

**JI Packer, “*The Christmas Spirit*”**

We talk glibly of the “Christmas spirit,” rarely meaning more by this than sentimental jollity on a family basis. But . . . it ought to mean the reproducing in human lives of the temper of him who for our sakes became poor at the first Christmas. And the Christmas spirit itself ought to be the mark of every Christian all the year round.

It is our shame and disgrace today that so many Christians—I will be more specific: so many of the soundest and most orthodox Christians—go through this world in the spirit of the priest and the Levite in our Lord’s parable, seeing human needs all around them, but (after a pious wish, and perhaps a prayer, that God might meet those needs) averting their eyes and passing by on the other side. That is not the Christmas spirit. Nor is it the spirit of those Christians—alas, they are many—whose ambition in life seems limited to building a nice middle-class Christian home, and making nice middle-class Christian friends, and bringing up their children in nice middle-class Christian ways, and who leave the submiddle-class sections of the community, Christian and non-Christian, to get on by themselves.

The Christmas spirit does not shine out in the Christian snob. For the Christmas spirit is the spirit of those who, like their Master, live their whole lives on the principle of making themselves poor—spending and being spent—to enrich their fellow humans, giving time, trouble, care and concern, to do good to others—and not just their own friends—in whatever way there seems need.

There are not as many who show this spirit as there should be. If God in mercy revives us, one of the things he will do will be to work more of this spirit in our hearts and lives. If we desire spiritual quickening for ourselves individually, one step we should take is to seek to cultivate this spirit. “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” ([2 Corinthians 8:9](#)). “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” ([Philippians 2:5](#)). “I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart” ([Psalm 119:32 KJV](#)).