



Christmas Notes

Part 2 – O Come Let Us Adore Him

Shay Robbins

So, today, we're picking up *Part 2 – O Come Let Us Adore Him*. We're going to talk specifically about adoration. I want to give you the definition of adoration that we'll work with this morning: "*A deep love and respect, worship or veneration in the spiritual sense.*" Here's kind of the big idea that we'll weave through out the entire message.

Adoration precedes worship. The idea is that as you grow in your affection and love for God, your life will become worship. A lot of times, we associate the idea of worship with what happens at the beginning of the service, where we come together once a week and we sing worship songs. But, throughout the scriptures, God shows us that worship is more than merely singing songs. The first time worship is brought up in the scripture is when God tested Abraham. He asked him to take his son Isaac up on the mountain to sacrifice him. It was a test. Abraham said, "I'm going to grab my son and we're going to go up on the mountain to worship." That idea of worship was an act of obedience. In other words, it was a display of his love and trust that God would provide another way and of course we know that he did. That was a foreshadowing that God was actually going to give his own Son Jesus to die on behalf of the sins of the whole world.

I've seen Joe white talk about this with college students for years and years. He talks about the difference between being saved and being a bond servant. When we're saved, it's a one-time moment in the course of your lifetime where you make a profession of faith and you believe in your heart that Jesus died for your sins and that he was raised from the dead on the third day. You commit your life to follow him and you are saved. In other words, your eternal destination changes and you get to go and be with God forever.

The difference between being saved and being a bond servant is pretty significant because it changes the way that you live your life. A bond servant was someone who was given their freedom and instead of taking their freedom, the servant would make the statement that, "My love for my master is greater than my own freedom, in fact it's greater than my own life." A bond servant, figuratively speaking, would chain their heart back to their master and serve them out of love for a lifetime.

When we make a commitment like that to be a bond servant – to give our lives back to God – this is the statement that Joe uses often and it I think it applies to us today. He says this, "When you're saved, you sing those worship songs, but when you're chained, you live those worship songs."

Adoration transforms obedience out of obligation into obedience out of love. Obedience out of true love is true worship. Adoration transforms obedience out of obligation, which is what we call religion. When you've got a list of dos and don'ts and you do them in order to be a good person and to behave yourself and to do your very best to earn God's love, that is what we define as a religion. But a lot of people have come to Woodland Hills and they've found out that we're not preaching religion, we're preaching a relationship. Adoration transforms that obedience out of obligation to an obedience out of love. When you're obedient out of love, you begin to live a life of worship. That's a huge differentiation between religion and relationship. I'm here to tell you today that God wants a relationship with you today.

As I've wrestled with this topic, I've asked myself what I think is an important question. How do you adore a God that you cannot see? As I've wrestled with this, I think, especially for men, this is a hard thing to grasp. That's a little bit stereotypical, but guys generally have a harder time tapping into their feelings in the emotional aspect of loving a God they cannot see. As I've wrestled that, I think that's the question we need to answer today. How do I go about doing that? If in fact adoration drives a life of worship, how do I grow in that. God has brought me back to my role as a daddy and Ashley and I raising up our family – as he often does – to help teach me what it looks like to grow in adoration.

The Robbins family is on a great adventure every day and every adventure culminates in bed time. Bed time at the Robbins' household is pretty intense; I'm going to be honest with you. By the end of the day, Mom and Dad are pretty excited to put the kids to bed. We finally get them all washed up and teeth brushed, and we get them into their beds. Our four bigs all sleep in one big room upstairs, with mattresses across the floor. We get them all tucked in and Ashley and I have a system. Every night we'll lay down and have a tuck-in with one kid and we kind of rotated each night, so we can rotate through the kids. We'll go through our rotation, then we'll pray, and then we'll sing as a family. Then we tuck them in and we quietly back out of the room, turn off the light, and shut the door. Then we hear somebody say, "Daddy, I need to go to the restroom!" They come running out of their bed and into the bathroom and I'm thinking, *NOOOOOOO, we were so close!!*

And then you get that one tucked in and another one says, "Dad, I'm so thirsty!" They go and get they're drink and after tucking them in four or five times, we're finally done with tuck ins. We're emotionally and relationally empty. We go down and we get about an hour together and then we lay in bed. My wife often... She's so good at this. A lot of times in bed on a regular basis, we'll pull out pictures and videos of the kids and we'll look at them in bed together. It's a really healthy process. This process that we walk through restores our hearts for our kids.

