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(Eventually we'll get to chapter 8, our text for today.)

As you are turning, let me make this comment about where we are in our study of 2 Corinthians: In my opinion, 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, comprise perhaps the greatest treatise on the subject of GIVING in the entire New Testament. That's a bold comment...in that there is a lot of Scripture in the NT on giving... But, what we have in these two chapters is truly one of the broadest, most detailed looks at the theology and teaching on giving in the NT.

What we find in these two chapters is: how we're to give, where we're to give, when we're to give and to whom we're to give. I guess in some ways, I'm glad the Corinthian church struggled to follow through with their promise and commitment to give to help their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, who were suffering under extreme poverty and famine...because without that issue...I'm not sure if we would have had this portion of Scripture.

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You see the Corinthian church had committed to participate and help in a “relief offering” that the Apostle Paul had started about one-year earlier to help the believers in the mother church in Jerusalem. Yet, one year later, they had not followed through. Paul has been instructing them to “finish the job.” And what I want to show you in 1 Corinthians 16 is where Paul had already encouraged them as to HOW they should take up this offering. Look with me.

### **1 Corinthians 16:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning<sup>[a]</sup> the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. <sup>3</sup> And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

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Right there is the instruction and direction of how we're to give. Verse 2 says that we're to take up an offering the “first day of the week,” which is Sunday...the Lord's Day. The Day of Jesus' resurrection...the day that the church comes together at the “gathering” or the Ecclesia. And church family, that “FIRST” reminds us of our series title: “Giving Ourselves First to the Lord.”



Because we remind ourselves from last week: we'll never give our money to the kingdom of the Lord, if He doesn't first have our hearts. Remember, people give their money to what they're committed to...to what they believe in...to what they're dedicated to. AND we can tell what that is by looking at our bank and credit card statements. The truth is: if we're dedicated to the Lord and His work, then that will show up in our giving and we'll not turn a blind eye to brothers and sisters in need.

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So, Paul has instructed the churches to: “take up an offering every time you come together...on the first day of the week.” That makes it easy, doesn’t it? It’s consistent. You do it every week. AND that instruction has been carried out by the Church of Jesus Christ ever since...right up to today...churches, including us, take up an offering every week. Now, you might not GIVE every week, because most give when they get paid. That’s the whole: “give as he may prosper” part in verse 2 that we just read. But, the point is...we’re instructed to give to the work of the Lord the first day of every week. The question is: Are we?

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If you were here with us last week, we saw how the Apostle Paul used the example of the Macedonian Churches to the north of Corinth. They were dirt-poor and yet they gave sacrificially...to the point that they begged Paul for the chance to give and help their suffering brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. So, the challenge has been levied by Paul...will the church at Corinth follow through or will they fail?

**Now turn with me to our text for today, chapter 8, verse 6** and I’ll tell you as you are turning...thankfully Paul has a man he can send to find out the answer to our question. His name is Titus, and we’re going to see him enter the scene today.

**2 Corinthians 8:6-15**

<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. <sup>7</sup> But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you<sup>[c]</sup>—see that you excel in this act of grace also. <sup>8</sup> I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. <sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. <sup>10</sup> And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. <sup>11</sup> So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. <sup>12</sup> For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. <sup>13</sup> For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness <sup>14</sup> your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. <sup>15</sup> As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

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The key verse to this entire passage is found tucked right in the middle in verse 9. This verse is perhaps one of the most amazing verses in the entire Bible. See it again...

**2 Corinthians 8:9**

<sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

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Church, if we can grasp and truly understand the profound significance of this verse, we will have no trouble giving to the work of Jesus Christ...because if it weren’t for Him...we would have no hope for all eternity and truly have nothing!

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When Jesus became poor for our sake, this speaks, not of Him being a beggar or pan-handler, but of His incarnation...becoming one of us. Emmanuel. God with us. The verse speaks of this:



Joseph and Mary and Jesus in Bethlehem. The tense of the verb, in verse 9: “He became poor,” speaks of Jesus leaving heaven and coming to earth, not that he didn’t have a 401-k. For sure, Jesus leaved a meager life while on this earth...yes...he left his home in Nazareth to go live the itinerate life of a traveling Rabbi, sharing the Gospel...but, He was not a beggar. His poverty was becoming one of us. His poverty was taking on human flesh, even though He had been in the throne room of heaven. His poverty was taking upon Himself our sin, even though He was sinless and being killed for it. Listen, Hell is eternal poverty. You can’t get any poorer than being in Hell. That’s the ultimate poverty of a human...AND yet, Jesus, on the cross became the poorest of the poor and endured our Hell...our separation from God...so that we wouldn’t have to.

