



## “The Inexpressible Gift”

II Corinthians 9:15

December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

This morning we continue in our series on the Gifts of Christmas. As we open the Word of God together now, it is my joy to speak with you about a gift that is, in fact, too wonderful for words. It is the gift that exceeds all other gifts. It is a gift that could never be purchased, but it was given freely from a heart of love.

I suspect that this is a gift that most of you have already received and if that is the case, I pray that this morning the worth of this gift would burn all the more in your heart. If you are here this morning and you come to the realization as we speak of this gift that you have not received it, I pray that there would be a great sense of urgency and desire to receive it.

It is a gift that is so magnificent that it is beyond telling in human language. The fullness of this gift cannot be contained in human words. The Apostle Paul came to this realization as he brought his lengthy discourse on Christian giving to an end in his second letter to the Corinthians.

In Chapters 8 and 9 of II Corinthians, Paul was encouraging the Gentile Christians of Corinth to follow through on their previously stated desire to help the Jewish Christians of Judea in their poverty to alleviate the want that they were experiencing.

So coming to the end of what Paul had to say on that topic, he capped it off with a statement that almost seems abrupt and out of sync with the flow of thought when you read everything that led into it, because so far in this segment of Scripture, Paul had been exhorting them about giving their gifts, about being sacrificial with their love. Paul had been speaking to them about following through with their good intentions, and giving the gift that they had committed to in months past.

But as Paul came to the end of this portion of encouragement about their giving, he crowned this section with this short-abbreviated outburst of praise about God’s giving, knowing that God’s giving surpasses and inspires all human giving.

And what God has given is beyond human expression. We can speak of it, but we can’t speak forth the fullness of it. Paul just brought this too us in one loaded and short sentence. So let’s look at what it says in II Corinthians 9:15:

**<sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!**

As we begin our consideration of this sentence and this gift this morning, let me first draw your attention to the singular form of the word *gift*. Is there an *s* at the end of it? No, there is not. It is not plural. It is singular.

God has given a great many gifts, but this verse would indicate to us that there is a gift that is, in fact, set above the rest. For it says:

**<sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!**

Further, some have pointed out that this verse does not specify what the gift is. It describes it. It is an inexpressible gift, but it goes as an unnamed gift, at least in this verse. So Bible scholars and commentators have suggested several ideas about just what this gift might be. Reading those suggestions, I found them both interesting and edifying. So let me name a few of them for you.

What is this gift that we are talking about? It is an inexpressible gift. First, some suggest that the gift spoken of here in this verse is the miracle of Christian unity. After all, Paul was describing the newfound Jew-Gentile union of worship. He was even describing it in the verses that preceded this crowning verse that leads up to it.

I don't know if you will believe this or not, but back in biblical times blatant racism was rampant. It was all over the world. We might even say that there is way too much racism that even exists in our so-called enlightened time.

Here in this context, we have Greek Gentiles that would have considered the Jewish people nothing but a nuisance and an irritation with all of their scrupulous discussion about their monotheism, their one god that they worshiped. Similarly, the Jews under the leadership of the Pharisees, the Separatists, would have distained the Gentile Corinthians, considering them a bunch of unclean, uncircumcised Gentiles.

But then in the body of Christ, back then in the church, you had Gentiles of Corinth and Jews of Judea, they were saved in Christ. They felt and behaved differently. The Corinthians and the Macedonians were giving sacrificially for the good of the Jews in Judea. They were giving to them out of love, based on the affection that they felt in their hearts as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul, who was the converted Jewish Apostle to the Gentiles, saw these people who had previously despised each other now loving and having concern for one another. There was union that was remarkable.

Then writing about it all, Paul was saying that it was wonderful and praise be to God for His inexpressible gift—people who were previously so combative toward one another, and then being enmeshed in this kind of love. Isn't reconciliation among people wonderful? Isn't it just a lovely thing when people who had been at odds with each other humble themselves and seek mutual understanding and become reconciled?

I can tell you this: not many more things gives more joy and refreshment and energy to the heart of a pastor than when people who had been troubling each other, humble themselves and confess sin and seek to understand each other and are reconciled. It is a wonderful, wonderful thing that gives wings to the heart. So I understand the suggestion here that maybe it was unity that Paul was rejoicing in as he thought about it.

Yet, as wonderful as the gift of unity is and as deeply as we need to contemplate these things, if we are in any state of ongoing discord, especially with people in the body of Christ, it does not quite measure up to the superlative language that Paul used in this portion of Scripture. So secondly, some suggest that there might be another identify to this gift.

Some suggest that this gift is the marvelous grace of God. God's grace is the gift. God's grace being the active energy, the power from God in mercy and kindness upon the ill-deserving to make them spiritually alive in Christ and empowered to live like Christ; this grace that both initiates and characterizes and empowers the Christian life.

