

## The Forbidden City

. . . *abounding in riches for all who call upon Him.* . . (Romans 10:12b NAS).

My husband and I just returned from China. While there, we were able to view the Imperial palaces and gardens of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Construction began in 1406 and was completed fourteen years later. For over 500 years, 24 emperors ruled from the confines of this city. The palaces were fully walled on four sides by 10-meter-high walls, 7,236 kilometers in circumference. Outside the walls, a 52-meter-wide moat with a length of 3.8 kilometers surrounds the city. Only the rulers of China and their servants were allowed within the city. Anyone else attempting to come in was killed. Thus, it was named “The Forbidden City.”

In one of the palaces, the imperial throne sits on a seven-floor base. It is so high that when the emperor was seated on the throne, his feet were 11 meters above the heads of the officials.

The Imperial Garden, 130 meters long and 90 meters wide, has more than 20 architectural structures of different kinds arranged symmetrically in hierarchical order, dotted with rare flowers and trees, ponds and layered rocks.

Walking through this massive city, I compared the vast difference between those rulers of old and Jesus Christ, our Lord. For some human rulers (such as these were), exercising supreme power over the people was done from a distance. From within the confines of “The Forbidden City,” these emperors, called the Sons of Heaven, issued commands with absolute authority to millions of subjects.

How unlike our Savior! Leaving Heaven, He became one of us. John tells us that *the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). Not only did He leave Heaven, but He came to serve . . . . *The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many* (Matthew 20:28). After washing the feet of His disciples, He said, “*You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you*” (John 13:13-15 NAS).

Instead of ruling from a distance, Jesus came and lived among us. Instead of sitting above us, He came and knelt at our feet. Instead of killing any who would attempt to come near, He sacrificed Himself. Instead of forbidding us to see His beautiful gardens, He offers us eternal life so that we can enjoy all the splendor of Heaven with Him. Jesus does not live in a forbidden city. He invites all to live with Him. For those who accept His invitation by trusting Him as Savior and Lord, He is preparing a place in His Father’s house (John 14:20).

It continues to baffle me that anyone who hears the truth of who Jesus is and what He did on our behalf could refuse such an incredible gift. God’s grace and the riches of Christ are truly unfathomable. To God be the glory for such amazing grace!