

Many of you voted that we observe Advent for this Christmas season and that we do topical Christmas messages related to Advent. And some of you voted that we do a continuation of our chapter by chapter verse by verse studies through the book of First Corinthians. Well, I have decided to meet both of you halfway. Here's the deal, we've already had two quote unquote Advent Sundays that have passed and we spent those two Sundays going chapter by chapter, verse by verse through first Corinthians.

But for this morning and for next Sunday, the two Sunday services remaining before Christmas, I wanna take these and make these Christmas themed. So I have prepared a short Christmas message this morning and we'll do the same for next week, next Sunday. I just feel like it fits better. We're one week away from Christmas.

And instead of studying about speaking in tongues this morning, one week away from Christmas, I think it's better that we get our attention on Christmas and the Christmas season. So if you're having a difficult time getting in, quote, the spirit, unquote, this should hopefully help you a little bit. Let's begin with one verse of scripture that will serve as our main text today. It is one of those lofty verses in the Bible that stretches the mind and enthralls the mind, just the thought of it and the exploration of it.

And any other verses that we throw in here this morning, they will be meant to bring more focus to the statement that this one verse is going to make for us. And that verse is 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 15. So let's read that right away and get going. Second Corinthians chapter nine verse 15 says this, thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift.

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift. First I wanna share with you how I landed on this verse and this topic for this morning. For some of you, you might find it interesting. for the rest of you bear with me.

I just felt like this was important to share because it really displays what we teach a lot here, what we study a lot here at Anchored Fellowship, that the way that you find God's will is you just pray about it, and then you go on about life. And at some point in the course of your life, as you have prayed and as you continue to pray about whatever it is, somehow the Lord just maneuvers you into the right place. So this kind of models that quite well. I had decided to do two Christmas messages, one for this morning, one for next Sunday, but I had no idea what to speak about.

I'm just, I am terrible at topical messages. It's really strange because at one point in my life that was all I did for quite a few. Would you mind moving that receiver that I tried putting on top? Would you mind moving that back down where it was?

That's not working. Thank you. At one point in my life, that's all I did for years of ministry, every service I would pick my topic and get up there and give a topical message. And I stumbled across Calvary Chapel teaching and fell in love with that chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and have done that since.

And I've been doing that apparently so long that I'm just completely out of practice for getting topical messages together. So I did what I usually would do in a situation like this. I looked through all of my resources to see if I could spark some inspiration. I thought about it for quite a while.

I found some things I could speak about, some things that might work, but there just wasn't anything that just hit the spot spiritually speaking. There wasn't anything where I could say, that's it, that's the verse, that's the topic. So what I did was I took the dog outside and decided to pray about it. And we have this arrangement that when I'm outside praying, he gets to play fetch, so that's our deal.

I pray he plays. I throw the ball while I pray, he fetches. He gets his energy out and I get to talk to the Lord and get some direction from the Lord. So in the course of praying, Lord, what would you have me

to speak? I'm not real good at this topical thing anymore.

I need you. Would you intervene? Would you give me some sort of impression in my spirit or some resource, some verse, something that I'm looking at, would you just give me that confirmation of the Holy Spirit that that's what you want me to share? And as I closed out my prayer, I did as I often do, I closed out my prayer and worship, and my last line before my, in Jesus' name, amen, was this, thank you, God, for your unspeakable gift.

And as soon as I said that, as soon as I prayed that, I was like, whoa, where did that come from? I know it's a Bible verse. I know that. I know Paul said it.

Where did that come from in my prayer? And that started to churn and I started to think about it and I realized that's the verse. Now I know I said unspeakable gift but you gotta understand I was born and raised on the KJV. I use the KJV.

I looked this up for approximately the first 10 years of my ministry. KJV only. So a lot of times when I'm remembering verses, it's the KJV that first pops up. The KJV is very memorable.