Maybe this grace is what were are talking about in this verse. Scholars point this out, recognizing that this unit of Scripture in II Corinthians 8 and 9, is absolutely permeated with the language of God's grace.

Through the week I like to stroll our property at lunch time and find different places to think. One time I went into the youth room, the DOXA room. I went in to eat my sandwich and reflect a little. And, man, it smelled so good in there! This was the youth room and it was kind of surprising. That is a room with pizza stains on the carpet, but it smelled so good. What I found is that there was a Glade air freshener that was plugged into the wall. Good idea! It smelled so good and it was permeating the room.

Beginning in Chapter 8 and Verse 1 of II Corinthians, grace infuses this passage of Scripture, appearing ten times all the way up Chapter 9 and Verse 14, where it speaks of the surpassing grace of God upon the Corinthians, empowering generosity in their hearts.

That is an awesome thing, and it was such a movement of the grace of God to help the Macedonians in Greece to be so generous to people that in a racial sense, they would have not previously cared about at all, and even despised. All of this was being empowered by grace.

Grace is an astonishingly wonderful gift. That word *grace* is a top tier, vitally important biblical term that we need to study and understand and appreciate and praise God for. This is something that we need to understand.

Brothers and sisters, we go straight to the heart and soul of the Christian faith as I understand it right now. For even if God had this gracious inclination toward sinners like us, this undeserved kindness and desire for forgiveness and reconciliation, His righteousness would still demand that sinners be held accountable for their transgression of His good and perfect Law.

Even if He wanted to pour out the grace He has in His heart, His justice would require that the penalty of sin be paid. His holiness would still be too pure to look upon human iniquity, so that while there is grace, there is also justice and holiness and righteousness and there is His pure wrath that abides upon the sin and abuse that occurs in this world and upon those who do it

So while there is grace, God cannot pour out His grace without compromising His justice and staining His holiness, but, thanks be to God, there is another gift to be spoken of. Thanks be to God, there was a gift that satisfied the justice of God; that pleased the holiness of God; that fulfilled the righteousness of God.

It is a gift that allowed the torrent of His grace to be released from His heart upon the heads of sinners like us. I won't keep you in suspense any longer. The Gift of gifts, the Inexpressible Gift, Paul was speaking of is the Son of God born into the world and given the name Jesus.

Paul was speaking of the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world; risen in power; returning in glory. He was speaking of the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and the God of gods who entered into the world as a human being and died a bloody death on the cross, that our sins might be forgiven.

Jesus lived a life of perfect righteousness so that we can be covered and adorned in Him, qualified to dwell in the presence of the eternal kingdom of holiness and love and joy and dancing and laughter forever and ever and ever, without the justice of God in any way being compromised; with His love being poured out in full measure.

Jesus Christ, Jesus Himself, the Eternal One made man, He is the inexpressible gift. The fullness of who He is and all that He has done for us, while it can be spoken of, it could never be spoken of fully. He is so much more that our hearts can even understand yet.

Those of us who are in Christ, who take shelter in Him, who are cleansed in Him, who are born anew in Him, we will spend all of eternity getting to know more and more of this greatest gift that has ever been given in the history of the planet earth and universe and all that God has created. Jesus is the gift! I am very much convinced and convicted that Jesus Christ is the gift.

Now, we have the Apostle Paul writing this sentence for us—the sentence that we have recorded before us in II Corinthians 9:15. Sixty some odd years had passed since that baby was born of a virgin daughter of Israel and placed in a manger.

Sixty some off years had passed since the Bethlehem region was lit up with the joy of angels expressing the coming of the Savior. Sixty something years had passed since the Maggi had arrived with their gifts befitting a king, because He is a King. Thirty something years had passed since Jesus was crucified and His resurrection and ascension, His being lifted back to heaven.

All these years had passed which included the conversion of the Apostle Paul, the author of this text, from his violent ways. There he was somewhere in a small room in Macedonia. I picture him there sitting next to a lamp, writing on a scroll with his stylus in hand. He was urging the Corinthians to practice generosity.

Paul's heart was taken to the generosity of God as he concluded his discussion of that topic. His heart just welled up in gratitude for the great gift that God had given. He found no words adequate to convey what was going on within him, as he heart was worshipping the Lord. So, do you know what Paul did at that time as he wrote this sentence? He could not find the word, so it seems that he just coined a word for himself.

He used a word that is found no where else in the New Testament. What my reading and study has informed me of is that this word was not used in any writing of Greek antiquity up to that point. Afterward you find it, but up to this point, you don't. It might have been circulating somewhere but if it was, we don't have a record of it.