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And listen church family, He did it all that we might become rich. Millionaires? NO! You see we’re the beggars...we have no way to get to heaven...we have nothing that we can offer to be able to be in the presence of Holy God. But, once we trust Jesus and choose to follow Him, we share in all of His riches...we get what He gets... Romans 8 tells us that we become joint-heirs with Christ.

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Now listen...knowing all of this...HOW could we possibly refuse to help others either to come to know Him...or to be helped as a brother or sister in Christ, out of sheer gratitude! This was Paul’s heart totally. Think about his life: He went from being a wealthy Pharisee to a traveling missionary, making tents on the side to make ends meet...but, in the reversal of his earthly fortunes...SPIRITUALLY...he went from being a pauper, to a child of the King of Kings. From worldly riches to spiritual riches. I’ll take that too! Remember the words of Jesus, “What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world yet loses his soul.” Money means nothing in eternity.

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Paul never got over being saved and his desire to see others come to Christ was infectious and once they did, Paul wanted to make sure they were cared for. Thus, his desire to help the mother church in Jerusalem. Remember, Paul was in Macedonia working with the churches there; and so, he sent Titus to help him in making preparations to finish the relief-offering in Corinth.

**2 Corinthians 8:6**

**6** Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.

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Now, let’s be reminded of who Titus is. Titus was a trusted companion of the Apostle Paul for many years. Paul had led Titus to Christ and get this...Titus was a Gentile, meaning that Titus was living proof that the rite of circumcision was unnecessary for salvation and you know this galled the Judaizers when Titus came into town. The Judaizers insisted that all Christians were to be bound by the Mosaic Law and circumcision. The Judaizers said, “Gentiles must be circumcised, in order

to be saved.” Of course, we know that’s not true... Salvation comes by believing in and placing our trust in Christ and Christ alone... Jesus plus NOTHING!

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So as to broaden our understanding, let me set-up a quick timeline about Titus. We know on Paul’s third missionary journey, which took place from 53 AD to 57 AD, Titus ultimately joined Paul in Philippi and gave him a good report of the ministry in Corinth. We learned that back in 2 Corinthians 7. NOW, Paul is sending Titus BACK to Corinth to finish collecting funds for the needy saints down in Jerusalem. BTW, the last mention of Titus in the Bible tells us that he was with Paul during Paul’s final Roman imprisonment. Titus was willing to be identified with Paul at the risk of his own life. Now that’s commitment, loyalty and devotion. What a faithful servant of the Lord!

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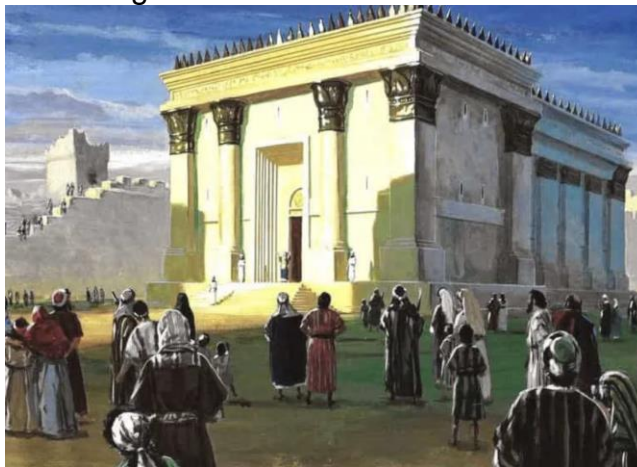
So, Titus comes to Corinth to finish the collection. So now, as we talk about giving...we learned last week: the kind of giving the Lord wants us to participate in is what is often coined as “Grace Giving.” We allow the grace of God to fuel our giving...not guilt...or pressure or fear. God tells us what to give and the goal is to seek to listen to Him as we excel in this act of grace...

**2 Corinthians 8:7**

**7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you<sup>[c]</sup>—see that you excel in this act of grace also. 8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.**

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So, let’s talk a bit more about what giving is and isn’t in the NT. Now remember, the Temple is still in existence at the time of this writing.