You got to give it that, right? If you learn a verse in the these and vows, you're never going to forget them because they're so different than everyday modern speak. And so that verse, that thought, it popped into my mind. I prayed it and I could just feel the Holy Spirit saying, that's it.

I led you right to it. I brought it out of your mouth. Now take that and deliver the message. So thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift or thanks be to God ESB for His inexpressible gift.

What is the inexpressible gift the Apostle Paul is speaking about? That seems pretty straightforward to me but as I look at the answers that some commentaries give I realize I guess that's not so straightforward. One loves opportunities like this in the Bible, if you're a commentator or a preacher or a teacher, when, for example, in this situation, Paul doesn't give you a very definite, well, a full definition as to what he's speaking about, that can be exciting because then you think to yourself, well, I can define this however I want and I can't go wrong. So what should I make the inexpressible gift?

listen, there's an obvious answer to what Paul's meaning here. He already makes the statement essentially in chapter 8. And if this were a normal Bible study, I'd take you through the grueling trials and paths and meanderings of logic that would help you to reach the conclusion firmly in your own mind. But since this is an abbreviated Christmas sermon, What I'm going to do is I'm just going to give you the answer up front.

You can go home later, look that up and confirm that in your own heart if you want. But here's the answer. What is the inexpressible gift that Paul was referring to? Let me give you a couple of verses of Scripture that answer it plainly.

About Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, for unto us a child is born, to us a son is given or gifted. And how about this one, John 3.16, for God so loved the world that he gave, which means he gifted to us the Son. So folks, the inexpressible gift of Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 15 is not a single statement. It's not a fact.

It's not a doctrine. It's not a blessing. It's not an action. It's not an attribute.

is the person of Jesus, the Christ. Jesus is the inexpressible gift that Paul was thanking God for. For the briefest of backgrounds, I would just tell you this, that in the eighth and the ninth chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul was talking to the church in Corinth and trying to encourage them to give in an offering for the persecuted and poverty-stricken church in Jerusalem. He was trying to inspire their

financial giving and to do that, to inspire their financial giving.

What he chose to do was remind them of the gift that the Father had given and get them thinking about how generous the Father is in his giving and then use that as motivation, as inspiration in their own giving. Brilliant attempt by the apostle Paul, but from that place, from that background comes the statement of Paul, thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift. Like me, I hope you are struck by the seeming incongruity of the statement from Paul. Paul is an apostle, which means he's a representative of Christ, his entire calling is about expressing the gift of God.

His whole calling is about expressing Jesus and everything that He is to the folks that don't know Him and haven't received Him yet. So as an evangelist called to express the gift of Jesus, it's just odd to hear an evangelist like that say that this gift, this gift of Jesus is actually an inexpressible gift. He's indescribable. He's undefinable.

He's unspeakable as the King James Version would say. So isn't it good to hear that just like to soothe you and console you because I know you've experienced what I've experienced countless times before. Or when trying to share the wonder of all that Jesus is to folks, and by the time you're done using human language and the knowledge of your brain, everything that you know about Jesus and the sweetest ways to frame your words, by the time you're done you end up delivering that message and feeling like, wow, did I make a disaster out of that. Do you know how many times I speak on Sundays and Wednesdays and when I'm done, I go home and I just think, Lord, that man did I fail my task. Such lofty things that you gave me tonight to share with Anchored Fellowship and I did such a horrible job representing you.

I deserve to be fired. In fact, that's too good for me. I don't just deserve to be fired. I deserve to be flogged.

That's what I deserve for how badly I did. How you know how many times I think that pretty much after every message. You can guarantee after this one this morning. And that is the plight of the evangelist.

That's the plight of the preacher, the pastor, the teacher, the evangelist, any position within the church that involves speaking on behalf of God. We are called to express a gift to the world that is inexpressible. So it's going to be our natural state to feel like we've done a lousy job that we've failed entirely. I heard a story about a woman back in I believe the 1800s or so over in England who wanted to join a particular church and the council they asked for her testimony they wanted to make sure that she was a legitimate believer of Christ and she gave her testimony and needless to say, the counsel was not at all impressed with her testimony.

