

Christmas and charity go together. Not-for-profit organizations rely on gifts this time of year, and people come to the rescue. Some folks admit that tax deductions motivate them to give. It looks like a free gift, but the giver gets something back on April 15. Charities solicit gifts this way: “Contribute, and your gift will be tax deductible.” Give a material gift, and you’ll get a material gift.

But not all giving is motivated by the bottom line. Some giving is motivated by the bottom of the heart. In Cameron the Ministerial Alliance is speechless at the generous response people made to our Adopt-a-Family program. Last year we had a good response from donors and a handful of last-minute volunteers – our elves – getting the final gifts together for over 150 needy people. This year, we had more donors than ever and over 50 elves for the last-minute work. We helped over 1000 needy people this year.

Yes, the ministers are concerned about the number of needy in our area, and yes, we need someone to figure out why the needs increased. But to explain why the giving increased, you have to look beyond the benefits of tax deductions. It’s Christmas, and people in the Cameron area know that Christmas and charity go together.

Tonight we express our belief that God loved us enough to become human in order to save us from sin and death. God dignified the human race by becoming like us. The poor deserve respect because every person shares what God became. In giving charity we connect with other people and we experience God in them.

If God had not become human, charity would not make much sense. We would bankroll our earnings, rather than give to the needy. We would go have fun, rather than care for the sick. We would exterminate our enemies, rather than love them. We would squander our natural resources, rather than prepare the earth for the future. We would let children in Africa die from AIDS, rather than fulfill our promise to end this disease. Charity would be foolish if every human being were not important. But God become human, Jesus was born, and that has made all the difference.

The Letter to Titus says Jesus appeared to save everyone and to train us “to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly and devoutly.” We are here tonight because we

got the message. We have heard the good news. At Christmas,
charity is born because Jesus is born.