**He Became Our Neighbor**

Based on [John 1:1-18](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn1.1)

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Christmas Day

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*"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."*

I'm sure you're all at least somewhat familiar with the story of the Titanic, that huge cruiseship that hit an iceberg on it's maiden voyage in 1912, and some 1500 people lost their lives. If you've seen the movie...you probably noticed the different treatment that was given the rich and the poor. I'm not talking about the obvious difference. Even today if you fly first class, your ride will be more luxurious and comfortable than those stuck in coach...you get what you pay for.

But in the movie, when it became clear that the sinking of the massive oceanliner was inevitable, many of the poor were not allowed to be saved by a life boat. Instead it was the rich who received priority boarding. **Now the actual history of "class conflict" and life discrimination aboard the titanic isn't clear.** But the movie certainly portrays that the wealthy and the majority of the crew assigned more value to the life of the rich than to the poor.

I don't know if the movie got the history right or not, but I do know what God says. God says, the distinction between rich and poor--that's just the way of the world. Jesus says, the poor will always be with us; and that the rich already have their reward. He says blessed are the poor, for theirs shall receive the kingdom of god. He says it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to get to heaven.

Jesus does not say these things to make the rich feel bad about being rich, or the poor to feel good about being poor. In fact, he's not even talking about money. He's pointing out that, in this world, power, and prestige, and their symbol wealth will always receive preferential treatment...while weakness, poverty, and humility will be trampled underfoot.

**In other words, in spite of all the welfare programs, and progressive tax structures implemented mankind cannot--through programs of social engineering--change the nature of the world.** And it is the nature of the world is to seek life on its own terms, without God.

Even if society succeeds in empowering the poor, all they've done is made some of them rich. And so, ladies and gentlemen, know this: when the world receives the poor, they are, by definition, no longer poor. Because poverty has nothing to do with coin. According to the way Jesus speaks, to be poor means nothing else **than to be rejected by the world.**

All this is to remind us that the royal Son of God was born in poverty, and that indicates that he was born rejected by the world. John the Apostle says, "**[Jesus] came to his own and his own people did not receive him.**" God was born a Jew, and the Jews rejected him. God was made man, and men rejected him. God was born into the world, and the world cast him out. **And yet in the midst of all this rejection there is this Gospel**, "**But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**." Because Christ was born, we are given a second birth as children of God.

Dear Christian friends, we remember that by our new birth of "**water and the spirit**" Christ's birthright becomes ours. And we also remember the tragedy of unbelief...that some reject their birthright, and trade it for a pittance. Esau traded his for a meal. Paul says of the enemies of Christ's cross, "**Their god is their belly, and they glory in shame, with minds set on worldly things**."

And so on Christmas day, we ask not only why did God send his son into the world, but why did he send him in a manger? **If God wants all men to be saved why wasn't his son born in glory, and riches, and power and might? Then he wouldn't be rejected.** Then all would come to him, all would praise him, and claim their birthright. Not just shepherds, and foreigners, but the whole world would certainly come to receive such a hunk of a Saviour. Everyone would bet on that horse; all would bank on that stock; all would receive his silver and gold and crowns into their homes and their hearts.

Ladies and gentlemen, why did the son of God take on human flesh? Why did he come in weakness and not in power? Why did he come in a manger and not in a palace. The answer is simple, it's so that the weak would be drawn to him, **and so the powerful would reject him**.

If God comes in glory and might, giving all blessings by request, it doesn't matter whether you love him or not, you're gonna smile when he looks, laugh at his jokes, shine his shoes, and flatter him. And you're going wait for his blessings like a seal waiting for a fish. Even if your god is your belly, you'd follow a powerful god. **Like Judas, you'd give him your lips, but withhold your heart.** In order to satisfy your belly, you'd bow down to the powerful, and trample the weak underfoot. So it was with the Pharisees who acted as though they could love God without loving their neighbor.

And so, on Christmas morning, the God who in power commanded us to love our neighbor, came in weakness and **became our neighbor**. God wasn't found in first-class, he was stuffed in the lower deck. And the hearts of men were revealed in how they treated God numbered among the poor.

And so here's the gospel for Christmas. God came in humility and weakness, to reveal the hearts of men. And here's the twist...**this poverty of spirit that makes the god/man rejectable; is the very thing that makes him approachable.**

There was a story once told by Paul Harvey, about a man who wouldn't go to church with his wife on Christmas. He just couldn't believe that God became a man, and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. So came Christmas eve and she went to church, and then it began to snow heavily. He sat down to rest by the fire when he began to hear an occasional "thump" "thud." He looked outside and saw a flock of birds huddled in the snow...they were flying into his lanscape window trying to escape the storm.

The man then thought of his barn, how if he could lead them there they would be safe from the storm. First he tried a trail of breadcrumbs to the barn, but they wouldn't come. Then he tried catching them. No good. He waved his arms shooing them, instead they scattered in every direction except the warm lighted barn. Then he realized they were afraid of him. He realized to them I am a strange and terrifying creature. "If I only could be a bird", he thought to himself, "and mingle with them and speak their language, I could tell them not to be afraid. If I could become one of them, then I could show them the way to the warm safe...." then upon his face amazement. In the distance he heard the church bells ring "O Come All Ye Faithful". And he sank to his knees in the snow.

So too on Christmas morn we sink to our knees and pray to the Lord: "Come not in terror as the 'King of Kings', but kind and good with healing in thy wings"

Merry Christmas...