Her testimony just didn't inspire a whole lot of confidence that she was really saved. And as they were trying to decide on whether or not to accept her as a member of the church, when it became very obvious that they weren't going to accept her because they didn't feel like her testimony was genuine enough, sincere enough, she just burst out just in a weeping voice at that point, and she made the statement, I cannot speak for him, but I could die for him. And that's kind of like the way that it goes with the Christian, the depth of everything that the gift is to us, the depth of everything that Christ is, we feel that, we know that, we would die for him because of that. And yet, the Lord asked you to share with someone else.

and you're just fumbling all over your words. You're making a mess out of it. You're feeling bad. It is only by the grace of God that the gift of Jesus is even hinted at by such poor spokesmen as you and I.

Poor preaching is the best we can do. That's what Charles Spurgeon said. Poor preaching is the best we can do. Or as Job said, How small a whisper we hear of him.

You know, think about that, how little we actually know of him. But let's shift gears here for a second and talk about the mechanics that we go through every Christmas to illustrate that gift, the gift of the Father, the gift of Jesus to the world. What would that be? How do we illustrate that?

How do we symbolize that? That would be through the giving and receiving of Christmas gifts, right? The very reason that we do that, and if you didn't know this, well, you know it this morning. The reason that we give gifts is because in the giving of gifts, every aspect of that, it is symbolic of the gift that God the Father has given to us in the person of Jesus.

And then not just that, but our responses to him. their responses or pardon me, their illustrations to the world about Jesus Christ. So that gift you're giving, you know, it's more than about just what it is that you're giving. It is an expression of this inexpressible gift unless that gift is socks.

If the gift is socks then you're just revealing that you're cheap. You know, my parents used to get us with this every year. We had this deal where on Christmas Eve, we get to open one gift. And we were so dumb.

Like every year, me and my brother, we thought it was going to be something good. Every year it was socks. You think we'd learn. You think like just once we'd not anticipate a really good gift on Christmas Eve from mom and dad, but we never did learn.

You just always expected something good and it was always socks. Now to defend them, that wasn't because they were cheap. We got all of the good gifts the next day and if you don't know me by now, I'll just go ahead and say it so you're not confused. I am joking about the socks.

Socks are a fine gift. If you bought me socks before, don't feel bad. If you bought someone else socks this year, don't return them. Oh goodness, I'm so embarrassed because of what he said.

socks are good gifts. That was just a joke, but enough about my struggles. How's your gift shopping going? Are you done with your gift shopping?

Are you close to the end of it? By the way, just a reminder for you men, you've only got one week left until you begin your Christmas shopping, so let this be a reminder to you. Well, let me finally get to my point here. The Christmas gifts that we give and receive in order to illustrate the gift of Jesus are completely expressible.

No matter what it is, no matter what that gift is, it is completely expressible. So when someone asks you, what did you get someone or let's put it, let's frame it in these words, what did that person get you as a gift for Christmas, you can fully express what that is. So it might look like, you know, something, something like this, that, well, they got me a four pack of Apple air tags. Oh, fully expressed.

We all know what that is. We all know what that does. Well, most of us, I guess, some, some, some folks, you might need to give them a little bit more of an expression of that gift. But the point is, you can.

You can fully express that gift. Or, you know, they got me a heated blanket. They got me a portable air compressor for my car. Those are all fully expressible gifts and we can express them.

And if the person doesn't quite get it, then we can go into more expression, you know, that portable air compressor. That's a bower, I came from Harbor Freight, and we can continue to express, but the point is we can fully express those gifts because there's not a whole lot to tell there. The gift of Jesus is so vastly different than the earthly gifts that we give because the gifts that we give and the gifts that we receive on earth, those are all finite. But the gift that God the Father gave us in the person of Jesus was infinite.

