

God's Radical Economics

A Christmas Truth for Tough Times

2 Corinthians 8:9

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"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."

The Poverty of Christ at Christmas

2 Corinthians 8:9 tells us that for our sakes, Jesus Christ became poor. Not just a little bit poor, but truly poor...dirt poor. Doesn't really sound like a Christmas verse, but it is. For Jesus, the change from rich to poor came on Christmas day. This was deity taking up residence in humble human form. I can't imagine a more dramatic, extreme movement from rich to poor. Everything about the birth of Christ screams out of poverty. Born in a barn? Some people think it was probably a cave. Is that better? Sounds like tough going. Sure, wise men showed up at some point with gold, frankincense and myrrh. But how much gold was it and what happened to it? Maybe Joseph and Mary had to hawk it at a pawn shop to get the cash so they could flee for their lives to Egypt. Baby Jesus began His life on the run, broke and a stranger in a foreign country. Jesus was poor...extremely poor. That poverty was played out in His life in countless ways. It found fullest expression on the Cross, where Jesus died, naked and alone between two thieves.

Many people are poor because they have no other choice. The amazing thing about Jesus is that He actually chose to enter into this extreme poverty, all for us. More amazing yet is the outcome...it is through the extreme, voluntary poverty of Christ, that we may become rich.

The Riches of Christians through Christ

Christ was born into poverty on Christmas day, lived a life of extreme poverty and died in shame on the Cross, all so that we might become rich. But what exactly does it mean to be rich, in the economy of God? Tough economic times in our nation remind us that the "riches" of this world are unstable and uncertain—the riches Christ brings into our lives are different. These riches do not depend on the economic upturns or downturns of financial markets. These riches are certain even in uncertain times. These riches can never be taken away from us. The Christian who knows the grace of Christ is a man or a woman who is rich: rich in faith, hope and love. They are rich in forgiveness and the gift of righteousness before God. They are rich in purpose, meaning, and mission. This is the gift of God and it is the meaning of Christmas. We have been made rich through the poverty of Christ!

The Grace of Giving

So now we know the amazing economics of God at Christmas. In God's economy Christ became poor for us so that we might become truly rich through Him. This is God's grace poured out for us. But God also asks us to pour out grace for others. He asks us to join Him in His unusual economic plan! Just two verses earlier, in 2 Corinthians 8:7, we are called to excel at the "grace of giving". So now we find that this whole discussion of Christ's poverty and our riches has been a profound illustration intended to spur us to action. God

asks us to give—even out of our own poverty, just like Jesus. This is called the grace of giving and it is modeled from the greatest gift of grace ever...the poverty of Christ that purchased the riches of our salvation.

This Christmas, I pray we will each know the true riches that can only come through the radical grace of God in Christ. And then, by the grace of God, may we also open our hands and our hearts to give graciously to the needs of others. Amen!