

## Christmas! Who Knew?

☆ The depth of God's riches (v.33)

☆ The wonder of His counsel (vv.34-35)

☆ The glory of God's praise (v.36)

In the name of Jesus, our newborn Savior, dearly redeemed family of God:

One of the dumbest things I ever did as a teenager was to put an anonymous note on the school bulletin board. Our basketball season wasn't going so well. Fans weren't cheering. And at the last game, neither were the cheerleaders – as far as I was concerned. So I took it upon myself to write something and pin it to the main announcement board where everyone could see it. Nowadays, you'd send something by email or texting and your name would automatically be on it. I left mine off and walked away. When I looked back a few hours later, a note was attached to mine. But it was signed – from the school president. "Whoever posted this note without the courage to sign his name should see me in my office during consultation this morning." That's where my friends could laugh at me and ask, "Who knew? You got called to the president's office. Did you forget his daughter was one of the cheerleaders?"

Dumb doesn't get much dumber. The president was too wise to make this about his daughter though he heard about it at home. He just wanted to teach me a valuable life lesson. If something is worth saying, sign your name. If you can't, should you say it? See why we generally don't publish anonymous materials unless personal privacy is needed to share a valuable life lesson? See how awesome it is that God put His Name on every word He inspired in His holy writers? This isn't dumb at all. **Christmas! Who Knew?** You can never exhaust the wonder of it. **Who Knew...?**

☆ The depth of God's riches (v.33)

A member told me about a worship service he attended in a different fellowship where the pastor went on and on about how much he loved the people. It was a wealthy congregation where he made everyone feel good about themselves. But he did not say one word about Jesus Christ.

Do you remember how the preacher introduced Jesus? His name was John the Baptizer. With his strange clothes came a strange message: ***"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'" That's like saying, "Don't think because you belong to this church that your membership makes you right with God." "I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham" – or members for this church! "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."*** (Matthew 3:7–10 NIV) Jesus preached that to wealthy, self-righteous church people too. (Matthew 12:34; 23:33) That's Paul's first three chapters in Romans leading up to our text. Not one of us is righteous either. If we were, families would not have to breath a sigh of relief when Christmas get-togethers are finally done. Putting it mildly, we get on each other's nerves. We aren't helpful, kind and considerate like God.

***"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"*** God demands that we be holy like Him, then sends His holy Son to live in our place and to die our death under God's law. Christmas is all about the Christ who takes our sins away and gives us new life by faith in Jesus. That's chapters 4-6 of Romans with God's help in our struggles and His victorious life in Romans 7, 8. When you're "down in the dumps," you know what the Psalmist meant praying, ***"Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; O LORD, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD,***

*who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.* ” (Psalm 130:1–4 NIV) Christ came for the cloudy days too in order to show us in the depths our feelings that He is right there to comfort and lift us up again with the Good News that God is on our side. Just look at His Son in the manger to see **The depth of God’s riches** and...

### ☆ **The wonder of His counsel (vv.34-35)**

Last evening I watched a “family friendly” movie about a young boy who befriends the new girl in school. Theirs is a sweet adventure in a make-believe land with a tree fort in the forest. She finally goes to church with him. In her purse she catches a sunbeam streaming through a stained glass window. She says it will give their magical land “balance.” Riding home in the back of his parents’ pickup, his little sister says, “You’re going to hell if you don’t believe the Bible.” She asks her boyfriend if he believes that. Of course, he’s clueless, because clueless is how modern writers like to portray boys. He’s too afraid of offending her, but she’s not at all afraid to say, “I just don’t believe God would damn anyone.”

Neither does our society. No one believed on that August morning a few years ago that the I-35 bridge in Minneapolis would collapse. No one believed terrorists could fly our own planes into our buildings. One of the smartest meteorologists in the world said a few years ago that soon children would not even know what snow is because of global warming. Wouldn’t you love to invite him over to shovel the snow back to the curbs in our parking lot? Who are you going to believe about the hereafter? People who’ve never been there? Or the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself to rescue you from hell?

God does not rule by committee. He does not consult with His creatures for what to do and when. ***“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?”*** The Creator can see the end from the beginning to bring about His own saving purpose by directing His-story to His own right time in history. He controls evil kings like Herod to rescue his own Son in Egypt. Then God kills kings like Herod in such gruesome ways that doctors still hold international conferences trying to diagnose all his diseases. God changed nature in order that His own Son could be born of a virgin and serve as our Savior from sin, death and hell. ***“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”*** (Psalm 32:8 NIV)

### ☆ **The glory of God’s praise (v.36)**

One of our elders reminded me of a story Dr. Becker liked to tell about a guest pastor who preached for a congregation. Afterwards, he wondered why no one said anything and why he was not invited back. Talking to the president of the congregation, he said, “I just have to ask you this. Was there something I said which the congregation didn’t like?” Kindly the congregation president replied, “Don’t you remember? You told us you have discovered in your studies that there really is no such place as hell. If you’re lying, we don’t want you. If you’re telling the truth, we don’t need you.”

Fact is, I could go on and on about how much I love all of you too. But then, why would need me? You have plenty of politicians to do that. I don’t need to go on and on condemning because there are plenty of lawyer-preachers with fire and brimstone. What we need is what Elijah discovered so alone and on the run at Mount Horeb. Wicked Queen Jezebel wanted to kill him in spite of God’s fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:16-46). But the Lord assured Elijah he was not the only believer left. ***“I have reserved for myself seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.”*** (1 Kings 11:4) Only God can see faith in someone’s heart. And only God’s praise for His own grace and mercy will ever count.

Kneel beside the manger and look at God’s Son. There we can humbly confess after we ***“have done everything [we] were told to do..., ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”*** (Luke 17:10 NIV) As a wise man once prayed, “The good in me to thee I trace.” Eternity will be too short to shout all God’s praise. And we will receive great praise from Him when He calls us His own dear children at the judgment on the Last Day. Then glory to God in the highest! ***“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”***