That is an infinite gift. And just to further establish the great golf between the two, you know, our gifts to one another during Christmas and God's gift to us during Christmas, just consider the fact that even the finite stuff of earth can be too much for us. You know, think about the ocean. The ocean is finite.

It's not infinite. We may poetically refer to it in songs and poems as being the infinite ocean. It's not infinite. It is finite.

It has a beginning point. It has an ending point. It's fully measurable. So if someone said to you, hey, would you do me a favor?

Get very accurate and complete measurements on the ocean. I want to know where all the boundaries are. I want to know the scope of it. I want to know the weight of all of it.

Could you do that? Well, you couldn't do that. Not, not, well, theoretically you could because it's measurable. It's finite.

It's measurable. Theoretically, you should be able to complete that task, and yet it's too difficult to do even with something that is as large, though still finite, as the ocean. But when you think about the gift of Jesus Christ, this carries out into a completely different sphere. So even the ocean is a comparison that's way too small for the loftiness of this idea that the Apostle Paul gave us, this inexpressible gift, because Christ Himself is infinite.

The gift that God gave us in Jesus is an infinite gift. Let me give you one verse of Scripture that gives the reason for the infiniteness and the inexpressiveness of the gift of Jesus. with me to Colossians chapter 2, verse 9. Again, the apostle Paul speaking, here's what he says, speaking about Jesus, for in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

For those of you who have the King James Version and the New King James Version in your memory, You know how that verse is worded. It says, in him, in Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. That's a big statement that basically God packaged himself in the wrapper of humanity through the person of Jesus so that the gift of Jesus is really the gift of God's fullness sent to us. So I would love to have been able to give you a Christmas visual of this.

But I was not able to get that together in time. So let me just talk you through an example that I want you to visualize if you can in your mind's eye. I want you to picture up on this stage a huge box, huge, massive box. And I want you to picture the most beautiful box, the most beautiful thing that you have ever seen.

And what we're going to say that is, is the fullness of God packaged in the person of Jesus Christ. And then I want you to imagine that box being too beautiful, too glorious for humanity to see. So I want you to imagine us taking and putting wrapping paper over it and covering it up with wrapping paper. And what that would symbolize for us is the incarnation of Jesus.

It's put like this in 1st Timothy chapter 3 verse 16. Great indeed we confess is the mystery of godliness. He, God, was manifested in the flesh. So the packaging, the wrapper on the gift, that symbolizes the humanity of Jesus.

He was wrapped in human flesh to be sent to earth and now in that form he could be presented to us and we could behold him on the earth. All of God packaged in the person of Jesus Christ, and all of that packaged in human flesh Jesus, the God-man. Next would be the decision on what to do with that gift. A lot of people would look at that gift and even if you gave them the offer that, hey, if you want this gift, you are free to take it.

And even if you gave them that offer, many of them would never get past just seeing the packaging, just seeing the gift on the surface on the outside and leaving the gift and walking away from the gift. The apostle John writes in John chapter one versus 10 and 11, he was in the world and the world was made through him. Yet the world did not know him, he came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. And then for the folks that won't receive Jesus, that gift is never unwrapped.

So they never find out fully about what's inside. They don't even get started on the gift of what's inside. He's just to them always the baby in the manger in Bethlehem. That's all that will ever be.

Baby Jesus, meek and mild. John chapter 1 verse 12, but to all who did receive him. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10 verse 40, whoever receives you receives me and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. And that brings us right back to the thought that when you receive the gift of Jesus, you're receiving the fullness of God the Father.

So get this, again, once more. God was packaged in the Son, Jesus said, I am the Father, R1, Jesus, God the Father was packaged in the Son and the Son was packaged in human flesh for us. And within that gift, within all of that packaging is everything that God wants to be for us. So it's not a single gift of a single person, it's not just that God sent us Jesus and He was an incredible teacher or an incredible rabbi or an incredible prophet.

