

“How Would You Describe It?”—2 Corinthians 9:15

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “How Would You Describe It?”, is 2 Corinthians 9:15 → *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!* (NIV)

This is the text.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:2)

In light of the wise men’s practice of honoring Jesus with their gifts, gift giving has continued for centuries with the celebration of Christmas. Gift giving is so intertwined with the celebration of Christmas that one is expected to give and receive gifts. Have you ever had one of those awkward moments upon opening a present and your first thought was, “What is it?” How about your efforts to describe your gift to another person? Was it indescribable because the gift was like nothing you had ever seen before, you couldn’t figure out it’s use or it simply didn’t make sense to you? Seems your only option is to simply say “Thank you!” and receive the gift graciously.

This is actually the most proper response, especially when it comes to God’s gifts to you. This was the response of Paul in our text: *Thanks be to*

God for His indescribable gift! (NIV) Paul spoke these words following instructions to the Christians in Corinth concerning their part in a financial collection to be given to Christians affected by a famine. (cf. Acts 11:27-30) But how is a financial collection an *indescribable gift*? It's not. Rather, it's that which motivates such giving which is *indescribable*. It's what we're celebrating today—God's gift of His incarnation, taking on our humanity in Jesus! In fact, throughout his discussion of the financial collection Paul refers to it as an *act of **grace*** (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:6-7, 19) and grace is the focus of the whole discussion!

The word *indescribable* is very applicable to God's gift embodied in the Person and Work of Jesus, the Christ. Descriptions of Jesus abound in many directions, ranging from fanaticism to adoration. Jesus Himself used a lot of different "titles" and pictures to describe His relationship with people. What is so *indescribable* about this Gift is the way in which He brought God's grace to us sinners! As Romans 6:23 says: *The wages of sin is death, but the **free gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The "indescribable-ness" of God's grace in Jesus can refer to His unusual Person. This is God, Himself, Who took on human form, submitting Himself to the very Law over which He was Lord as He served rebellious, unthankful, messed up sinners! Philippians 2:7-8 says *God emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in*

human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Why would anybody bother doing that for a bunch of ungrateful sinners? Why would God Himself do this for sinners? The world would answer, "Because He's nuts!" as a result of their refusal to recognize their sin and their need for a Savior. The Christian would say, Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! because he confesses he is a sinner undeserving of such love and compassion and trusts in Jesus' death for his forgiveness.

Even the teachings of Jesus are hard to describe because they go directly against the most logical ways of thinking and functioning. For example, in Matthew 5:39-44 Jesus tells you not to *resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. . . Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.* These are actions which go contrary to the world's ways of acting and thinking. The Christian responds by dropping to his knees seeking forgiveness, confessing that he has failed such teaching miserably and looking in faith to the perfect obedience of Christ to find forgiveness and the Holy Spirit's power to go forth in confident obedience.

Then he responds with: *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*

The *indescribable gift* is completely bound up in God's gift of grace for us sinners. Listen to how Paul described it 1 Timothy 1:12-16 → *I thank Him Who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent.* Notice Jesus *judged* him *faithful*. Paul could only judge himself as a rebellious unbeliever who believed God wanted him to kill Jesus followers! Now He depended upon Jesus' judgment.

He continues: *But I received **mercy** because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and **the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*** He experienced the undeserved love of God in the Person & Work of Jesus!

He continues: *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life. Jesus' perfect patience is seen in the all-encompassing nature of His forgiveness. While the world does not understand forgiveness at all and may try to forgive, Jesus forgives over and over and over again. Romans 5:15-16 says *the free gift by the grace of that**

one man Jesus Christ abounded for many . . . following many trespasses to bring about your justification! Because His sacrifice on the cross was for all your sin, for all time, you can walk away from Confession and Absolution saying: *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*

This *saying* which is *deserving of full acceptance* can only be accepted by trusting in Jesus! Faith is not the ability to process information intellectually. It is also a gift created in your heart by the Holy Spirit as a result of giving you God's grace in Jesus Christ. (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9) Faith is simply trusting what God has done for you, whether or not you understand it. It allows you to respond to the *indescribable gift* with thanks, praise, obedience and a life of service to Jesus as your Lord! Grace is meant to be basked in, not controlled somehow!

Do not let God's *indescribable gift* be a stumbling block to your simple faith and trust in the atoning work of Jesus for your sins. When people depend upon their own analysis of God's grace at work in their lives it will lead them to a distorted view of the Gift. Jesus becomes a Savior of their own making; forgiveness is reserved only for those who deserve it; the basis of faith is experiencing God's working in my life on my terms; salvation is based upon one's performance of the Law and good works. God came into the midst of such satanic deceptions on that first Christmas Day to break you free from the

bondage of these lies **by His grace**—His undeserved forgiveness and favor in the accomplished work of Jesus **for you!** God gives you what you don't deserve in the Gift of His Son, Jesus!!

This grace was so much at the forefront of Paul's life that he thanked Jesus for *appointing* him to *His service* even though it was a life filled with suffering for Christ! The impact of this grace is seen in his letters which make up much of the New Testament. His greetings to the churches always begin with the word **grace**. The grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ was the central focus throughout his letters many times ending the same way—*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.* (cf. Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 16:23; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:23; Philippians 4:23; Colossians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 1 Timothy 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25)

As you thank God for His indescribable gift of Jesus Christ and all He gives you in the free gift of grace, maybe you will look at your Christmas presents with the following description:

THE WRAPPING: *This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.* (cf. Luke 2:12)

THE CONTENTS: *When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.*

(cf. Galatians 4:4-5)

THE TAG: *Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord.* (cf. Luke 2:11)

THE PURPOSE: *God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.* (cf. John 3:16)

AND LET'S NOT FORGET THE NOTE OF THANKS UPON OPENING THE GIFT: *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.* (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:15 — NIV) Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

and the love of God

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

(2 Corinthians 13:14)