

The Infinite Span  
Christmas Eve, 2021

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 through His poverty might become rich. (2nd Corinthians 8.9)

In 2008, Eric Weiner wrote what went on to become a bestselling book on the relationship between location and happiness. The book, titled, *The Geography of Bliss (One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World)* also identified the saddest places in the World and the nation taking the honor of saddest nation on earth was Moldova.

Moldova was not the poorest nation in the world. In fact many poorer nations were happier. It wasn't climate or any of the obvious factors that made Moldova unhappy.

Moldova was a nation that had lost its identity. It had been a Soviet Satellite nation and saw itself as a member of an empire...but when that fell on Dec 26, 1991 (BTW – I THINK, Sunday is the 30th Anniversary of that date) then Moldova went from the most powerful empire to well, do you know where it is? (B/T Romania and Ukraine)

The point IS – if a person or group or a band has known greatness and dominance and has THEN been downgraded and relegated to weakness and impotence, from power and wealth to poverty and WANT, the sense of deprivation is exponentially greater than for those who have never known what it's like to be on top. (I might bring up certain sports teams at this point – teams once undefeated and now NOT so much... but I'll leave that alone).

And all this is to say that we really can't get the true meaning of Christmas until we see the distance that was crossed by this Visitor sleeping in the feeding trough. So let's delve into that question – in fact 4 questions:

1. What does it mean that Christ WAS rich?
2. What does it mean that Christ became poor?
3. What does it mean that YOU through His poverty might become rich?
4. What does it mean to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ?

1. What does it mean that Christ WAS rich?

The Bible teaches and all Christians have believed from the start that Christ was AND IS God. He's the eternal One. He, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God created all things... As Second Person in the Holy Trinity, God the Son shares all the attributes of divinity – He is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

To show His people that THEY need Him but that HE will never need them – this God points to His infinite wealth. Psalm 50: "For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all it contains." (v. 10-12) He owned everything – you can't possibly BE any wealthier than that!

Are Christians saying that Jesus Christ is actually God Himself? Yes!

I love the quote by the old English writer, Thomas Watson, "God's centre is everywhere and His circumference is nowhere." And that can be said of the One who walked the dusty streets of Galilee – He was God AND He was Man.

2. What does it mean that Christ became poor?

Here's a bit of a very ancient sermon (dated from the 4th C), the Nativity Sermon of John Chrysostom: "The Ancient of Days has become an infant. He, Who sits upon the exalted, heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. And He Who cannot be touched, Who is... without parts... and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He Who has broken the chains of sinners, is now Himself bound by swaddling cloth..." St Paul would put it this way: "who, although He existed in the form of God... He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." (Phi 2.6-7)

The Prince becomes the Pauper. He becomes, in His human body and human nature, subject to the laws of physics AND subject to His own moral/ethical laws as well. The Infinite, Eternal and Unchangeable ONE becomes subject to change (Luke 2.52) bound by the limits of time and space and obligated to keep the commandments that He Himself decreed for the human race... The God-Man is obliged to keep His own law. Now His center is in one place (not everywhere) and His circumference is traceable/limited.

The One who needed NOTHING...now needs everything. He's totally dependent on His mother and father for the basic necessities of food, shelter, hygiene, help, protection. He has crossed the infinite divide... Any distance we might imagine between a high position and low – the wealthiest person on earth and the poorest... that distance is not even comparable to the distance between His state of original glory and sovereignty and the State of His Humiliation – He went from infinite height to the lowest depths... helpless...excluded...unnoticed...human...poor.

3. What does it mean that YOU through His poverty might become rich?

Well, what God did, in becoming physical, in becoming limited in time and space, in becoming HUMAN – He did in order to fulfill the terms of an agreement. That agreement (or covenant) was made between God and the human-race.

God agreed to give human beings life with Him and humanity was required to obey God. God made that agreement with two people who represented all humanity and these two representatives... trusted in a lie that God was somehow withholding something from them.

Adam and Eve broke the agreement. Standing in for us as our agents or representatives or proxies, they violated the terms. And all humanity has universally followed our first parents. But the arrangement, while BROKEN has not been abrogated or revoked or repealed. The conditions (between God and humanity) MUST be met if the seals are to be broken and the plan for the fulfillment of all things be executed. But there IS no human being sinless and self-less who can fulfill the agreement and fix what is broken...Is anyone worthy?

But now God has come as a human being to fulfill the terms of the agreement... The Creator becomes a Creature and does so in order to be a New Representative, a Second Adam who will at last return to the

Garden and say (what the first Adam refused to say), “NOT My will – but THINE be done”. With His dying breath, He says, “It is finished!” The terms have been met – covenant fulfilled!

And everyone represented by this New Man, the Last Adam, is given what He, the GodMan deserves. All people are in one category or the other: represented by the First Adam (the guilty) or the Second Adam – the GodMan, the innocent, perfect human Being, Apple of the Father’s eye and are declared innocent and righteous because of Him.

Every person I see right now...every man, woman or child watching by internet...every person who has ever lived will stand either IN Adam or IN Christ... a member of the Old Creation or of the New Creation.

4. (Finally) What does it mean to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Our original verse says, “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 through His poverty might become rich”. (2nd Corinthians 8.9)

St Paul tells this church that they have experienced the ultimate gift... they KNOW it...They’ve actually received the benefits of God’s infinite descent in Jesus Christ... It’s become their sole source of confidence and comfort – that THEY are NOT under the reign of Adam the covenant breaker but they are represented by Jesus Christ the New Adam, the Covenant-Keeper.

Paul tells them that knowing this, believing and receiving and resting on this GRACE in Jesus Christ and the full and free acceptance with God that’s so real that it’s as if YOU YOURSELF kept the covenant and are PERFECT in the sight of God... Paul tells them that IF you get this...believe it ...know it...NOT only are you a member of the New Creation...but even right now ...IF you see what started in that manger, that stable, ...the cave where God entered our world poor, naked, a Baby and what was finished with the words, “IT IS FINISHED” and what was validated/proven at another cave, an empty tomb...If you are a recipient of this grace... It saves you from judgment and even now it begins to make you gracious and even radically generous.

Paul’s whole section of this great letter is about that very thing: you wealthy Corinthians, give your wealth to your brothers and sisters in the poor church of Jerusalem...If God came an infinite distance to YOU, and YOU know it...you get it...you believe it...THEN move toward those in need and go the few inches it takes to help your brothers in need.

Let God’s infinite generosity take hold of you and YOU will actually become WILDLY generous...