A Grace Gathering
22 November 2026

Congregational Song: “Sanctuary”

“WHAT CHILD IS THIS; or, THE CONDESCENDING LOVE OF GOD”

In the Christian calendar, at least as considered from a historical perspective, we are in a most holy season, the Advent Season. Christendom celebrates the greatest of all anomalies, if you are persuaded that miracles fit into that category, the coming into our world of material things, observable things, repeatable things of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. The secularists, those who discount such belief as fantasy, wish-fulfillment, paranoid escapism, or the ostrich-approach to dysfunctionality, simply believe that this world is the sum of all existence; that there is little, if anything, beyond this world of observation and analogical repeatability (they do delight in the magic of the season and the oft-repeated line, “YES, Virginia. there is a Santa Claus”). We, who have been touched by the realities of a world that we have come to see as far more real than this one, who have experienced the life of God through the work of the divine Spirit revealing the offices of Christ (prophet, priest, and king), who have embraced the claims of Jesus, are a people now filled with hope, all because of the reality that the world beyond sight has penetrated our shadowy, blighted existence. We exalt with deep emotions in the words of John when he wrote, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and peace (1:14)” or “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him* (1:18).” Charles Wesley wrote of it this way: “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail incarnate deity. Please as men with men to dwell Jesus our Immanuel.” Yes, this world is a favored place simply because it has been visited by its creator and someday will be redeem by the return of that creator.

To celebrate together, as a family we come today to remember the one who came, the one who is coming again, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to prepare our minds, to focus our thoughts, I want us to turn to a single verse of Holy Scripture, II Corinthians 8:9, a marvel description of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

“FOR YOU KNOW THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT, THOUGH HE WAS RICH, YET FOR YOUR SAKE HE BECAME POOR, THAT YOU THROUGH HIS POVERTY MIGHT BECOME RICH.”

The context of our verse is that Paul is soliciting the church for a loving offering, a financial thank-you gift, for the suffering saints in Jerusalem who sustained the

missionary enterprise to the Gentiles. He feels this is appropriate, in part, because his work in the East is finished and he is anticipating other fields of service (Acts 24:17, Rom 15:26). Paul's argument is a two-fold comparison: first, other churches in the area have given sacrificially (vv. 1-7) and, second, the debt owed to Christ for his unspeakable sacrifice. Could they face being compared to the Macedonians in this regard? Could they not be motivated in comparison to the Lord and His great gift?

I. The exalted privilege: "you know the grace…"
   They had come to know the grace of God; they now knew the creator of the universe as omnipotent, but also benevolent. This is sheer unmerited favor on the part of the just and justifying God! "O! The grace that brought salvation's plan. O! The grace that brought it down to man. O! The mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary," to quote an old hymn of the faith.

II. The exalted person: "our Lord Jesus Christ…was rich"
   Who has made all this possible that you and I could know the infinite, righteous creator of the universe? Only God is capable of revealing God to us simply because no one can reveal what they do not possess (finitude cannot disclose what it is not). He was rich in character, being perfect holiness; He was rich glory being loved with mutually in the unity of the Godhead; He was worshipped by the angelic hosts and delighted in by the saints that enjoyed His presence before He came among us. All of heaven worshipped Him, the omnipotent and glorious God.

III. The gracious act: "became poor"
   How did He become poor? He became impoverished by taking on the frailty of human existence. He became poor in the manner of His living. "Foxes have holes and birds have nest, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head (Matt. 8:20)." Isaiah tells us, "… He has no form or comeliness, and when we shall see Him. There is no beauty that we should desire Him (53:2)." He knew pain, affliction, sorrow, hunger, and temptation in proportions we shall never understand. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief… (53:3)."

   He died as a defeated Roman insurrectionist with no one to comfort Him. He endured mockery of passersby, the humiliation of His mother observing His ignominious demise. The few possessions He had were given away in a dice game at the foot of His cross. Even in death, He was placed in a borrowed tomb owing his burial to charity (though a surprisingly past in a rich man's tomb. No one has succumbed to such depths of poverty from such an exalted position!

IV. The reason for the act: “for our sake”
Here I find the greatest of words; words that leave me in stunned silence and unspeakable admiration. He became poor for us guilty, hell-deserving sinners. He became the sinner’s judgment, forsaken of God and man. There is no scourging for you or me because our strips have fallen upon Him!

V. The purpose of the act: “that you through his poverty might became rich”
Here is the “sweet exchange” that Luther spoke of so frequently. His cursedness became the ground of our wealth though we possessed nothing to purchase His favor. What are our riches?

Freedom from the limitation of our fallen natures.
Christ’s captivity has led your captivity captive.
Our lives have been spared.
We have been pardoned.
We have regained our lost inheritance.
We now see this life for its worth and can enjoy its benefits.
We have the prospect of unspeakable joys in heaven forever.
In Christ, we are even today the truly rich and enriched in the world.

The Celebration of the Lord’s Table

“The Service of the Bread”

Congregational Song: “You are my All in All”

“The Service of the Cup”

Congregational Song: “Give Thanks”

Concluding Prayer