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Sermon Notes

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True Christmas Gifts: Grace Upon Grace

John 1:16

There was a time when Christmas gifts were given primarily to the poor

In the Middle Ages, when Christianity had, for the most part, replaced paganism in Europe, the pagan Mid-winter festival was a chance for nobles and barons and lords to put on feasts for the serfs and peasants and give them gifts to minimize social unrest

St. Nicholas is the most famous symbol of Christmas. It is believed that Nicholas was born sometime around 280 A.D. in Patara, near Myra in modern-day Turkey, and that he was a great benefactor to the poor and needy; thus many legends surround him: One legend tells of three poor sisters who could not marry because they had no money for a dowry. To save them from being sold by their father, St. Nick left each of the three sisters gifts of gold coins. One went down the chimney and landed in a pair of shoes that had been left on the hearth. Another went into a window and into a pair of stockings left hanging by the fire to dry. These form the basis for the stockings hung by the fire and St. Nick coming down the chimney.

In England before the Puritan era under Oliver Cromwell, Christmas was little more than a pagan bacchanalia with a thin veneer of Roman Catholicism painted over it, and the Puritans rightly hated it. When they came to power in the mid-seventeenth century, they abolished it.

The Puritans that came to establish their way of life in the American Colonies carried with them their deep dislike for Christmas, so the holiday was not much a part of American culture. In fact, Christmas was outlawed in Boston from 1659 to 1681, though it was celebrated happily in the Jamestown colony in Virginia.

After the American Revolution, throughout the thirteen states of our new country, there was a general distaste for all things of English custom... and Christmas was definitely seen that way. In fact, Congress was in session on December 25, 1789, the first Christmas under our new Constitution! Christmas wasn't even declared a Federal Holiday until June 26, 1870.

What resurrected Christmas in America? One history I read puts the credit squarely at the feet of Washington Irving

The early 19th century was a period of class conflict and turmoil. During this time, unemployment was high and gang rioting by the disenfranchised classes often occurred during

the Christmas season. In 1828, the New York city council instituted the city's first police force in response to a Christmas riot. This catalyzed certain members of the upper classes to begin to change the way Christmas was celebrated in America.

In 1819, best-selling author Washington Irving wrote *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, gent.*, a series of stories about the celebration of Christmas in an English manor house. The sketches feature a squire who invited the peasants into his home for the holiday. In contrast to the problems faced in American society, the two groups mingled effortlessly. In Irving's mind, Christmas should be a peaceful, warm-hearted holiday bringing groups together across lines of wealth or social status.

This reestablished the sense of Christmas being a time when the wealthy gave gifts to the poor to calm social unrest, as was the case in the Middle Ages

This concept was certainly at the center of the most famous Christmas story of all time, Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol*. The infamous miser Ebenezer Scrooge is healed from his indifference to the suffering of the London poor by facing his own sinfulness and his future descent to hell as punishment for his miserable attitude to the needs of others around him.

The story ends happily with Scrooge giving lavish gifts to the poor, especially to Bob Cratchit and his sick and crippled son, Tiny Tim. This story embodies the 19th century ideal that Christmas is a time for the wealthy to look after the needs of the poor

I maintain that that is the core of the Christmas message as well:

John 1:14-17 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth ... ¹⁶ From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

THIS is the real Christmas present... the gift at the center of it all; the infinitely rich giving to the truly poor

But Christmas in 21st Century America has lost this twin focus: God's gift of His Son to a poor planet; and the corresponding generosity of Christians to the poor and needy as a result

I. Introduction: Lavish Christmas Gifts

- Statistics show that almost \$38 billion has been spent by or for children between the ages of 4-12 this Christmas season....
- According to a study done by James McNeal of Texas A & M University, between November 24 and December 25 children of those ages averaged thirty visits to stores and shopping malls and spent about \$2 billion on playthings, \$1 billion on clothes, and \$900 million on gifts for others