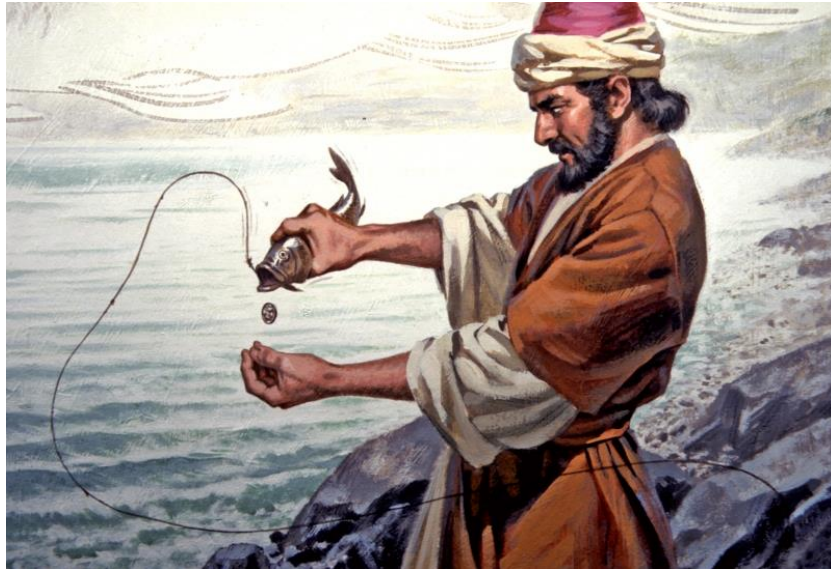
The Temple wouldn’t be destroyed by the Romans until AD 70, about 14 years later. And so, the Jews still brought their “tithes” to the Temple to support the Levitical priesthood and the work of the Temple.

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You see the Pharisees and Sadducees through the Sanhedrin (like the Supreme Court) are still controlling the religious system of the nation of Israel at the permission of Rome. Rome didn’t mind the religious leaders of the Jews, because the Romans saw this as a way of keeping peace in the region. The point is: the OT system of tithing was still in place as well as the taxation system of the Jews at the time of this second letter. So, the system of taxation remained.

You may remember when these tax collectors came to Jesus saying that He needed to pay the Temple Tax, and He did...by way of a drachma (a coin)...

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that Peter got out of the mouth of a fish. Jesus gave to this system when He was here.

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Remember the widow from last week?



Where was she? In the Temple. That's where there were thirteen trumpet-shaped receptacles into which the people dropped their money. Yet, the need for the Levitical system of taxation and tithing to the Temple under the Mosaic Law ended with the New Covenant, which was instituted by Jesus.

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Again, as we've said many times, the tithe is an OT principle for the nation of Israel...and yet, many preachers still push the tithe for us today...and they use Malachi 3 to say the tithe is the model.

**Malachi 3:10-12**

<sup>10</sup>Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. <sup>11</sup>I will rebuke the devourer<sup>[b]</sup> for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. <sup>12</sup>Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

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Church it's simple...we are NOT The nation of Israel...we are followers of Christ...therefore, our instructions come from the NT and we just saw earlier in 1 Cor. 16 we're to give the first day of the week, and we don't bring the money to the Temple, but to the gathering, our local church. But, I

know the question remains: HOW MUCH? How much are we to give? Well go back to 2 Cor. 8 and look at verse 12.

### 2 Corinthians 8:12

<sup>12</sup> For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

The HOW MUCH is according to what you have. This is pretty simple church family. The Lord doesn't want you to put your offering on a credit card. Unless you are getting points? But, the point is...He doesn't want you to go into debt to give. I guess the question is: why are so many in so much debt? Are you overspending? Are you living on a budget? Can you tell yourself, "NO?" The reason many Christians don't give to the Lord's work is because the Lord's work is not a priority and there is nothing left over. That's why we give FIRST (when we get paid...not at the end of the month when there's no money).

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No, you don't have to give 10%, but don't breathe a sigh of relief because...LISTEN...I've said this so many times, the tithe is not the ceiling, it's the floor. We give a good waiter or waitress 15% or even 20%; and yet, we give the Lord...for ALL He's done for us...just 10%.

Oh, the Corinthians were dragging their feet and this is why Paul said: COME ON ...it's been a year!

### 2 Corinthians 8:10-11

<sup>10</sup> And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. <sup>11</sup> So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

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Church family, think about this with me... If they've been taking up money every Sunday for a year, shouldn't they already have it... UNLESS the Judaizers have been siphoning off the money to themselves. Tithe to us! We're your spiritual leaders. See the conflict here? Who are the Corinthians going to follow...the Judaizers or Paul (and now Titus) who is there representing Paul? Paul says, "Finish the work...and let your desire be matched by completing the job."

You see the Corinthians had good intentions. Do you ever have those and not follow through? Sure, you do...so do I. You know the old saying... "Good intentions are the pathway paved to Hell." Matthew Henry, the great Bible Commentator said this:

**"When people intend what is good and also seek to perform it, God will accept what they can do and not reject them for what is not in their power to do. Yet this Scripture will in no way justify those who think good intentions are enough. Good plans and good intentions are like buds and blossoms, pleasant to look at, giving hope of good fruit; but they are lost and mean nothing without fulfillment."** Matthew Henry, Bible Commentator

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The Corinthians had good intentions and excuses. Can you hear them: "Hey Paul, you're making it hard on us (former Gentiles), to give to the folks in Jerusalem (former Jews), you shouldn't double-down on us!" Well, it seems that Paul anticipated that complaint...

