die because we're born and one day we die. That's not our purpose. Our purpose is not to die. We die because we have inherited a sinful nature because of what Adam did in the Garden of Eden.

But Jesus was just the opposite. Jesus was born for the purpose of dying because if he didn't die he could not save us from our sin. So he was born to die.

The reality of the heart of the incarnation. You know we see these pictures of birth of Christ around this time of year.

[21:14] We see the baby in the manger and often we kind of gloss over the fact that this baby in a manger over 2,000 years ago was born to die.

I think we need to go back to Matthew chapter 2 and again look at the story the account of Jesus being born. It was talking about the wise men.

We'll be looking at Matthew chapter 2 beginning with verse number 9. Talking about the wise men came to visit Jesus from Magi from the east and they came bearing gifts.

And I want us to spend a little bit of time not long we spend a little bit of time looking at those gifts that they gave so we can grab a hold on to a little bit of a deeper understanding of the why Jesus came.

How he went from life to death so that we might live. Look at Matthew 2 verse 9. When they heard the king they departed the wise men and behold the star which they had seen in the east went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy and when they had come into the house they saw the young child with Mary his mother and fell down and worshipped him and when they had opened their

treasures they presented gifts to him these were the gifts gold frankincense or incense and myrrh now what are these gifts now we could spin an entire message here in Matthew chapter 2 as we dig deeper and figure out all that's going on and the and the picture or the the deeper meaning that we see in everything that surrounded his birth but let's just take these three gifts the first gift is gold something that we wish we all had right well gold in scripture represented royalty represented nobility it was a gift for a king gold was a gift for a king you remember the kings that came to see excuse me that that came to Jerusalem for Solomon they brought gold they brought all these expensive gifts what a beautiful and amazing picture these guys bring gold because his baby in the manger is a king we see the second gift frankincense or incense that's what frankincense is it was burned as incense for its smell and you look at the old testament imagery of incense and you see how the priest would burn incense as he was offering the sacrifice that would cover our sins as he would go into the holy of holies an amazing picture of this child in the manger as the priest who would intercede for us between us and god awesome awesome picture and then the third gift myrrh how many of you keep myrrh around your house nobody okay i didn't think so because what myrrh was it was an ointment that was used for burial it was used for burial purposes and the burial purpose of myrrh was to keep the stink off because we know that would happen with a decaying body and literally you know it was it was used for for embalming purposes and so kind of what a weird gift to give to a baby right you know imagine them coming here and and you know they give the gold fit for a king they give the frankincense picture of the child being a high priest of god interceding for us and then they go oh here by the way here's some you can use it when you die that's a strange gift can you imagine going to a baby shower and bringing a baby casket literally is what they did for jesus oh here's gold here's frankincense oh by the way here's some embalming fluid what does it tell us a beautiful picture you say well no it's not yes it is if you think about the why of the incarnation jesus came even as a baby in the manger his purpose was to die for us and i don't know if the magi really grasped the entire picture of what they literally were bringing to [26 : 03] him but god in his infinite wisdom in the gifts that the magi brought were a beautiful picture of who jesus of why the why jesus came and of the who jesus was this baby was born to die and if we look at philippians 2 8 he came he humbled himself became obedient to the point of death and the way that paul says it he's even the death of the cross why do you think he would put it that way even a crucifixion death because a crucifixional death was the most shameful horrible painful forms of death penalty that the romans had in their day matter of fact it was so bad that a roman let's go on to the next slide it was a shameful death it was a shameful death it was so shameful that romans were not crucified it was a form of death penalty reserved for the worst of criminals for traitors for those who would and the point so you wouldn't even talk about crucifixion in polite company so the point was their name would literally be forgotten you would never talk about them again if they were crucified so it was a shameful death not only was it a shameful death it was a painful death can you imagine lingering there on the cross and you are in Jesus' condition already being exhausted and they could linger there for hours literally hours having to push yourself up to be able to allow your lungs to expand to take in another breath of air every breath was agonizingly painful to take so it was a painful death but it was also a cursed death it was a cursed death in the Old