- Their parents and grandparents, however, poured on another \$34 billion on children of those ages... buying toys, electronics, cameras, computers, iPods, and PlayStation 3 modules
- Obviously Christians feel uncomfortable with the rampant materialism of Christmas and rightly so
- These material possessions, these gifts, can easily become idols, displacing the love of God from the hearts of their children
- However, the desire parents have to be lavishly generous to their children is actually a dim reflection of the lavish generosity of our heavenly Father:

1 Timothy 6:17 God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

- Nowhere in all human history is this lavish generosity clearer than in God's gift of His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

- In fact, all of God's lesser generosity (such as food, clothing, shelter, good health, loving spouse, loving children, close friends, and abundant luxuries besides)... God's lesser generosity to us is only made possible by the fact that God gave His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins... were it not for that most important gift, none of the other gifts would ever have been given
- My purpose this morning is to beguile you away from thoughts of any earthly treasures you may imagine are waiting for you under the tree tomorrow
- Some of you are old enough to realize that a small fraction of the gifts we give to each other on Christmas day will even be in existence five years from now
- But God intends to give us far more generously than anything we can buy at Southpoint or Crabtree or Hechts or J.C. Penny's or even at Best Buy or Circuit City
- I lead us therefore to contemplate one verse this morning: John 1:16

John 1:16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

II. The Supernatural Fullness of Christ

A. Christ's Supernatural Fullness

1. Christ was fully God

Colossians 1:19 God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him

- a. God is a “full” being... in Him there is no lack at all
- b. He is full of joy, full of wisdom, full of power, full of life, full of purpose, full of love
- c. We are so used to lack and emptiness and longing and deficiency, we cannot begin to understand how full God is
- d. Christ, before the foundation of the world, was fully God... not “god” with a small “g” as though there were something lacking in Him

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

- e. Thus Christ fully participated in all of the deity of God the Father
 - i) Christ was a fully joyful, fully powerful, fully holy, fully wise, fully loving, full righteous as His Father
 - ii) Nothing was lacking in the person of Christ... God the Father and God the Son equally shared deity from the beginning, actually from before the foundation of the world

B. Fullness Became Flesh

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- 1. There was nothing lacking in Christ even when He became flesh

Colossians 2:9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

- 2. Christ was thus the perfect display of God’s fullness in bodily form
 - a. “full of grace and truth” says John
 - b. “Full of grace”

Generally not considered a male virtue, if what you think of is “gracefulness”

At that point you’re thinking of a female ballerina, like the great Anna Pavlova, the Russian who perfected dancing on pointe, using specially designed ballet shoes whose points were extraordinarily small... the effect was like she was ethereal, like a goddess floating across the stage, pirouetting effortlessly

Or perhaps a female figure skater like Katarina Witt or Kristi Yamaguchi, able to leap in the air and land lightly and sweetly... perfectly graceful

Most men do not aspire to this kind of grace

Christ's was of a different sort entirely

"Grace" is God's lavish generosity to sinners, giving them what they do not deserve

It is by grace that God gives us sinners any good thing at all

In this context, however, for Jesus to be "full of grace" meant you could see God's grace come alive in the way Christ lived His life

A Hand gesture

Look on the face

Tone of voice

Bodily posture

Physical exertion

God's grace seen in what Christ did

God's grace seen in what Christ endured

- i) Grace flowed in the gentle way He dealt with children
- ii) Grace flowed in His gentle and kind manner to a leper; a man who made people scream and run away in fright
- iii) Grace flowed in His gentle and kind manner to a woman caught in adultery
- iv) Grace flowed in His tenderness with a dead girl and her parents
- v) Grace flowed in His compassion on more than 5000 hungry people
- vi) Grace flowed in His statement concerning those who nailed Him to the cross: "Father forgive them, they don't know what they're doing."

c. So also Christ was full of truth

- i) He always spoke the truth no matter what it cost Him
- ii) He courageously confronted sin wherever He found it
- iii) He rebuked His disciples many times for unbelief, and said to Peter