As I've thought about it, we kind of do three things. **We remember.** We think about memories that are fond to us. We think about the way we're **growing to know our kids** and the little creations that God has made them. Finally, we're **treasuring** some of these moments. As we walk through that process, our hearts are restored, and our adoration grows.

Speaking of **remember**, one of the videos that Ashley and I actually go back to on a regular when Knox has us at our wits end. I want to show you this 30 second video. This s when he was two, four years ago. [Knox making monster sounds] That's our swagger wagon full of dragons. I don't know what it is

about that little video, but we just love that thing. It's almost like we're dinking it up. We love two-year-olds. A lot of people call them the terrible twos, but we just get the biggest kick out them. When we watch that video, it just stirs up those affections and that adoration for our little boy, Knox. It kind of refuels us where we can get up the next morning and just love the fire out of that little guy. We remember, we think through these different memories with our kids, and we cherish them.

The next one is **we know**. We get to know our kids. If any of you guys have been parents, you know that your kids are just this little masterpiece. As they get older, you discover more and more of who God made them to be. Often times, it's just like absolutely amazing and hard to understand how they become who they are.

Tess Robbins is kind of our biggest personality in the Robbins' family. I've got a picture of her and her friend, Lincoln Ingram. This was a special day. This was Mother's Day at preschool last year. Tess was all dolled up. She's got her sparkly shoes on, she's got her dress on, and her hair is in pigtails. All the moms had gathered up, and all the kids were lined up behind this curtain. Then the teacher leads all the kids out in this little precession out in front of the moms.

As soon as the kids come walking out, all of the moms start snickering. One of Ashley's friends kind of gives her an elbow and says, "Look at Tess." This what she sees. Hello! Tess went through a phase about 18 months long, where she loved to tuck her shirt or her dress or whatever it might be into her britches and pull them up over her belly button. It was just her thing. Of course, she walks out in front of everybody. Ashley went to all the trouble of dolling her up and there she is, dressed tucked into her britches. I'm going to tell you that we did not raise her this way. This is not nurture; this is nature. God designed her that way.

Another story about Tess... This was just a couple of months ago. We've got a big beanbag in our living room. I was laying down on the beanbag and she comes and jumps on me. She starts feeling my whiskers. She's rubbing my whiskers and then she starts touching my face. Then she starts trying to touch my lip with her grubby little hands. I was like, "Get off of me!" She sees this moment of weakness in her dad, her eyes light up, and she starts going at me like a savage, trying to touch my lip with her grubbing little hands. I start laughing... She's got me laughing so hard it's everything I could do to keep her off of me. We're going at, just laughing and having a great time. We must have wrestled there for 15 minutes. She pretty well had the upper hand. Ashley finally comes and grabs her hand and drags her off to bath time. As she's being dragged off, Tess looks back at me and taps her upper lip. God designed that in her. Wow! Savage; I'm serious.

Anyway, just an example of how the more we get to know that little girl, our hearts just swell with love for her. She's just a fascinating little creature. As we grow in knowledge of who she is, our hearts grown in adoration for Tess Robbins. Out of that, we love her, we parent her, we discipline her, we raise her up. Everything we do for Tess, we do out of a big heart of love for her.

So, we remember, we know, and then **we treasure**. One of my favorite things right now is Piper June Robbins. Here's a picture of her. She went through a goggle phase. She wears goggles around the house. She's in the two's, which we love, as I told you. When I come home, Piper June Robbins makes

me feel like a million bucks because the moment she sees me, she comes running. She loves to wrestle her daddy and so she's always saying, "Daddy, wrestle me? Daddy wrestle me?" Then she says, "Daddy, kiss me? Daddy, kiss me?" And then she turns around and runs off. She runs off and hides and I chase her down and we wrestle. She's into this phase where she likes to hide in the cupboards. She'll run off and hide and I'll have to search through our cupboards to find her.

