

Adoration

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[0 : 00] Hi everyone, can I let you into a secret? During this lockdown things have absolutely gone crazy here. Mandy is just so organised and in fact we got to a point the other night where she even suggested that we start writing our Christmas cards.

What? Christmas though is quite relevant really to our theme today because it's about adoration. What is adoration? You know the dictionary defines it as deep love, respect, worship, veneration and at Christmas our churches are packed with people as we sing carols which are all about adoration.

Come let us adore him, Christ the King. You know nativities, shepherds coming to worship and adore, magi bringing symbolic gifts, stars, heavenly hosts filling the skies.

It doesn't get much more adoration filled than that folks. You know God loves his son and we all get to join in. Maybe you've experienced a birth in your family or of a friend and you will know that people flock to come and see the baby and those that are watching, maybe you've been isolated, just can't wait to get that first visit in and have that first cuddle of the newborn.

And we use terms like, ah isn't she or he adorable? And they are. Perhaps that's why our churches are full at Christmas because we relate so well to an adorable baby yet maybe not so much at Easter because it's more difficult to adore a person hung on a cross whose death and resurrection challenged and changes the world.

[1 : 52] That we so often don't want to change.

To him. To him. And that may be the resistance in prayer for some people because maybe we don't like the replies we get because it means that we have to change or listen or do something in our lifestyle that we don't want to change.

Jesus gave us the opening line of the Lord's prayer. He knew what adoration was as he pointed to the Father. Jesus who would often leave a large crowd waiting and demanding his attention and he'd retreat to a quiet place to be with the Father.

You know, that's adoration. You know, I know that what that was like, maybe some of you do when you've had teenage kids, you know, and when it's often it's all on their terms and their timing.

And, you know, they would always come in at the most inopportune times, often about 11 o'clock at night and they'd sit on the end of your bed and they'd want to pour it all out to you and chat.

[3 : 22] And it was just special times as they told us all about what they wanted to talk about. It was special, hugely timely, hugely tiring.

But the mere fact that they had come and wanted to converse with us was very special. The mere fact that you have come to God in prayer to chat things through is pretty awesome to him too.

It's adoration. He delights in it as any parent would, especially if that conversation hasn't happened for a long time. Perhaps that's what I enjoy as an adult parent, because the conversations I can have with my son and my daughter are really gritty, sparky at times, adult focus, but with a wealth of relationship that makes the conversation so special.

And humour too. Adoration, you see, is about love. The humour is that I've phoned my son who lives far away and before I've even had a chance to say anything, he answers the phone and he said, Parents, computer helpline, how can I help you?

You know, he knows how inept I am at technology. I suppose it's a bit like God really. He knows my need before I even ask it. And as we pray, our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, or whatever version we use each day, perhaps we need to pause at that moment of adoration, knowing that he knows our wants and our needs before we even speak, yet just savours the moment of our connection, our need of him, our desire to seek him, to know that at the heart of this conversation is adoration and love.

[5 : 14] The psalmist says, I lift my eyes to the mountain, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Adoration is at the heart of this opening prayer and conversation with God.

Like many of you, I watch the VE Day celebrations on the BBC and those wonderful surprise encounters as celebrities linked up with World War II veterans online.

And the initial surprise from them is they would say things like, I love your music or I love that film that you did. Our initial opening to our conversations with the Lord is, you are hallowed, you're greatly revealed.

I love the way you do things. I adore you. I don't know whether you've been on one of these answer things where you're waiting to speak to somebody.

It seems to get even longer at the moment, but God doesn't keep us waiting. He doesn't make us press two and then gives us another list of options or he'll phone you back when he's free.

[6 : 21] No, you know, you adore the moment, the opportunity to be able to converse with the one who we adore anywhere, anytime, 24-7.

But here's the question. How do I adore God when things aren't going so well? You know, maybe when there's disappointments or when I'm just really at the end of my tether, when the opening to the Lord's Prayer seems irrelevant, when all I want to do is get to the list of my wants.

I suppose my question is, who did we cry out to? Who did you run to when you fell as a child or when you were first dumped in your first teenage relationship?

Who did you go to? You go to the one where love is abundant and open arms and ears are ready to listen and comfort.

You see, that's adoration. You know, God is pleased when we go to him. The one who made heaven and earth. I love Graham Kendrick's line where he said, hands that flung stars into space.

[7 : 37] I love that line. Pure adoration. In our reading, Peter and John are released from detention. Who knows what they've endured?

But in the midst of this persecution and possibility of imminent arrest and death, they point to the awesomeness of God and to Jesus in his resurrection.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, the place is shaken. They point to the awesomeness of God. I guess that makes me ask whether I am praying in faith or just out of politeness.

Pete Gregg says in his book, I'd rather have a little faith in a great big unshakable God than a great big unshakable faith and a little God unworthy of the title.

So what does adoration look like for you as you pray from today onwards? Maybe we'll seek a new perspective.

[8 : 41] Perhaps for you prayer is a new adventure. And the awesomeness of God can't help but adoration just pour out as you pray.

It seems too small a word. Perhaps our prayer life has grown stale. And adoration and awesomeness doesn't have the same fire that it used to have.

Perhaps prayer is a knee-jerk reaction. When things go wrong, you know, you throw one up to the big man or you phone your clergy and ask if we'd say one for you. Maybe your prayer life got stuck on the rails of tradition and it's the same old repetitive prayer.

Get it said, get it done, move on with the day. Or perhaps just maybe adoration will seep so deep into our souls through this series that we can't help but pour out our praise and prayer 24-7 in the things we encounter, knowing that with him all is well.

Maybe this series will refresh our sense of him in our adoration. The Book of Common Prayer says, and this was written, you know, in the 1600s and what a time of turmoil that was in the church in this country.

[10 : 08] And it says, adoration is the lifting up of the heart and mind to God, asking nothing but to enjoy God's presence.

What a wonderful picture of prayer and adoration that is. So whether you're sat listening to this with others, whether you're watching an amazing sunset, whether you're watching a starry sky, come with me, please.

And millions of others today, as we enter into a relational conversation with the creator of it all, who not only knows that I adore him, but the comfort we feel in knowing that whatever we pray, whatever we have done, whatever we are about to share with him, that he adores us to, because you and I are a child of God.

So this day, we pray, Lord, to simply say that we adore you and we lift up our heart and mind to you, asking nothing but to enjoy your presence with us.
Amen. Amen.