- iv) He courageously confronted the scribes and Pharisees and their hypocrisy
- v) He claimed to be what He was, the Son of God in human flesh... and He never shrunk back from that claim even though He knew it was cost Him His life
- vi) He spoke the truth about sin, about salvation through faith in Him, about Satan, about judgment day, about hell, about heaven, about the poor and needy, about the rich and famous
- vii) Jesus was saturated in the truth... He was “full of truth”

In all of these ways, it was possible to see Christ “full of grace and truth”

C. Christ Did Not Come to Receive but to Give

1. Because Jesus was FULL, He was not NEEDY
2. He didn't come into the world to receive gifts
3. Certainly the magi offered Him gifts when He was born
4. Certainly Mary anointed His feet with extremely expensive perfume before He died
5. And certainly, people lavished Him with words of praise and wanted to make Him King during His life
6. But Jesus did not come to receive any of these things
 - a. The gold the magi offered does not compare with the gold in the New Jerusalem
 - b. The pure nard Mary anointed Jesus' feet with does not compare with the Holy Spirit with which God the Father anointed Jesus
 - c. And the Kingdom the Jews wanted to give Him when He fed the 5000 and even more when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey does not compare with the eternal Kingdom His Father gave Him on the basis of His death on the cross
7. No, Jesus did not come to earth to receive any gifts at all... two verses emphasize this:

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Yes... Jesus was infinitely wealthy in heaven, seated at the right hand of Almighty God, maker and owner of heaven and earth; all possessions were His and He could do with them whatever He wanted; He was rich in knowledge, rich in power, rich in wisdom, rich in goodness and rich in glory; He possessed all of these attributes in perfection as much as His heavenly Father... but for our sakes He became poor so that through His poverty we might become infinitely wealthy in heaven

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Yes, Jesus was well-served in heaven; the mightiest angels trembled at His word and hastened to do His will; one hundred million angels encircled His throne ready at a moment's notice to serve Him in whatever way He needed... but for our sakes He entered the world to serve us, not to be served by us!!

Jesus was full, He came to put that fullness on display: Full of grace and truth, not full of food or full of wine or full of gold or full of silk... full of grace and truth

BUT we, the sinful human race, are naturally empty apart from Him

III. The Natural Emptiness of Humanity

A. "We Are All Beggars"

1. When Martin Luther died, his final words were remarkable

"We are all beggars. This is true."

2. Sin has left us beggars, empty of all that really matters
3. This is how Jesus chose to begin the greatest sermon that was ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

B. Universal Emptiness

"From the fullness of his grace we have ALL received..."

1. Even the wealthiest, most powerful, most envied people in the world are still empty apart from Christ

John Wesley, Journal Entry, December 23, 1755, two days before Christmas:

"I was in the robe-chamber, adjoining to the House of Lords, when the King put on his robes. His brow was much furrowed with age, and quite clouded with care. And is this all the world can give even to a King? All the grandeur it can afford? A blanket of ermine around his shoulders, so heavy and cumbersome he can scarce move under it! A huge heap

of borrowed hair, with a few plates of gold and glittering stones upon his head! Alas, what a bauble is human greatness! And even this will not endure.”

This particular monarch was King George II, and he was at the height of his power; the Jacobite revolution in Scotland had been successfully put down; British troops had won a significant battle in India, laying the groundwork for the future British domination of the Indian subcontinent; the French and Indian war was beginning in the New World, and its outcome would establish England as the most powerful colonial power on earth

But here was this fifty-five year old monarch looking frail, worn, ugly... within five years he would be dead, his aorta would rupture while he sat on the toilet

What an ugly and inglorious way for a King to die

Wesley put it right: “And is this all the world can give even to a King?”