Last week, we were in Menards and we're shopping in the cabinet area. We've got a little remodel going on. All of the sudden, Piper disappears. I start looking in the cabinets and sure enough, there she is in one of Menard's cabinets. I'm glad we didn't leave her behind. Who knows how long she would have hidden out in there.

Those are the moments where you just treasure. I hope I never forget the goggles running around our house and the wrestling matches because those moments, as we treasure them up, fuel our love for our kiddoes. So, we remember, we know, and we treasure to grow in adoration of our kids.

Our relationship with God is not so different. In fact, it's easy to overcomplicate our relationship with God. If we have a desire to live a life of worship, this is what we need to do. We need to remember, know, and treasure Him. As we walk through that process, that's what will happen. Your heart will swell with adoration for God. Out of that, your life will be transformed.

So, I want to go to Ephesians 3. The Apostle Paul is going to kind of help us take this concept and make it practical. My hope is to really give us some practical steps to grow in our adoration of God. If you would, turn our Bibles or your phone to Ephesians 3. As you do that, I want to go ahead and pray as we dive into God's word.

Father, I want to come to you and just ask you to unleash the power of your word. I want to pray, God, that you'd speak to us very clearly this morning. I pray, God, for your blessing and your guidance and your care as we go to your scripture. It's in Jesus' name we pray... Amen.

A little bit of background. Paul is in his first stint in prison. From what we know, Paul was in prison twice. The second stint – where he wrote 2 Timothy – ended in his death. In his first stint, he wrote several letters. One of them was a letter to the Church at Ephesus. Ephesus was a pretty wealthy city. It was a port city, so it was full of a lot of economic wealth. It was also a melting pot of cultures. In a lot of port cities like in Atlanta or Los Angeles or Houston, you've got all kinds of diversity, all kinds of people, all kinds of religions that are clashing and melting together. That was Ephesus.

Paul is writing this letter and, specifically in Chapter 3, he's giving explanation. He says, "hey, I want to remind you of what God has done in my life and the message he's given to me for you." The specific message and role that Paul was given was the message to go to the Gentiles. So, God was the God of the Israelites and there was this mystery. They didn't know how God was going to save them or what exactly the Messiah would look like. But when he came and fulfilled all these prophecies that pointed to Jesus, Jesus then turned and he was welcoming the Gentiles. He wanted to adopt them into God's family. That was Paul's mission. It was his specific role to bring that message to the Gentiles. He writes in Chapter 3 and he kind of rolls this out.

Remember God

Ephesians 3 says, **1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you... So, this is that mission that he was given. 3 ...that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ... He's saying, "You may have heard of this, but let me remind you. 5 ...which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.**

Now, I'm going to camp out on this word *gift* for a little bit. Remember, when Paul talks about the gift that he received, it's important who he was. Paul, formerly known as Saul, was a persecutor of the church. We know that at a minimum, he held the coats of men who killed the Christians. And yet, God called him with a special, specific purpose. He snatched him out of the darkness and said, "Paul, I've got a special plan for your life." And he sent him out. It was an amazing gift.

One of these kind of divine echoes or sacred echoes that I've been hearing in my life... I feel like God has been pushing me to remember the darkness that he pulled me out of. There's kind of a fine line there when you look back on some of the guilt and the shame and the rebellion that you walked in, in your former life. There's a little bit of danger of falling into condemnation and taking those things on. But we know that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, but rather when we look back at that, it puts our life, and this gift that God has given us, into context.

I often think about the darkness that I walked in and what it was like to be there. Constantly being nagged by the Holy Spirit. Constantly breaking and messing up relationships. Constantly making decisions that I was ashamed of. Generally taking all of that guilt and shame and trying to just stuff it, to bottle it up, to medicate it. It was just this constant strife that I found myself in. It's healthy for me to remember that because the moment when I surrendered my life to Him, there was just this physical weight...

I've talked about this before, but I just can't get away from it. When I received God's forgiveness there was this physical weight that rinsed off my shoulders, and I experienced freedom that day when God snatched me out of the darkness and he pulled me up into his marvelous life. When I remember that, when I think about the beauty of that forgiveness and that freedom, my heart and my affections are stirred towards Him and the value of that gift is renewed. It's important for us to remember that. A lot of times, we can forget or begin to take for granted all that God has pulled us out of. When I remember those things, my heart is refreshed and my adoration for God is renewed.

