

Adore Him: humble obedience

Matt 1:18-25

MPS: Jesus is God's Savior worthy of our adoration through humble obedience.

OBJ: Every person should humble themselves to listen to God in hard times because of three values.

INTRO Love God, adore Him, is the opus of the Christian life. It is everything! And yet, as easy as that may at first appear, it can become much harder when set against the reality of life in almost every situation.

READ Matt 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Matthew's account of Jesus' birth narrative provides a unique introduction of Jesus as the Messiah. He begins with the angel's birth announcement to Joseph, Jesus' earthly father. Joseph was betrothed to Mary, a binding agreement where two people were considered married, but had not yet begun to live as a married couple. Before they are united in marriage Mary is found to be pregnant. Joseph plans to divorce her quietly to avoid unnecessary shame and disgrace. But as he considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him that he was to take her as his wife because the Holy Spirit had conceived the child. The angel gave the baby's name to Joseph and told him he would save his people from their sins. Matthew tells us that this all took place to fulfill scripture. Joseph awoke from his dream and did as he was commanded by the angel.

TRANS This is the story of Jesus' birth announced to Joseph. These few verses record only a brief snapshot into the life of a man we know almost nothing else about. Joseph disappears from the Scriptures after this record, except for a few references. But what we learn from his life helps us adore Christ in all of life.

Jesus is God's Savior worthy of our adoration through humble obedience.

There were so many questions for Joseph. His betrothed was found to be pregnant, and that would affect every realm of life. Mary knew how she was pregnant, the Angel appeared and told her. (Luke 1:35) But Joseph didn't know. And even if Mary told him the truth, it was more likely to be considered an outrageous explanation and impossible to accept. This turn of events brought Joseph to a hard moment in his life. And as he would soon discover, God was the one responsible.

Listening to God in hard times is hard because it forces us to deal with shattered dreams, confused purposes, interrupted plans and different paths that all differ from what we want. And the difficulty is compounded when we recognize that the "hard" part comes from God. Even when 'hard times' come from God, we must humble ourselves to listen. Joseph learned and modeled this for us. **Humbling self to listen to God, especially in hard times, is always worth whatever it demands from us because it tells God "I adore you".**

TRANS I preached a sermon a year ago titled, "Hearing God in hard times". It quickly became a favorite sermon for many. It appealed strongly to us because it showed how to hear from God in times when it feels hardest to hear Him. Today's message is similar, with one distinct twist that makes the difficulty significantly more challenging.

Today's Focus: "How do we listen to God in hard times, when His commands shatter our dreams, confuse our purposes, interrupt our plans of differ from the path we've planned? How do we listen so that we adore Christ more, especially when

He is the one who created our hard times?”

There's only one sure way to adore Christ, humble ourselves.

ILLUS Andrew Murray, South African pastor and theologian of the 19th Century, instructs us.

“What is the incarnation but his heavenly humility, his emptying himself and becoming man? What is his life on earth but humility; his taking the form of a servant? And what is his atonement but humility? Christ is the humility of God embodied in human nature; the Eternal Love humbling itself, clothing itself in the garb of meekness and gentleness, to win and serve and save us. If humility be the first, the all-including grace of the life of Jesus – if humility be the secret of his atonement – then the health and strength of our spiritual life will entirely depend upon our putting this grace first too, and making humility the chief thing we admire in him, the chief thing we ask of him, the one thing for which we sacrifice all else.”¹

Listening to God in hard times that we might adore Him demands that one understand the role of humility. In our text, Joseph helps us understand how humility helps us listen to God, that we might obey and honor Him.

OBJ: Humility enables us to adore God because it values listening to God in hard times in 3 ways.

Humility values God's Wisdom. READ Matt 1:20-23

The hardest part about hard times is that they're hard, meaning beyond our control, understanding or ability to change them. But nothing is too much for God. He promises His wisdom to those who humble themselves before him!

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. Prov 2:6

God's wisdom is not just knowledge of facts or details. Wisdom is divine power for right action based on deep understanding that glorifies God. [Humility positions us to hear from God and receive His wisdom.](#)

Matthew records that Joseph was “*a just man and unwilling to put (Mary) to shame.*” Though betrothal was not marriage, it required divorce in order to separate. It was the only way he could seem to justify rightness and provide for Mary's protection. What he planned to do was likely all he knew to do from God's Word in Deut 24:1.

God, knowing Joseph's thoughts and plans, speaks to him and reveals his wisdom and plan to Joseph. Joseph didn't know all the details, but he had a clear understanding of God's wisdom for his situation in ‘how to proceed.’ Joseph was submitted to God in his original decision. He thought, “I can't marry her because she doesn't love God.” We may scoff, but Joseph's willingness to forego an earthly relationship of sin for obedience to God is to be regarded as righteous. Joseph humbles himself to regard righteousness as revealed in God's Word of greater value than any conflicting doubt, question or desire he may've held. [Humility trusts God's Word as right, even when it seems most difficult to believe, because it rests in God's righteousness through Jesus Christ.](#)

God's Word promises,

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. Psa 25:9

God gives grace to the humble. Prov 3:34

When we humble ourselves, God gives grace that conquers sin and leads in His righteous path.