2. The “Lifestyle of the Rich and Famous” is greatly envied by many people in the world
3. But it is truly emptiness apart from Christ
4. UNIVERSAL emptiness
 - a. The poorest person, who has lived his whole life in the poverty of Calcutta, is not only materially poor... but they are spiritually poor as well if they don’t have Christ
 - b. The wealthiest captain of industry, making billions of dollars in the stock market, in oil or shipping or software or hi-tech... they are still empty apart from Christ

C. Emptiness Proven by the Law of Moses

Romans 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

The Law exposes our empty hearts and empty lives

It proves that we have nothing in our hands to commend ourselves to God

D. Emptiness Especially Proven by Comparison with Christ

1. As I just mentioned, Jesus said

“Blessed are the spiritual beggars, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

2. What if you don’t feel like a spiritual beggar?

3. What if you are actually confident of your own essential goodness? Feel you can make it for the rest of your life and of Judgment Day without Christ... that you're as good as any person?
4. One of the basic aspects of our emptiness, our poverty is we don't even know how poor we are!!

[Laodicea] Revelation 3:17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

5. How do we become spiritual beggars so we can actually become rich eternally?
6. Martyn Lloyd Jones gave a simple answer:

“Look at Christ; and the more we look at Him, the more hopeless shall we feel by ourselves, and in and of ourselves, and the more we shall become ‘poor in spirit’. Look at Him, keep looking at Him. Look at the saints, look at the men who have been most filled with the Spirit and used. But above all, look again at Him, and then you will have nothing to do to yourself. It will be done. You cannot truly look at Him without feeling your absolute poverty, and emptiness. Then you say to Him,

Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling.

Empty, hopeless, naked, vile. But *He* is the all-sufficient One.”

That's one of the reasons Christ came in the flesh... that as we behold His perfect fullness, His perfect love for others, His perfect servant heart, His grace toward sinners, His patience, His generosity, His power, His perfect obedience to His Father and to the Law, and above all, His sacrifice on the Cross... when we look at Christ in all these ways, we are undone, and we feel our genuine poverty

Then we know we need the grace He alone can give

E. Empty No Longer Because of Grace

John 1:16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

We have received literally “grace instead of grace”

We are empty no longer, beggars no longer, outcasts no longer, destitute no longer

From Christ's perfect fullness we have become full eternally!

IV. The Lavish Generosity of Christ's Gifts

A. Generous in Quality: From His Fullness

1. Another phrase helps us here: “According to His riches in glory”

^{NIV} Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

^{ESV} Ephesians 3:16 [I pray] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being

^{NAU} Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

The idea in all three places is that God gives IN PROPORTION TO How wealthy He is in glory

- a. Bill Gates might give you a \$1 bill and that would be “out of his riches”
- b. Or he might bequeath you half of his estate (net worth of over \$53 billion)
- c. In that case his gift would be \$27.5 billion, a gift “according to” or proportional to his riches
- d. That’s what Ephesians 1 says God has done for us in Christ
- e. John 1:16 is teaching us the same truth

John 1:16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

2. Out of Christ’s Fullness, He Gives Lavishly
3. Better than Bill Gates or Sam Walton or Donald Trump, however, there is no end to the fullness of Christ, and therefore no end to how much generosity He can show us
4. Like the sun, fueled by fusion power

The German-born physicist Hans A Bethe (“bay-tuh”) figured out in the late 1930s how the Sun shines, earning him the Nobel prize. In principle, using fusion to mint energy is easy: take hydrogen atoms and squash them together to form helium. The helium is a fraction lighter than its atomic ingredients, and by Einstein's famous equation - energy is equal to mass times the speed of light squared (a huge number) - that tiny loss of mass results in a colossal release of energy. This is the energy source of all stars.

The Sun radiates as much energy every second as 100 billion tons of exploding dynamite. That energy makes life possible on earth.

Because such a tiny amount of matter is lost, fusion is amazingly efficient and the sun can shine and give so much energy for the thousands of years that human history have gone on

But even the sun can't go on burning like that forever... if the Lord chose not to end human history, at some point the sun would run out of hydrogen atoms to fuel the reaction

5. Unlike the sun, however, Christ's fullness is not diminished in any way by giving us generously from it
6. Christ's fullness also speaks of the richness and quality of the life He intends to give us
 - a. A life of rich blessing, immersed in a sea of contentment and pleasure at the right hand of God
 - b. A life of peace and unity
 - c. A life of endless discovery of the perfections of God
 - d. In fact, we will experience the very fullness of God Himself, and that for all eternity