It's not just a single gift of a single person. Let me show you what I mean. Back to that picture of the ginormous gift on stage. Now it's wrapped, alright?

And as we receive the gift of Jesus by faith, then what we're doing is we're opening the top of that gift. And now you picture just like the lid being off of this box, this giant gift, the gift of Jesus, and then picture yourself looking in and seeing not just one good thing, not just a couple good things, but a ton of good things, like one after another. So you start going through them, you start looking at them, you start reading them, you start seeing everything that is available to you in just that one giant gift. And if you would do that, as you by faith receive Jesus, you're opening that gift of all of God's fullness for yourself, and in that gift, in the person of Jesus, it's impossible to get an exhaustive list of everything that you receive.

Because the incredible thing about the gift of Jesus is He also gives. God gave Jesus, but look at how many times you read in the scriptures about Jesus giving to us. So let me just go through a handful of these for fun this morning, and then we'll fail miserably and give up at the end. But how about this?

Let's just kind of go through this in some kind of order of succession. Let's start with this. You look in that gift of Jesus you've received it by faith, what do you find? First Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 10, and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

We deserve wrath, but through the gift of Jesus we get mercy. How about this one? In the gift of Jesus is forgiveness, Colossians chapter 1 verse 14, in whom in Jesus we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And that's not just the forgiveness of past sins and a fresh start.

That is perpetual forgiveness for our sins as we confess those sins to the Lord. Next in the gift of Jesus is grace. Thank the Lord for grace, Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9, for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast.

So mercy is God holding back from giving you something terrible that you deserve and grace is God not holding back and giving you something wonderful that you don't deserve. That's all in the gift of Jesus.

In the gift of Jesus there is also, of course, salvation and that is the ongoing forgiveness of your sins and right status with God's justification by faith, which would be the next one, faith, Romans chapter 12 verse 3, that is in the gift of Jesus. It says God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

our faith to believe in Jesus and to open that gift for starters, even that faith comes from him. But then after the faith to be saved, the faith to receive that gift of Jesus, then all of the faith you end up having as a Christian, that is all cultivated by God. That's all cultivated by him and through his word. Next we have hope, Hebrews 6 verse 19, kind of one of our theme verses around here.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain. How about this one? In the gift of Jesus is love, agape. What might we list as a reference for that one?

How about 1 Corinthians chapter 13, what we've been studying for the past handful of weeks. Let me give you this verse for love, Romans chapter five verse five. And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy spirit who has been given to us. How about peace?

In the gift of Jesus, there is peace. Jesus said in the gospel of John chapter 14 verse 27, peace. leave with you my peace I give you not as the world gives do I give to you let not your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid in Jesus in him in the gift of Jesus is his peace how about joy first Peter chapter 1 verse 8 though you have not seen him you love him though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. Great, here's another inexpressible thing that we're unpacking out of this giant gift of Jesus.

How about this one? Comfort. In the gift of Jesus is comfort. He is the comforter and he sent us the comforter.

Second Corinthians chapter one verses three and four. Blessed be the God God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. He's the Comforter. That's part of the package.

this rest Jesus told them in Matthew chapter 11 verse 28 come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest as rest in the gift of Jesus how about guidance or counseling Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 here's a Christmas verse for to us a child is born to us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called wonderful counselor, the best counselor you can have. That's in the gift. That's part of the package. How about this one provision Philippians chapter 4 verse 19 and my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in the gift in Christ Jesus.

The passage says that's the gift. How about this in the person of Jesus in And the gift of Jesus, when you open that up, here's what you get, here's what comes along with that, a family of believers. Some of them so crazy to come out on a morning like this when there's a half a foot of snow on the ground. A family of believers.

1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 9, God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. How about this one? this one. Adoption as God's children.