Testament Deuteronomy chapter 21 verses 22 and 23 it said that everyone who hangs on a tree is under the curse of God everyone who was hung on a tree and they did that quite often in the Old Testament you would go and you might conquer another another people they would take the leader the king or whoever and they would hang them up on a pike or they would hang them up on a tree to tell everybody this is what happens when you mess with God and so it was a shameful death anyone that Deuteronomy 21 anyone who hangs on a tree is under the curse of God so what is the result the result is remember Jesus went from life to death what's the result we are born again to live that's the why of the incarnation Jesus died on the cross so that we might have life we are born again so that we might have new life life everlasting the result is we are born again to live he was born to die so that you and

I 2000 years later could be born again to live and here's the beauty of all of this crucifixion was designed to blot out the remembrance of a person but think about it 2000 years later who are we singing about the name of Jesus who was supposed to have been blotted out but we worship we remember him we sing to his memory as a human being his birth his death on the cross and he died so that we might have life so that you and I don't have to walk around being captive to our sin

and his shame as we think about this the result him going from death to life so that we might be born again to live and part of this in this his shame becomes our honor
Jesus Christ was shamed on that road on the path to Calvary he was shamed when he hung on the cross people spat at him people cursed his name people made fun of him he was stripped bare and people made fun of him he took all of this humiliation so that we could receive honor his shame on the cross becomes our honor the things that you and I have done the things that you and I think about that those closest to us will never even know that would come out to light when we stand before God those all were placed on Jesus so that we might stand before him pure and clean so his shame becomes our honor not only does his shame become our honor but his pain becomes our joy he took pain upon himself so that we might have life according to God's word by his stripes we are healed we no longer have to fear the pain of death and worry about the afterlife and what's going to happen because by his stripes we are healed we don't have to worry about the pain of death any longer because in his humanity he took the pain that was supposed to be ours took it upon himself so that we might have joy his pain becomes our joy his shame becomes our honor and ultimately his curse becomes our blessing his curse becomes our blessing let's go to Galatians chapter 3 and I'm going to bring this all together Galatians chapter 3 verse 13 and 14 the Bible says Christ has redeemed us from the what?

[32 : 29] curse of the law remember his curse becomes our blessing Christ redeemed us from the curse having become a curse for us and then if you look if your Bible in parentheses has for it is written cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree remember Deuteronomy 21 the apostle Paul here in Galatians what he does is he goes back and he quotes from Deuteronomy and so Paul's bringing it together he says Jesus took our pain Jesus took the curse upon himself because Paul says you remember the very word of God says everyone who hangs on a tree is cursed so Jesus took our curse so that we might receive a blessing so we don't have to stand before God cursed we stand before him in the righteousness of Jesus

Christ awesome we never get bored let's never get bored with the incarnation with the grace that God has for us so what are the implications as we bring all of this to a close and maybe wrap a neat little bow around it what does all this mean for us I want us to go to another part of what the apostle Paul has written and we will be looking a little bit in a moment as second Corinthians and understand how the incarnation of Jesus Christ has implications for our life and the third move that Jesus Christ made we're going to see that the apostle Paul says that in second Corinthians is Jesus Christ went from rich to poor so that we might become rich and are we seeing here kind of a list of opposites Jesus went from exaltation to humiliation so that we could be exalted

Jesus Christ went from death to life so that we could have life Jesus went from rich to poor Jesus became homeless for you and me think about it he never had a home of course he didn't have a mortgage either but didn't have a place the Bible said he had no place to lay his head he was homeless so often we gloss over the life of Jesus even the baby in a manger we sing away in a manger no crying he makes he was crying alright but we kind of put a halo around everything when we see a homeless person quite often when it's cold he probably went to a shelter but if you come off 210 there by IHOP there's a homeless guy he was there every single day sometimes on this side of the road sometimes on that side of the road when it was raining he had a little tarp over his basket Jesus became a homeless person he went from rich to poor so that we could become rich let's look at 2nd