The Israelites would do something that was really smart, and God instructed them to do it. They would have what I would call these God moments. For example, when he parted the Red Sea and he led them out of slavery from Egypt. What they did was build what is called an Ebenezer. It was a pile of rocks.

The reason they would do that when they would have these God moments is so that when they went through out their life and they would pass these Ebenezers, they would look at that Ebenezer, look at that pile of rocks, and they would remember God's greatness, and their hearts would be stirred with adoration towards their God.

I would encourage you, as God answers prayers and you have these God moments in your life, write them down. It's crazy to me that I've had these magnificent moments where God has answered prayers, where he's done amazing things for me, and yet, I forget them. Write them down so that you can go back to that Ebenezer when you need it. "God, I need refreshed, I need reminded, I'm getting forgetful. Restore in me an understanding of how great your gift is."

Paul continues on. ***8 To me, the very least of all saints...*** So, in humility, Paul is remembering and he's putting himself in perspective. ***...this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ...*** The unfathomable riches of Christ. In this life, the riches that we get to experience are being forgiven of that sin, for that guilt, that shame to be washed away, and then he does in our life what he did in Paul's. He gives you a purpose, a specific plan. In fact, he's got a mission for you, just like Paul. You don't have to be an apostle to have been given a gift and a mission during this life time. Every single one of us has a purpose. There are riches attached to that and then when we walk in that purpose, God wants to reward us, not just in this life – there will be plenty of blessing to go along with that – but in eternity, he wants to bless you and reward you for walking in that faithfulness. And the unfathomable nature of those riches is beyond what we can comprehend. In fact, that's the way that Paul explains it. He says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind can fully comprehend..." You can't even imagine the riches that he has that he wants to bless you with. When we put our lives in perspective, we remember. Our heart is renewed, restored, and our adoration grows for our king.

Know God

The scripture goes on, ***9 ...and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.***

To know God... This idea of manifold wisdom... Manifold is a cool word. It's the word for a tapestry. A tapestry is made by taking all these different colors of yarn and weaving them together. What's interesting is if you look at the back of a tapestry, what does it look like? It's an absolute mess. But when you come around and look at the front of the tapestry, it's a beautiful work of art. As you look at a tapestry, every angle offers you a different view of its beauty.

As you grow in your knowledge and your wisdom of God, you'll grow in your understanding and you'll see different aspects of the beauty of God. Much like looking at a diamond, at every angle, as you grow and you walk with him, you'll see these new angles of his beauty. You look at that tapestry and you think about your life. Of the seemingly mess that is Shay Robbins, God wants to take my mess and he wants to weave me together into a new creation, created in Christ Jesus, with his unfathomable riches, and he wants to use me to be a blessing to the world and then he wants to bless me for eternity in heaven.

He's got the same plan for you. Each one of your lives is a beautiful work, a tapestry if you're willing to walk with Jesus. Apart from Jesus, life is just a mess. But he uses all things to work together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purposes.

One of my daughters, just a couple of nights ago, was caught in a lie. Ashley sent her up to her room and told her to come back when she was ready to talk. She ran up to her room and kind of does the whole girl thing, throwing herself on the bed and crying out loud. She came back down, and Ashley and I took her to her bedroom and we sat her down on the end of the bed.

Ashley asked her, "What do you want to say?"

In tears, this tender little spirit says, "I prayed to God and he told me that I needed to be honest." She confessed. And that was an awesome moment. There was some forgiveness, there was some reconciliation that happened in that family.

Later that night, I laid down for a tuck-in her bed and I was fascinated by that little statement. I asked her, "What did you mean by that? What did you mean that you heard God?"

I want to quote this to you because I don't want to dress it up at all. She said, "I prayed to God and he told me I needed to be honest." I asked her how she hears him. She said, "I pray to him and he talks to me in my mind. It's been that way ever since I got baptized." Isn't that amazing?