John chapter 1 verse 12, but to all who did receive him, everyone who opened the package by faith, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Your adoption papers are in that giant gift of Jesus. Your adoption papers are in there. You've got to dig through all the other gifts, but it's in there.

been adopted after opening that gift, after receiving that gift into the family of God. How about this one? This is crazy. In the gift of Jesus is our righteousness, not from us, not through us.

In the gift of Jesus is our righteousness. 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21, for our sake, he, God the Father, made him, Jesus the Son, to be sin who knew no sin so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God. How about this one, the Holy Spirit within? John chapter 14 verse 17, Jesus said to the disciples, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, you know Him for He dwells with you and will be in you." The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

That is in the gift of Jesus. And how about this one? The Holy Spirit's baptism and the subsequent gifts of the Holy Spirit. Luke chapter 24 verse 49, Jesus said to the disciples, "And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you, But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

That would be the coming upon of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent gifts of the Spirit that we've been studying about here on Sunday mornings. How about this one? What a blessed privilege. Access to God's presence through praise, through prayer.

Isn't that amazing? Let me give you here. Romans chapter 5 verse 2 through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God isn't that amazing we just as we take the gift the person of Jesus in that gift is complete access for you right into the very presence of God right into the throne room to speak to the father to worship the father to have a living, breathing, two-way relationship with God the Father. As you might know, I have a ton on my list here that I could painstakingly go through.

I'll just read them to you. I won't even give you the scripture references for them if you want them. Ask me and I'll zip them to you. But how about this one, wisdom?

Wisdom. That is in the gift of Jesus. How about this one's security or assurance of one's salvation that is in the person, the gift of Jesus that comes with him. He wants you to know that he saved you.

How about this one, glory? Glory right now is for God, but glory is coming for you and I. He was glorified, but you and I one day will be glorified as well. How about this one?

Inheritance. The Bible teaches us that we are joint heirs with Christ. We share His inheritance. That's in the gift of Jesus Christ.

You open the gift, you receive the gift, you get that too. You become an inheritor of the blessings of Christ. How about this? Citizenship in heaven.

Paul taught us that, right? We're not just citizens on earth. We are right now because we've received the gift of Jesus. Citizens in heaven.

Our, you know, not just our green cards, our citizenship paperwork was inside that gift of Jesus. When we received him and opened that gift, we could ruffle through those gifts and we could find our citizenship paperwork. We're citizens of heaven. How about this victory over death?

You get to die first, so it doesn't sound quite like victory over death, but it is because death is not going to hold you just as death could not hold the Christ. Death is not going to hold you in the person of Jesus in the gift is victory over death and victory over the enemy and unfailing promises and an unshakable kingdom and eternal life and glorious future, new creation, the list goes on and on. So at first you might think, well didn't we just fully express the gift of Jesus? Didn't you get it done Arlen?

Didn't you at least get close? Well first of all we've only scratched the surface of the gifts that come along with Jesus. There's way more than this. way more.

But then secondly, we were tipped off to it when I read to you our verse about joy and we read that just joy alone, his joy is inexpressible. So you realize what we've done, right? What we've done is we've tried to unpack that one inexpressible gift and we've tried to express it and in the process of doing it. I've just given you 32 other things that are inexpressible.

I've made it worse. I've dug us a hole because every one of those things that we shared, you can't fully express them just by stating them and reading a verse. The more you read, the more you learn, the more there is. So now we have Jesus and 32 other things that are inexpressible and we're trying to express it.

So how did I do today? Wow, awful. Not good at all. Here's what I'm going to ask for you to do.

I'm going to ask for a commitment from you this morning to be here for as many Sunday and Wednesday services as you can for the next 30 years. Because if you'll give me 30 years of Sundays and Wednesdays, I'll still fail at this miserably. I'll still absolutely be incapable of fully expressing the inexpressible gift of Jesus, but at least I'll have more time to do it. So statistically, I'll come closer.