B. Generous in Scope: We Have ALL Received

1. Everyone who simply trusts in Christ receives lavish gifts of grace
2. There is no one excluded; EVERYONE who calls upon Him, everyone who seeks Him, everyone who trusts upon Him, everyone who brings their emptiness to Him, will receive these lavish gifts of grace from Christ's fullness

C. Generous in Cost: At the Price of His Body and Blood

1. These lavish gifts of grace are NOT free of cost, however
2. Jesus took on a human body, was born in a manger, was given the breath of life, was given blood to flow through His veins SO THAT He might pour out that life, pour out His blood on the cross as an atonement for our sins
3. These gifts are infinitely more valuable than any that have every been purchased

1 Peter 1:18-19 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

D. Generous in Quantity: Grace Instead of Grace

1. The Greek of this phrase shows us how generous God intends to be to us
2. Lit. "grace instead of grace" or "grace in the place of grace"

3. One gift after another after another after another after another

Illus. “Little engine that could”... train full of toys for the boys and girls who lived in the Valley on the other side of the mountains; I always imagined they were Christmas presents; but obviously the train could not have been very long or heavy; even if every car were full of gifts, there is still a limit to the gifts the train could bring

the longest train on record had 682 coal cars and was pushed by 8 huge diesel engines; it was over 4 ½ miles long and weighed in excess of 70,000 tons. Imagine waiting at the RR crossing as that train slowly chugged by; it may have taken as much as half an hour to pass you by;

one car after another after another after another after another

That is the sense of the Greek here:

One gift of God’s grace in place of the another; and that one soon to be replaced by another one

V. Grace Upon Grace

A. Listing the Past Blessings of Grace

- First gift of God’s grace: God’s salvation plan, worked out in detail before the creation of the world, including the planned death of Christ Jesus on the cross
- Next gift of grace: electing you by name to be one of Christ’s disciples, one of God’s children
- Next gift of grace: creating heaven and earth with all of its beauty and majesty, with all its wonder and splendor, with all its majestic mountains and deep oceans, with all its flowers and trees, with all its birds and fish and animals; and creating our first parents, Adam and Eve, in His image
- Next gift of grace: after Adam’s fall, not killing Adam and Eve, but rather promising a Savior who would come later, thus instituting Redemptive History, the long march of history leading to your salvation
- Next gift of grace: saving Noah and his family from the flood, thus insuring that you and I would be born and that the human race would not be wiped out
- Next gift of grace: The call of Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation; thus insuring that salvation would come from the Jews
- Next gift of grace: The Exodus under Moses; the picture of our salvation acted out in grand history as two million Jews left bondage in Egypt and eventually entered the Promised Land

- Next gift of grace: The Law of Moses, that uncovers our sinfulness and puts it on full display; but which also pictures the remedy in the animal sacrificial system, a beautiful picture of Christ's death on the cross
- Next gift of grace: The Kingship of David, from whom the Christ would eventually be born; David, the righteous King who would someday worship His own son Christ
- Next gift of grace: The words of the Prophets, the Servants and Messengers of God, who pressed Israel's violation of the Law of God home in a powerful way that reveals our own depravity; but again, the words of the Prophets clearly and supernaturally predict a Savior who would come later
- Next gift of grace: The birth of Christ Himself, in the fullness of time, born under the Law of Moses, born of a Virgin, born the Son of Man and the Son of God
- Next gift of grace: Christ's perfect sinless life, perfectly displaying grace and truth, at every moment and setting a perfect example for all of us
- Next gift of grace: Christ's powerful miracles, a display of Christ's deity and His compassion all at once
- Next gift of grace: Christ's perfect teachings, like the Sermon on the Mount
- Next gift of grace: Christ's suffering, His death on the cross for our sins, even when we were still sinners
- Next gift of grace: Christ's resurrection, His defeat of death and His resurrection body that can never suffer or die again
- Next gift of grace: Christ's ascension into heaven and His sitting at the right hand of God the Father, from which He rules actively and absolutely over all the events of human history
- Next gift of grace: The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, to live within the heart of each person who trusts in Christ; also to bring lost people to faith in Christ
- Next gift of grace: The writing of the New Testament by the Apostles and prophets, a perfect record of Christ's life and the implications of the gospel
- Next gift of grace: The steady irresistible advance of the gospel of Christ, for twenty centuries; the heroes of the faith, the martyrs and sacrifices they made, the blood they shed over points of doctrine, the careful thinking and debating they did to protect the gospel from corruption and pass it on undefiled to the next generation, the missionaries who courageously stepped on boats and rode camels and climbed mountains to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth

- Next gift of grace: The way God has ruled over the nations and world history to prepare the world for the gospel and the gospel for the world; the wars and leaders and inventions and economic development and discoveries that made the advance of the gospel right to you a possibility
- Next gift of grace: our family lineage and its personal history; the way God brought your great grandparents and grandparents and parents together; the strengths and weaknesses of your family heritage

All of these and thousands of other gifts of God's grace He orchestrated with you personally in mind before any of you were born

John 1:16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

B. Listing the Present Blessings of Grace

Since you have been born, He has showered multiple gifts of God's grace on you as well, one after another after another

- Physical provision every day of your life of air, water, food, warmth, clothing, shelter, loving relationships and training
- Spiritual nurture, learning things about God and His Son from the first day you were born until now
- The beauty of the earth... mountains and rivers and trees and oceans
- The clear teaching of the Bible and the consistent proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ multiple times before you finally believed
- A key person or persons who took a special interest in you to bring you to faith in Christ: a mother or father, a pastor or evangelist, a Sunday school teacher or college roommate... someone who loved you enough to confront you powerfully with the gospel
- The work of the Holy Spirit in convicting you of sin and of Christ's atoning work on the cross
- Regeneration: born again by the power of the Spirit
- Faith: the gift of faith to trust in Christ
- Justification: all your sins, past, present and future completely forgiven
- Adoption: immediately adopted into the family of God
- Indwelling Holy Spirit, to guide you the rest of your life

- Sanctification: daily progress made in your soul enabling you to grow into Christlikeness
- Protection: from the world the flesh and the devil
- Other Christians: whose love and example and spiritual gifts have strengthened you in your journey in Christ
- The Church: structured to help you worship and serve and grow
- Christian books and materials
- Spiritual gift ministry of your own

John 1:16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

C. Listing the Future Blessings of Grace

- Sustaining grace until the day you die... nothing will separate you from Christ
- Food, clothing, shelter, health as the Lord provides to enable you to finish your work here
- Complete forgiveness of all your future sins
- Grace to enable you to finish your fruitful ministry
- Grace to suffer persecution or sickness or financial trials or any adversity to the glory of God
- Grace to die well to the glory of God
- Glorification: perfect souls, perfect bodies
- Surviving and thriving on Judgment Day
- Rewards for things done while in the body
- Eternity in the very presence of God
- Eternity in the New Heaven and New Earth
- Walking on the New Earth, a world that will constantly ravish your eyes with its beauty
- An inheritance on the New Earth that can never perish, spoil or fade
- Freedom forever from death, mourning, crying and pain... NO MORE SIN!

- Perfect fellowship with God, looking at the beauty of His face, listening to the perfection of His words, basking in the comfort of His love

John 1:16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

VI. Application

- A. Tomorrow: focus your minds on these gifts I've listed here... fifty-four blessings God has given you, "grace instead of grace"
1. Thank God for each of these things
 2. See your material gifts and blessings as good things that have a very limited lifespan
 3. Consider ways you can be more generous to the poor and needy in 2007 than you ever have before
 4. You have twelve months to consider how you might reform your Christmas celebration in 2007: take the resources you would have put toward the wealthy friends and relatives and coworkers and neighbors and give them to the poor instead
 5. Set your mind on your future inheritance with all the saints in heaven!!
 6. Worship Christ tomorrow with grateful hearts