A lack of humility means living outside of God's wisdom. When you refuse to humble yourself, you always choose to act on one of four wrong motivations. Your response will be motivated by self-righteousness, bolstering pride by believing that you deserve better than what God has given you. Your response will be motivated by self-preservation, deflecting your pain by justifying your actions based on your hurt. Your response will be motivated by self-reliance, relying on self-condemnation as a means of attempted redemption or restitution. Your response will be motivated by religious reductionism, believing that what you “want” or “prefer” is not that bad, though you know it's not what God wants, and once it all turns out okay by your plan, God will accept it. Every motivation rooted in self only leads away from God. It not only fails to grow love for God, but always ends up blaming God. [Humility that trusts God's wisdom to rest in Him is the only way to grow adoration for Him.](#)

¹ Andrew Murray, *Humility and Absolute Surrender*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2005), p11.

Joseph demonstrates humility in his motivations in dealing with the tension, “hardness”, of his decision; *did not want & had in mind*. (v.19) His decision revealed his motivation to love God and Mary, even though either of them could have been blamed by him. He didn’t use his ‘status’ as a free-pass to avoid suffering by getting angry at God for what he was doing to him or by hating himself for not doing everything perfectly. He didn’t point blame by becoming bitter or angry at Mary for the hurt she had put upon him with her pregnancy. Joseph shows compassion for Mary while maintaining a high commitment to his obedience to God’s law. No matter how bad the hurt or how painful the decision, he proceeded in the way that he believed was of highest love for God and greatest love for people. *Adoring God through humble obedience will always lead us to honor others, but it may mean we must separate from them.*

Adoring God demands God’s wisdom. God’s wisdom is the knowledge of His will regarding what we are to do, though we sometimes do not see it this way, joined with the authority and power to do His will. The wisdom of God founded all that is (Prov 3:19). He can take care of all that you need. *We adore God when we humble ourselves to value His wisdom above all else for life.*

TRANS When God bestows his grace upon the humble, his wisdom is given to empower us to obey.

Humility values courage and boldness to obey. READ Matt 1:24-25

Joseph DID what God told him to do. This took courage and boldness because it was much harder than his plan. Obeying God always demands courage and boldness. But the question we most want to know is, “where does courage and obedience to obey come from?” The answer is simple, humility. Courage and boldness are strength of heart. Joseph was not a super-human. He was a man with an undivided heart. God was the strength of his heart. *Courage and boldness only come from humbling self before God to obey.*

For this is what the high and lofty One says – he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in the high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

Isa 57.15

Humility before God revives the spirit and heart to live in courage and boldness in God’s presence to obey His commands.

Without Christ filling our heart, courage and boldness are absent to obey God. Rather, we become full of self to do as we will. When self fuels our life, ‘right’ is determined by self-righteousness. We feel good about ourselves. We may be bold, but it’s little more than self-confidence that looks down on ‘weaker’ people. When we don’t live up to our standards, we are humble, but not confident. When we are confident, every success only fuels more pride. Christians are not shielded from self-righteousness as a motivation of life. We must daily set the heart and mind on Jesus to empty it of self.

Humility empties the heart of self that we might be filled with the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ fills our heart through the gospel, we are simultaneously bad enough that he had to die for us (humble), yet loved so much that he was glad to die for us (bold). Courage and boldness to obey never comes from self, but from trust in God. When Christ fills the heart, boldness and courage to obey are present. *Humility values courage and boldness through the gospel of Jesus Christ to produce increasing joy from Him and adoration for Him through obedience.*

Humility values God’s reward as greatest for life. READ Matt 1:21b, 25b

The promise of God’s greatest blessing is found in humility. Joseph named God’s only begotten son. What a great joy to enjoy! *The glory and joy that awaits when we humble ourselves to obey God pale all other joys and sacrifices.*

Consider the ENJOY-ment that scripture promises will be brought by humility;

Humility and fear of the Lord bring wealth and honor and life. Prov 22.4

But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace. Psalms 37.11

Jesus begins His sermon on the mount by promising that the meek will inherit the earth.(Matt 5:5) When we strive toward and grow in humility, we honor God’s reward as of highest value in all of life. The reward of humility will not be found in earthly terms because it cannot be measured with temporary standards. Humility honors the Lord Jesus by following his

model in depending on God. And it teaches us that God's reward in exaltation far exceeds any sacrifice, longing or suffering we may experience or endure. (Phil 2:5-11) [Humility is the present disposition of life that brings God's eternal reward to life.](#)

Until you've humbled yourself before God and experienced his grace, you have not known His joy, goodness, blessing or pleasure in life as He intends. God exalts the one who humbles themselves before Him. He lifts us up in our humility and honors us, just as He did Jesus. (Phil 2:9) He grants to us life that is our supreme joy! [Humility values God's reward as greatest for life.](#)

[Jesus is God's Savior worthy of our adoration through humble obedience.](#)

Christmas is our celebration of God's incarnation, the very humility of God become man. [How can we claim to celebrate Christmas, but not humble ourselves to listen to God and adore Christ? We adore Christ when we humble ourselves to listen and obey Him first, and confess that He is alone is worthy.](#)

CLOSE God owes us nothing. But when we humble ourselves to adore Him, he gives us everything through Christ Jesus.

Listening to God when times are hard is almost never because we can't hear Him, but because we don't like what we know He is saying to us. If you want to adore Christ, you must remember His love for you as the defining motivation to live in humble obedience. If you want to humble yourself before Him, you must trust His love for you to listen to God, even in hard times, to obey. [Christ is worthy of all our adoration through humble obedience. Every time you humble yourself to obey God, you adore Him as "worthy".](#)

[Baby Jesus born in a manger reminds us, humility brought the Savior to us, and leads us to the Savior! Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.](#) (James 4.10) And, Christ will be adored IN you.