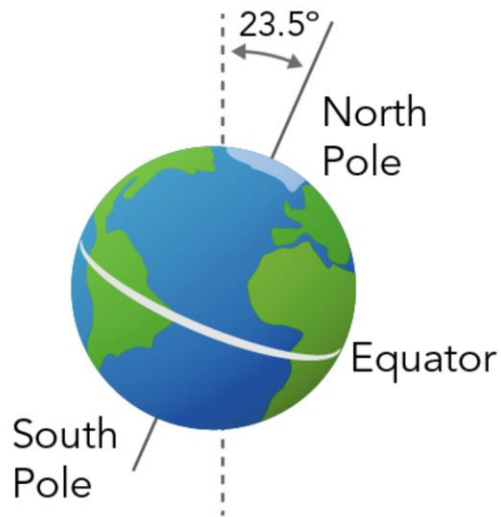
### 2 Corinthians 8:13-14

<sup>13</sup> For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness <sup>14</sup> your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.

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Paul was saying, "This offering is not to burden you...it's not about making you sacrifice so that others can have more...no...the folks in Jerusalem sacrificed to get the Gospel through me to YOU

in the first place.” No, the purpose of this love offering is not to make life easy for anybody. It wasn’t about making anyone suffer. It was about helping, it was about fairness. In fact, the word “fairness” used at the end of verses 13 and 14 is the word in the Greek “isotēs,” and it means: balance or equality. The earth is balanced on an invisible axis that’s titled at 23 ½ degrees.



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It's how we get our seasons. Isotēs- Perfect balance.

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Balance! I bet I know what you might be thinking...talking about balance...equality... I know where our minds can go with all of this. Socialism! Have you heard this...that the first church, since they sold land and “shared all things in common,” were all living under socialistic principles? That’s simply not true. Socialism is where a government forces it’s citizens to give up what is theirs to others forcibly...a forced reallocation or redistribution of wealth. No! That’s not Christianity! Christianity is giving up what is yours by your own free-will...no pressure, no coercion. Christianity is taking care of people because the Lord puts that on your heart. This was free-will.

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Paul’s point was this: “Hey, our Jerusalem brothers and sisters are suffering...would you consider helping to ease their suffering...” AND then he offers this principle. Verse 15.

**2 Corinthians 8:15**

**<sup>15</sup>As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”**

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Did you catch the “As it is written...” at the beginning of the verse? Where is this written? Exodus. The Children of Israel, God’s people, had finally exited Egypt after being in slavery to them for over 400 years. They’re in the wilderness wandering around between Egypt and the Promised Land because they had disobeyed God and now they’re starving. And God in His mercy provided food. What was it? Yeah...that’s it. Huh? Yes, that’s the name of it. What? The food. ☺ God provided manna, which literally means “what is it?” Because they’d never seen it before.

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See this artist’s depiction:



Manna was like white grits on top of the grass and it came with the dew every morning. It looked like frost. Look at verse 14.

### **Exodus 16:14-21**

<sup>14</sup> And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup> When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?”<sup>[a]</sup> For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. <sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer,<sup>[b]</sup> according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.’” <sup>17</sup> And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. <sup>18</sup> But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. <sup>19</sup> And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over till the morning.” <sup>20</sup> But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. <sup>21</sup> Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

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What’s the point? God provides... He will take care of us...but, it’s so often...just day-by-day. We have to rely on Him daily. Jesus said, “Give us this day our daily bread.” The Bible says, “morning by morning new mercies I see.” It’s a “taking up of our cross daily.” Church family, the Lord will provide day-by-day...

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Oh, I know it would have been nice for the Children of Israel to have had to ONLY gather the manna once...but, they gathered every morning...which was a reminder to depend on the Lord to provide for them day-by-day. Did you need to hear that today? You are going to be okay...because the Lord has the manna you need. He will give you what you need TODAY... and then what you need for tomorrow...will come with the morning. Aren’t you glad?

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I am. The Lord has blessed me so much... So, I give. I give to His kingdom work and store up for myself treasures in heaven. Remember what we said in the beginning:

### **2 Corinthians 8:9**

<sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

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Isn’t this our greatest motivation for giving? That’s why we were singing, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus, (Amazing Grace).” We’re rich because of Jesus!



Oh, He came to make us rich...not in wealth, but in Spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." As followers of Jesus, we are the possessors of the eternal life of God. We are joint-heirs with the Jesus and we own heaven with Him! We will possess the eternal glory of the new heaven and the new earth and the new Jerusalem and all they contain. Because Jesus became poor...by choosing to follow Him you can reign with Him for all eternity!

Oh, WE ARE RICH because for our sake, He became poor. Praise the name Jesus!