Corinthians chapter 8 verses 8 and 9 now here's the context of this passage just kind of give you a little bit of background Paul was writing this letter to the church at Corinth he was going to be taking an offering to the Christians in Jerusalem they had been going through a difficult time and they were in a financial bind and so Paul had been going around taking up a collection taking up offering for the Jerusalem Christians he's been to Macedonia he's picked these up now he is telling those in Corinth come on let's give we have fellow believers who have a need so he's writing to the church of Corinth and they're much more affluent than the Macedonians so that's kind of what Paul says the Macedonians who don't have much sacrificed and gave much now Paul is kind of saying to these guys you

Corinthians you're affluent by the world's standards you're wealthy let's share the wealth let's look and see what he says 2nd Corinthians chapter 8 verses 8 and 9 he says I speak not by commandment but I am testing the sincerity of your love I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others he says I'm comparing you with others now we should not compare but Paul

says okay let's do a little bit of comparison here for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ now Paul why would you bring grace into this deal because remember what is it that separates Christianity from the rest of world religions it's grace why did Jesus come to the earth to die it was a result of God's grace he wanted to give us new life he wanted to be able to spend an eternity with us but he knew it was impossible apart from

[37 : 57] Jesus Christ taking our place on the cross so he says for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was what rich he became what he became poor so Jesus Christ went from rich to poor he goes on to say that you through his poverty might become what might become rich so we see we see a litany of opposites we see Jesus Christ now leave riches to take on poverty in order that you and I might become rich not necessarily riches as this world sees riches but that we would inherit everything that was his and here's how Paul uses the incarnation to compare or excuse me to compel the Corinthian Christians to give to the church in Jerusalem when they were in such need the creator of the world became homeless so that we could be rich and what was happening in Corinth in the Corinthian church is you know they probably had pretty decent jobs some of them probably were business owners they had nice homes and they were living in their affluence and abundance and they were holding on to that and

Paul comes in and he says open your eyes and see the grace that God shows us in Jesus let's follow his example like Philippians 2 let this attitude be in you Jesus didn't think it was Robert to be equal with God that he would just stay up there no he humbled himself and came here and he says open your eyes see the savior that you're worshiping see who Christ is he gave up all of his resources so that you might become rich and I think he's kind of saying how can you claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and hoard all of these riches that you have how can you grab on to all of these resources you have while others are in need he says it doesn't make sense basically he's saying first of all that we need to see his poverty in the world in order for us to be who he wants us to be to accomplish what he wants us to accomplish we really need to see

Jesus' poverty as a human being he did this by giving up his rights he did this by giving up his rights remember Philippians 2 8 he took upon himself the nature of a slave slaves owned nothing slaves were told what to do and when to do it where to go and when to go so he gave up his rights second he gives up his resources remember he had all the resources that heaven offered but he lowered himself even lower than the angels subjected himself to his creation became a human being and we need to understand without Jesus we're spiritually bankrupt we have nothing to offer God but for those of us who trust Jesus as our Savior everything that's his belongs to us he gives us his resources now that's

Christ see his poverty he gave up his rights he gives up his resources so what about those of us who were followers of Christ what about those who have Christ dwelling in our lives because we've trusted him how does this affect us now think about it not only do we see his poverty but now we are his people the bible says we are his people we are called by his name so we are to how do we do that we are to be his people in the world you see the world cannot see Jesus today he's in heaven at the right hand of God how are people going to see Jesus it's through us we are the light we are light in this world Jesus was the light of the world we are his light in this world now that's Christ we see his poverty he gave up his rights he gave up his resources so what about those who are followers of

Christ we need to be doing the same thing how can we do that by giving up our rights by giving up our rights as a follower of Christ you realize that you have no rights well you know what I deserve respect no we don't we deserve an eternity in the lake of fire that's what we deserve so we give up our rights we belong to Jesus we are the bonds Paul said he was a bondservant of Jesus Christ so if we're slaves of Jesus slaves own nothing slaves have no rights so what does that say about us we have no rights we only have the right to follow him and that's what he's given to us he's given us the Holy Spirit so that we have the ability to please him and to follow him so Philippians 2 our attitude needs to be the same as

