

...deserves to be adored

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Date: 22 December 2019

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[0 : 00] let me start by saying there are all sorts of things people adore in life, aren't there? For example, some people adore dogs, perhaps like this one.

Yeah, and not to offend the cat lovers, people adore cats too. And of course, most people adore babies, especially those we're related to, perhaps like this little one.

Are they even more adorable for grandparents and friends? Because we can give them back, aren't we? And I realise there are some younger folks amongst us, and so not to leave you out, there's a new Star Wars series called Mandalorian, and something that has gone viral is Baby Yoda.

Now, by using the word adore, we mean that they are adorable, don't we? They are cute, and we all go, as you've done, oh. Well, at Christmas time, people can often have the same kind of response to Jesus, can't they?

People can adore Jesus by seeing him as a cute baby in a sterile stable in a manger full of fluffy straw, when it was nothing like that, of course.

[1 : 16] And then they go, oh. But is this what it means when we sing the carol, O come, let us adore him, from O come, all ye faithful? Well, not really.

Because the word adore can also mean to revere or worship, to give adoration, if you like, to bow down to him with our lives.

This is what it means when we sing, O come, let us adore him. And indeed, this is how he deserves to be adored, as the last reading tells us.

You see, Paul is writing to the Philippian church, where there are some tensions amongst the church. And so he says that in your relationships with one another, you ought to have the mindset of Christ Jesus.

Well, what mindset did he have? Well, one of humility, for being in very nature God, he did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant and being made in human likeness.

[2 : 23] You see, Jesus had the mindset of humility, doesn't he? Although Jesus is God the Son, he did not consider being God something to be used for his own advantage.

Instead, he humbly and willingly left his throne above to come to earth below, to be born in human likeness. And I wonder if we sometimes forget how extraordinary that is, that God the Son would come down and become one of us.

I mean, can you imagine leaving your nice, clean house to become perhaps one of these? Now, no offence to pigs. They're nice, especially with bacon and eggs in the morning.

And I'm not saying we are pigs. But the gap between God and us is at the very least the gap between us and pigs, you see. In fact, I'm sure it's bigger.

And yet God the Son came down to become one of us, to live amongst the dirt and mud of our world. It's extraordinary, isn't it?

[3 : 32] Oh, sure, there are great things in our world that we can enjoy. But has not humanity messed up so much of it? I mean, the global warming seems to be a real thing.

I know people still deny it, but, you know, last Friday. And is there not corruption and selfishness and greed? Aren't local councils like the Council of Casey down Frankston Way in trouble for corruption at the moment?

And have we not all muddied our own lives with sin? You know, lost our temper, thought ill of others? And certainly we've all ignored God in our lives and lived without reference to him.

And so there is none of us who are perfect. There is moral dirt on all of us, if you like. In some senses, we are like pigs in the mud. Moral dirt that we will one day be held accountable for on Judgment Day.

But Jesus didn't just come down from heaven to earth to become human at Christmastime. He came down to then go up at the cross at Easter time.

[4 : 42] Remember the next part of the verse says, And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Jesus became human so he could die in our place, so that he could take our judgment for our moral mud. And we who believe in him can instead be washed clean of our mud, forgiven, that we might one day go up, not to the cross, but with him to glory.

I can't remember if I've told this particular congregation this story. I've used it at five o'clock before, but back in 2015, there were bombings in Paris.

You might remember those vaguely four years ago. But what the media seemed to forget were the bombings in Beirut that happened a day before. And so you may not have heard, or you may have heard of Adele Tomas.

He was there with his daughter that day. And when he saw the suicide bomber heading towards a crowd about to detonate his vest, he ran and tackled the bomber to the ground.

[5 : 51] The vest went off and Adele took the full blast. But in doing so, he saved the crowd, including his daughter.

An article actually on the next slide called him a saviour of Beirut. The article adored him, gave him adoration, if you like.

But Adele saved dozens of people from what they did not deserve, yet Jesus has saved billions of people from what we do deserve. For he came down from heaven to become human, to, as our verse says, suffer at the cross.

And there he took the full force of our judgment, that we might be saved from it. And instead, as I said, be forgiven and washed clean in God's sight, that we might be guaranteed of life eternal if we believe in him.

And so do you? Do you trust in Jesus as the one who can save us from sin, wash us clean in God's sight?

[7 : 00] And for us who do, then we too are to give him adoration as our Lord. For that is who God declared him to be.

The rest of the reading goes on to say, on the next slide there, therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, in every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

You see, because Jesus obeyed his Father and willingly went to the cross for us, then God exalted him to the highest place. In other words, God declared him to be Lord.

And so Jesus deserves to be adored. Not just because he is our saviour, but also because he is our Lord. That's why every knee should bow and one day every knee will.

And that's why the carol, O Come Only Faithful, doesn't end with, or doesn't have the chorus, O Come Let Us Adore Him with Goose and Gars. No, it says, O Come Let Us Adore Him, Christ the Lord.

[8 : 16] Yeah, that's who he is. And so I wonder this Christmas, how will you adore Jesus? Will you look at the nativity scenes on Christmas cards and around the places and think, oh, isn't baby Jesus cute?

Or will you see Jesus as God the Son who came down to earth to die for us, then raised, declared Lord, that we might joyfully bow our lives to him?

In the end, it's the difference between thinking he's adorable and giving him adoration. And so I wonder, how will you adore Jesus this Christmas?

I'm going to spend a moment praying and then we'll sing our final carol. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks for this Christmas season.

Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son who came down from heaven to earth to die for us and yet was raised and declared the Lord.

[9 : 30] May I help us, we pray, to adore him rightly this Christmas season and not just at Christmas but for the rest of our lives. And we pray also for your world.

Lord, we pray particularly for those for whom this Christmas will be difficult. We ask, Father, that you would sustain them whether it's through loneliness or suffering or sickness and remind them of the gift of your Son who has secured for us glory to come.

We pray this particularly for those amongst us listed in our pew sheets who are doing it tough. Further afield, we pray also for the fires that continue to burn, many of which are out of control in New South Wales.

Father, we ask that you would sustain the firefighters and pray that you would be with the families of the two who lost their lives. We ask that you might raise up Christians around them to encourage them, comfort them and in due course share with them the hope of heaven we have in Christ.

Father, we pray also for the newly elected government in the UK. We pray that you would help them to govern justly and for the common good. And Father, we pray for all Christians around the world, particularly those who are suffering persecution.

[10 : 55] We pray that you would help all Christians to remember what Christmas is ultimately about, that we might joyfully bow our lives to our Saviour and Lord, in whose name we pray all these things.

Amen.