Paul took all that was in his heart and said, *Anekdiegetos!*. That is the Greek. *Ekdiegetos* means expression or full discourse. Then *An* is a prefix of negation. And Paul said, *Praise be to God. Thanks be to God for His gift that is too much, too big, too full for us to fully describe.*

Jesus is beyond human expression. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! As different translations have it:

ESV: "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"  
NASB: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"  
KJV: "Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift."  
NLT: "Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!"  
Amplified: "Now thanks be to God for His Gift [precious] beyond telling [His indescribable, inexpressible, free Gift]!"

Jesus is God's inexpressible gift!

This morning I want to finish up this time by thinking about the different facets of who Jesus is to us; who He is to the body of Christ. If you are here and you have not become a Christian, I pray that you would enter into this by faith; that you have the sense of the drawing in your heart; this sense that there is a God and He is holy and boy are you not. Jesus is the answer. He is the One. I pray that you will have the sense of humble faith in Him rising up that you might be one who enters into the grace of God as well.

I pray that we would appreciate Jesus all the more as we think about four different facets of all He is to us, knowing that this is just the tip of the iceberg. There is so much to Him that we will get to discover through eternity.

When I was growing up we would get up so early on Christmas morning. It would still be dark, but we were up and ready to go. I remember at about 8:00 or 9:00 AM after all the packages were opened. I would just look and admire the gifts I had received. I looked at the packaging, and savored the boxes. I savored everything about the gifts received.

Let's spend a few moments savoring the glorious aspects of the Gift that has been given to us. I pray that we would delight in the gift of Jesus Christ. Let me talk about four ways that Jesus is God's gift to you. Jesus is God's gift to you:

### **1. In His Incarnation (Hebrews 4:14-16).**

*Incarnation* is not a word that is used every day in the vernacular of the United States of America. Incarnation? Aren't those flowers? I think there might be some ice-cream also with the language of carnation. What are we talking about with that word *incarnation*? What that phrase means is *in the flesh*. Brothers and sisters, this is the great truth of Christmas. Christmas is all about the one true God adding human nature to His divine nature.

In Christ you have God who is 100% divine and 100% man in one perfect being. This is the incarnation. God the Creator of all things entered into the sphere of His creation through the birth canal of a daughter of Israel who was a virgin.

In Christ you have God wearing human clothing. You have God walking human streets. You have God eating human food. The One who provides all is the One who is also all-consuming. You have God shedding human tears. You have God feeling human pain. You have the God-man—Jesus Christ.

He came into the world and among the great many things that He has done, as is stated in Hebrews Chapter 4, He has become a sympathetic high priest because He has walked our streets, and He has lived life in this world. That is just such a precious thing to contemplate.

Jesus is God's gift to you in His incarnation. I can't go without reading how Charles Wesley put it in wonderful hymn that he wrote:

**Christ by highest heav'n adored, Christ the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of the Virgin's womb  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel  
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

Jesus is God's gift to us in His incarnation. Also, Jesus is God's gift:

### **2. In His Crucifixion (I John 4:9-10).**

In His suffering on the cross for our sins.

I remember years ago we were having our Thanksgiving Day and the next-door neighbor's granddaughter was over playing with the boys, as she often did on holidays. Time came for our Thanksgiving dinner, so we told her that it was time for us to have our dinner, thinking she would take the hint and go home to her grandparents, where she too would have her Thanksgiving dinner.

Instead, she said great and sat down at our table. So we thought, *Why not!* Then I was preparing to read Psalm 100, when she said, *Oh, oh, I know a Scripture!* Can I tell the Scripture that I know? I told her sure! She beautifully quoted with perfection I John 4:10 out of the NIV—*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.* I thought that was wonderful and that she nailed it. She said, *Yes, I learned that in Good News Club.* Thank you to those serving in Good News Club!

This is the gift of God to us. In this the love of God was made manifest among us. That God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He has loved us. He sent His Son to be the propitiation, the sacrifice, for our sin.

This is the gift of God: I John 4:9-11:

**<sup>9</sup>In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

There was a pastor-preacher who lived all the way across that gigantic pond that we call the Atlantic Ocean. He lived during the Civil War era. He is remember as *The Prince of Preachers*. His name is Charles Haddon Spurgeon and he preached out of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London.

Again he is remember as *The Prince of Preachers*. He had such eloquence. When you read his material, it seems that he had an unlimited vocabulary. He had such fluency in the English language, that it is remarkable to read his sermons. You got to wonder what it was like to hear them.

However, when it came to the theme of the incarnation of Almighty God, especially His visitation to earth, His taking on the apron strings of a servant, and humbling Himself to even death on a cross for us, Spurgeon felt like he became tongued-tied in his ability to express these things. He said that there was no way that the fullness of this could be described.