That little girl is nine years old and she knows God. Isn't that something? You don't have to be a theologian. You don't have to have gray hair. You don't need to be a really, really, really nice guy. You need to have a child-like faith to know God. We over complicate it. Hey, if a nine-year-old can know God like that, so can we. As we get to know God, as you press into him, study his word, spend time around other believers, and begin to practice your prayer life, you will not be disappointed. We're used to worldly relationships where people can let you down. But in this heavenly relationship, there is no error on the other side, there's no imperfection. You will be perfectly received on the other end of this relationship. And as you get to know him, your heart will begin to grow in adoration for your King. Isn't that great news?

Treasure God

So, we remember, we know, and then we treasure. Picking up in Ephesian 4, ***14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name...*** He's speaking of our adoption into God's family. ***16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man...***

It's one thing to be adopted into a loving family. It's a whole other thing to be adopted by the King. Those are the riches that you're stepping into. That's your inheritance. I think there are too many times where, as I go through out my life, I minimize my standing before God. When I mess up, when I say something foolish, when I upset my wife, when I get caught in a lie, that shame and guilt wants to tell me, "Yeah, you've got your salvation, but you're still just a mess."

God wants more than that for you. In fact, his generosity is such that he wants to dote on you, he wants to bless you, he wants to forgive you again and again and again. He wants to equip you, he wants to give you gifts to be a blessing to others. His riches are yours because of your relationship as an adopted son or daughter of the King. So, we treasure him, we treasure those riches.

I was with the kids at breakfast the other morning and I asked them, "If you had a box that was full of treasure, if you had a treasure chest, what would you do with it?" We started talking about that at the breakfast table. "We'd count." They like to count their money, right? The Robbins' kids are always counting their pennies and their nickels. So, they would count their treasure. Then they would protect it, right? We'd find a safe place to keep it. They would guard their treasure. They'd show it to their friends and they'd share it with people. We were just having this great conversation and I'm like, *You know what? This is all true. That's exactly what you would do with a treasure.*

I was thinking about Ted's message from *Luke 2 – Go Tell it on the Mountain*. At the end of Chapter 2: 18-19, Luke makes mention of Mary and how she's receiving all this and it says this: ***18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.*** She treasured them up. Isn't that what a good momma does. She was treasuring this amazing story that was unfolding in her life around her. That's what we need to do with those God moments. We need to treasure them up. That's what you need to do with this gift of your salvation. You need to guard it; you want to protect it.

One of the things that I've been reflecting on and treasuring is that 12 years ago today, I married my bride, Ashley Robbins. Isn't that fun? It's our anniversary. Every day, Ashley is a reminder of God's grace. That's because, again, if I was to sit you down and explain to you who I was living in the darkness, it would make your gut churn, if I was honest with you. Yet God, in his kindness and his love and his extreme generosity, forgave me and he gave me this woman that I don't deserve. Each anniversary is a reminder for me that I need to treasure her, and I need to treasure the gift that she is because it's just another example of how much God loves me. It's a gift that we get to treasure.

In fact, 12 years ago today was the first time I kissed my wife and I've been smooching her ever since. We're celebrating today and as I do that, as I celebrate our anniversary, my heart is growing with adoration because I'm reminded how good God has been to us.

I want to show you one more passage in 2 Timothy 1, ***Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.***

There is an enemy that prowls around like a roaring lion and he wants to gobble up all those God moments. He wants you to forget them, he wants you to minimize them, he wants you to explain them away. He wants you to lose them in all the hustle bustle and busyness of life. He wants you to forget about them because they are powerful. When you treasure those things and your heart swells, your life begins to wreak havoc in the enemy's world because you live out this life of worship. Remember, worship flows out of your adoration for the King.

Let me sum in up this way: We remember, know, and treasure to grow in our adoration of Jesus. Amen, church?

Father, we come to you and I just want to ask that your Holy Spirit would help us as a church body to grow in our adoration of you. I pray that it would be genuine and honest. I want to pray, God, walking out of here, that our hearts would be full.

I want to pray that you would remind us of how much we're loved and all the kindness that you've shown us over the years. I pray, God, that we grow in the knowledge of who you are and that we would treasure the gift that you've given us in Jesus.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name... Amen.