

God's Indescribable Gift

Based on a sermon by Melvin Newland

2 Corinthians 9:15

Our scripture this morning is 2 Corinthians 9:15. It is a short verse, only 8 words long. Listen as the apostle Paul says, **"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"**

This is the time of year when we are concerned about choosing just the right Christmas gifts to give to the special people in our lives. But let me ask you, "Have you ever received an indescribable gift?" Have you ever received a gift that was beyond description?

I thought about that for a while this week. What kind of gift would it have to be to be called "indescribable?" Would it be a gift that you open and look at and say, "This is just beautiful, and it is something that I've wanted all my life - what is it?"

Or maybe it is a gift that carries a lot of emotional feelings with it. It was given to you by someone very special, and it was a complete surprise when it was given. You'll treasure it always because of the memories. Would that make it an indescribable gift?

In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul at first is writing about human gifts. The church in Corinth is taking up offerings to give to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. He commends them for their eagerness to help, and reminds them that those who sow sparingly will also reap sparingly, but that those who sow generously will reap generously.

Then he shifts his attention from human gifts to God's gift. And he cannot find words to describe that. He simply says, **"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"**

God Himself is the first gift-giver. John 3:16 tells us very plainly what God's gift to us is, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."** God gave His Son out of His love for the world.

The Father gave His Son. The Son gave His life. Listen to these verses that describe what God gave in Jesus Christ:

who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (Gal 1:4 NKJV)

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal 2:20 NKJV)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, (Eph 5:25 NKJV)

who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, (1 Tim 2:6 NKJV)

who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (Titus 2:14 NKJV)

ILL. Now at this time of the year we do our best to depict the wonderfulness of God's gift of Jesus to us.

Musicians have composed some of their greatest music on this theme: Handel's "Messiah," Bach's "Christmas Oratorio," and the beautiful Christmas hymns, "Joy to the World," "Silent Night," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." Some of the greatest music our ears will ever hear were written about God's indescribable gift.

Poets and painters and sculptors have taken up the tools of their trade to pay tribute to Jesus, the gift of God's love.

PROP. Now Paul said, "**Thanks be unto God for His indescribable gift.**" Why does Paul call God's gift of Jesus "indescribable?" I think that there are at least four reasons.

I. BECAUSE OF HIS NATURE

First of all, I believe that Paul calls Jesus "**indescribable**" because of His nature. How do you describe Jesus? What words would you choose? How do you describe a baby born of a virgin? How do you describe the Word, who was God becoming flesh?

Isaiah said He would be called Emmanuel, "**God with us.**" How do you describe that? What words would you choose?

How do you describe God who has all knowledge when all we have is limited knowledge? How do you describe the infinite God? How do you describe the eternal? How do you describe the indescribable?

Paul says that we can't. Words aren't adequate. But many of the wisest men in the world have tried to describe Jesus.

ILL. Listen to the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. Some of the greatest theological minds of the time came together and tried to describe Jesus. Here is their description:

"We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.."

Did you understand all that? Neither did I. That's man's attempt to describe the indescribable. Even when we bring together our greatest minds and our most extensive vocabularies, we cannot adequately describe Jesus.

II. BECAUSE OF HIS PURPOSE IN COMING TO EARTH

Secondly, I think Paul called Jesus indescribable because of His purpose in coming to earth. The angels announced to the shepherds, **"Unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord."**

What do we celebrate at Christmas? We celebrate the fact that Jesus came into our world to save us. When God looked at our world He knew that our greatest need is not for more wealth, nor better schools, not even a better welfare system. Our greatest need is for a Savior.

As we have been learning in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, without Christ we were all **"dead in trespasses and sins;"** we were **"the sons of disobedience;"** and were **"by nature children of wrath, just as the others."** Our problem was that we were, **"without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."**

Our greatest need is to be saved from sin, from self, and from Satan.

How do you describe that? How do you put into words what God accomplished when He sent His only begotten Son into the world?

1 John 4 puts it this way:

9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

I think that Jesus, God's gift, is indescribable because of His nature, because of His purpose in coming to earth, and thirdly, because of the grace by which Jesus is given.

III. BECAUSE OF THE GRACE BY WHICH JESUS IS GIVEN

Most every gift that we give at Christmas will be given because the recipient of that gift has some claim on us.

Now you might not like that idea, but that is as frank as I know how to be. I'll buy a gift for my wife because she is my wife. I'll buy gifts for my children because they are my children.

If I give a gift to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked or to take care of the homeless, I do it because down deep inside I recognize that I have a debt to humanity, a feeling of obligation to them.

This is what makes God's gift so special. He didn't owe us anything. We were in constant rebellion against Him and His will for our lives. Remember the big BUT in Ephesians 2:4? **"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."**

God gives a gift, not because He feels obligated to give a gift but because His love is so overwhelming. It's a gift of grace.

And when you stop at the manger at Bethlehem and look at the Christ child, you must realize that He is a gift of grace. And there are no words adequate enough to describe God's grace towards us in Jesus.

IV. BECAUSE OF HIS EFFECT ON US

Now what happens when I receive God's gift? When you open your gifts this Christmas will your life be different? When you receive the gifts that have been purchased for you by loved ones, will this change your life and make you different? Or will you be the same as you have always been?

The Bible teaches that when we accept Jesus, the indescribable gift of God, that we will never be the same again because of how He affects our life.

Again, we have learned in Ephesians that God grace gift in Jesus Christ changes us. We were spiritually dead in sins, now because of Go's gift He has **"made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"** (2:5-6).

We are made to be **"His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them,"** (2:10). We are, **"no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,"** (2:19).

When I accept God's gift of Jesus I am adopted into His family and I am guaranteed citizenship in His kingdom. Before, I was a foreigner and an alien, separated from God. But now, because I have accepted Him, I am an adopted son of Almighty God. Everything that belongs to Jesus also belongs to me. We are brothers and sisters in God's family because I accepted His indescribable gift.

Because of God's gift of Jesus Eph 1:7 says, **"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."**

Because Jesus is now my Savior my sins are forgiven. Cherish that promise with all your heart.

When I accept God's gift of Jesus I also receive the gift of His Holy Spirit to live within me. Eph 1:13-14 says **"having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."**

I am also given His peace. Peace with God and peace with other people. Not the peace of the world, but a oneness with others because we have a union with God through Christ. Eph 2:13-14, **"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation."**

I knew when I started this sermon that I would fail in my attempt to describe God's gift of Jesus because someone else failed before me, and he was better at it than I. The apostle Paul looked at Jesus and said, *"I can't describe Him. All I can do is fall on my knees and thank God for His indescribable gift."*

And I guess that's what we need to do at Christmas time, too, to fall on our knees and thank God for His indescribable gift.

How in the world do you describe that which is indescribable? In the fullness of time God sent His only begotten Son, as a baby. Indescribable! But the good news is that you don't have to be able to describe Him to accept Him. You can be changed by Him. So make your journey to the manger with the shepherds. Take Him into your heart and accept God's indescribable gift for you.

We offer Him to you this morning, and we pray that you will respond as we stand and as we sing.