[43 : 44] Jesus Christ now what Paul is saying look around the Macedonians were willing Christians were willing to sacrifice for the believers in Jerusalem and he says those of you who are living the Corinthian dream he says look to Jesus because if you're going to be Jesus's people in the world you as well have to be willing to give up your rights and to give up your resources and that's the second thing if we want to be his people in the world we give up our resources we give up our resources because what Paul is telling them in 2nd Corinthians 8 their needs in Jerusalem

you've got the wherewithal you have the resources it's time for us to rise up surrender our resources and say they're God's God you can use it as you will and you know we're much like the church at Corinth if you have a roof over your head and you have at least a couple of meals a day most of us have more than that we are more affluent than the majority of the world and he's saying you want to be his people then be willing to give up our resources and the question is what does this mean to us what does this baby in the manger mean to us now I know many of us are familiar with the author

J.I. Packer matter of fact you may have even read his book Knowing God I'd like to read an excerpt from that book as we close and it's this he says we talk glibly of the Christmas spirit rarely meaning more by this than the sentimental jollity on a family basis but it ought to mean the reproducing in human life of the temper of him who for our sakes became poor the first Christmas in the Christmas spirit itself ought to be the mark of every Christian all year round it is to our shame and disgrace today that so many Christians the soundest of the most orthodox go through this world in the spirit of the priest and the Levites seeing human needs all around them but after a pious wish and perhaps a prayer that God might meet those needs avert their eyes and pass by on the other side these are not my words these are words J.I.

Packer that is not the Christmas spirit nor is it the spirit of those Christians alas they are many whose ambition in life seems limited to building a nice middle class Christian home and making nice middle class Christian friends and bringing up their children in nice middle class Christian ways and who leave the sub middle class sections of the community Christians and non Christians to get on by themselves the Christmas spirit does not shine out in the Christian snob the Christmas spirit is the spirit of those who like their master live their whole lives on the principle of making themselves poor spending and being spent to enrich their fellow humans giving time trouble care and concern to do good to others is not just their own and not their own to others and not just their own friends in whatever way their sins need now let's not fool ourselves today by rejoicing in the incarnation and then hoarding our resources and not seeing the need to help others and that's why one of the reasons why every year we take up an offering called a happy birthday

Jesus offering and this year half of that offering that we take up tonight is going to go to one of our foreign missionaries and the other half is going to go to the ABC crisis pregnancy center for those who take care of those who might consider aborting a child and it's being offered the options that they have whether they give up for adoption or to keep the child and to raise that child so we need to remember we are here to be here for others and as we wind this down what's the bottom line what does all this mean well I think the first part of the bottom line is God has amazed us with his grace through the humility sacrifice and liberality of his son he went from exaltation to humiliation so that praise God one day we might be exalted he went from life to death so that we could by trusting Christ as our savior go from death to life and he went from being rich to being poor so that we through the riches of his grace might be able to go from poverty spiritual bankruptcy to being rich with him so we see the humility the sacrifice the liberality of his son Jesus we've got to draw the connection that's not the end of it God is not finished working in this world and we realize that God desires to amaze the nations we see that in his word the church exists to amaze the universe that God in his grace could take us who are morally bankrupt who deserve death and to give us his riches through his son Jesus Christ so God desires to amaze the nations with his grace through the humility sacrifice and liberality of his people so that's us

[49 : 44] God showed his riches through his son Jesus Christ rich poor death life so that we might be able to have life so that we might be able to live one day being exalted and that we could show the riches of Christ to the world so let's not get bored with Christmas and I know all the glitz and glamour and the the tinsel and all the the salespeople and and everything they're trying to sell us over the holidays let's never forget and let's never stop being amazed by God's grace that he showed to us revealed to us in the form of Jesus son of God and the son of man together in the same person and let us be his people that God can use to amaze the nations with his grace through us in our humility our sacrifice and our liberality let's pray father we thank you we thank you for the awesomeness and the magnitude of the incarnation and lord we thank you today for having provided this for us we praise you

I know this is difficult for us to say but we even praise you for the humiliation and the death of our savior that through our though our we are poor that we might become rich father all glory be to your name and may we honor you glorify you in everything that we say in everything that we do father

we're so thankful make us a people who see your grace and sacrifice just like you have sacrificed and with all that you have entrusted to us let us be willing to use our resources for your honor and for your glory for it's the name of Jesus our savior we pray amen amen it's amen amen amen let's amen let's let's let's