On July 27, 1890, Spurgeon preached a sermon on this text called *Praise for the Gift of Gifts*. He said this:

**“Beloved, I cannot speak adequately of Gethsemane and the bloody sweat, nor of the Judas kiss, nor of the traitorous flight of the disciples. It is unspeakable. That binding, scourging, plucking of the beard, and spitting in the face! Man’s tongue cannot utter the horror of it... Even dying thieves upbraided him. His eyes are choked, they become dim with blood. He must die. He says, “It is finished.” He bows his head. The glorious Victim has yielded up his life to put away his people’s sin. This is God’s gift to you, divine, unspeakable, O ye sons of men!”**

It is an awesome reality that we are thinking of here today. I pray that we would feel the gravity of such glory in our hearts.

He is God's gift to us in the crucifixion, the one and only way of our salvation. But He is also God's gift to us:

### **3. In His Elevation (Ephesians 2:4-7).**

In His glorification. In His being lifted up. Jesus died and on the third day He rose again. The grave could not contain Him. Brothers and sisters, He is risen! He is risen and He is lifted up.

The amazing thing about it is that we are united with Christ, and we are united with Him because of His love, even in His reign. We are joint heirs with Jesus. Look at how this is expressed in Ephesians Chapter 2 and Verses 4 through 7:

**<sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup>and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

That is amazing! We are so close to the heart of Christ that the church of God is pictured in that verse as being enthroned with Him, seated with Him on the throne. I don't know exactly how that is going to work. We will wait and see, but it is going to be awesome, brothers and sisters.

This is His love. All of this is done out of His love. Where He is preparing a place for you. What He has He shares with you. When your time on this earth comes to its end and your body dies, your soul is going to outlive your body and you are going to be lifted up with King Jesus in glory for everlasting life in Him.

While the hard things we face in this life truly wears down the soul, let that bring perspective to the suffering that I know that many of you are experiencing even right now. You are enthroned in glory with Christ; raised up with Him; seated with Him.

Understand, we are not God and we are not going to evolve into God—never, ever, ever! We are always going to be created beings. But look how close we are joined to our Messiah, the bride of Christ. We are the bride of Christ!

I will say it in the reverse way that I often say to the ladies. Men, if the sisters can be sons of God, we can be the bride of Christ. There is the language of us being that close to His affection and being joined to Him by grace.

Finally, Jesus is God's gift you:

### **4. In His Utmost Affection (John 15:9-11)**

I am a dad. When it is Christmas time, I like to think of the earlier years, even as I am savoring the days that I am living in.

I remember how one of my boys used to come to me and give me this big old giant hug, like a python hug, squeezing me. He would preface his hugs by saying, *Here is how much I love you, Dad!*. I was like wow, that's awesome. That's a lot of love.

I would get into verbal discussions with one of my other boys about who loved the other more. That boy used to say, *Oh, yea, well I love you to the power of God!* Whoa!! That boy does have a competitive streak.

But these are wonderful things to remember. There is a place in Scripture where Jesus told His disciples not only that He loved them, but how much He loved them. I John 15:9:

**<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me**

Just let that sink in. Jesus, the Eternal One, the second person of the Triune God, who has dwelled in His Father's affection that is measureless through all time, and even outside of time, says:

**<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.**

To give some kind of measure to how much He loves us, His disciples and church and people, He had to go outside of the realm of human measure into the great mysteries of the Godhead.

**<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.**

Then Jesus gave an appeal:

**<sup>9</sup> Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love**

There is power in the Word of God. It is the voice of God speaking affection and grace and divine power into us.

**<sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.**

I conclude. Jesus is the inexpressible gift. Jesus is the gift beyond human telling. Jesus is the gift of gifts, in addition to being the Lord of lords and the King of kings.

I pray that your heart will rejoice in the gift that has been given, and I pray that these things will inspire you to be close to Him and to be like Him as you go from this place into the world that God calls you to.

What is the date today? December 22! How many shopping days left? Two! There might be a sense of urgency that people are feeling to get the right gift, but there must be an even greater sense of urgency to receive the Gift of gifts.

Listen to how the Gift of gifts was spoken to us in another familiar passage. John 3:16 – 18

**<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**

Jesus is the Gift of gifts. He is the way, the truth and the life. He is the one way to be delivered from your sin and you, like me, sin. He is the one way to enter into everlasting life, and we enter in through faith, believing, taking to heart all that He has said about the existence of one God, us being created by Him, us being stained by sin, us facing judgment for our sin, and Jesus entering as a substitute to take that judgment in our place and to cover us in righteousness.

Believe in Jesus! Believe in Jesus. Believe in Jesus. Believe in Him. Trust in Him, and by faith, you will receive this gift. Live for Jesus. Walk with Jesus. Abide in Jesus. This is what He calls each one of us to do. We get to live with Gift of gifts!

Let's close in a word of prayer.