

Pictures of Union with Christ

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Preacher: Jonathan Clark

[0 : 00] I'm going to tell you guys a quick story. So when I was graduating from seminary in 2017 and looking for a job as a pastor, I assumed that I would end up back on the East Coast because the way things work in the church world is it's hard to get a job where you don't know anyone, and the only people I knew were on the East Coast.

Except I forgot about one and exactly one person who I knew in Colorado, and that man's name was Jonathan Clark. Jonathan and I went to seminary together, and Jonathan was the intern here at this church, Cheyenne Mountain, summer of 2016.

So those of you who are old timers will remember him. And Jonathan knew that this church was hiring someone, and Jonathan said, this is a wonderful, beautiful church.

The job is not for me because I feel called to college ministry, but you should hire my friend Matthew. Here we are. I say that to say two things.

One, this is not Jonathan's first time in our pulpit. Jonathan preached several times in the book of Romans six, seven years ago now, however you do the math. Two, you have Jonathan to either thank or blame that I'm here.

[1 : 20] With that, I'm going to welcome Jonathan Clark up, and he's going to bring us God's word. Thank you. Good morning once again.

It's good to be with you this morning. Matthew is one of my best friends. We talk often. He's a dear, dear brother. He and I live together. So, yeah, small providence, funny providence that the Lord brought him here.

Yes, my name is Jonathan. Some of you have known me since I was a baby. I grew up in Colorado Springs. Some of you don't know me from Adam, but that's okay. It's great to be with you this morning. I love this church.

I love this city, so it's a delight to be with you this morning. I hope to be here with you more often.

Thank you all for letting me come this morning and share for moments in Sunday school, and now, of course, to worship with you, what the Lord is doing in my life, what the Lord is doing in our family, and hopefully what the Lord is going to do at UCCS.

So, yeah, I'm married to my wife, Caroline. She is a graphic designer and a mom, and she could not be with us. She's not with us.

[2 : 26] We have a daughter. She's three years old, and then we have a—she loves dinosaurs and trains. We have another dog. You know, everyone's got a dog. So, looking forward to getting to know you all.

Work for RUF, as you've all heard, and we're hoping to start one here. So, please do pray with us. But that's not why we're here this morning. Today, we are here to study God's Word, to see how it ministers and cares and speaks into our lives today.

And so, if you would, please stand with me as we read God's Word and turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 1. 1 Corinthians 1, and this is God's Word.

And because of Him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. Please be seated. Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, we pray that you would send your Spirit now to be in our midst, because these things are too great for us.

[3 : 30] Your Word is too magnificent, too mighty for our minds, for our hearts. We pray that you would work through these times, that what is said here would be more than words from a pulpit, but they would be indeed your words to comfort, challenge, convict, equip, and send us out.

Lord, we pray that you would send us to the Lord to be faithful ministers in your name to a city, to a family, to a base, to a world that desperately needs you.

Do these in Jesus' name, and we will give you the glory. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. So this morning, I want to start off by asking us a question, a question that I often feel very acutely in my own faith and life, and one that I know that students often feel, and if I know the human experience, I think you do too, what it feels like to be a Christian in the 21st century in America. And often in my life, I know this is in students' life, I feel, I perceive a disconnect, a gap between what I believe, what I trust, what I hear on a Sunday morning, and often what I experience in my day-to-day life, Monday through Saturday.

There feels to be a gap. Sometimes it's an emotional gap. Sometimes it's an intellectual gap. Sometimes it's a physical or a social gap, something. There's a gap of what it feels like to believe what a Christian believes and then to go out and live the rest of my life.

[4 : 57] And let me try to fill out for you how I feel this gap. Have any of you perhaps ever felt like you were a fool for being a Christian? I know that's something that college students often struggle with.

I remember when I was in college, I went to college in New York City, very intellectual, academic place, and I remember as a young man asking questions of another student who went to a large secular Christian school, questions about the Christian faith.

And this student was, they were studying sociology. And the student proceeded to tell me, well, the Christian faith is just the, it's just a construct of, you know, religions are just products of culture. And the Christian faith is just a construct of what it means of one particular culture's version of spirituality. And I, having grown up in the church, so desperately wanted to disagree with him. But I didn't quite know how. I didn't know what to say. And so I felt like a fool. And I felt this disconnect of, here's what I grew up hearing and here's what I'm experiencing. And I didn't know what to do.

[5 : 57] I felt unwise. I felt like a fool. A gap between my faith and my experience. Maybe you felt that. Here's another one. Perhaps have you ever felt truly dirty, not just physically after like a long exercise, but dirty to the core of who you are.

I remember this. Some of you are going to hear me say this and you're going to be like, you're preaching? But hear me out here. I remember there was this moment when I was a little boy that my friend and I, we were absolute monsters.

And we trapped my dog, my family's dog, into our backyard. And we ran around with plastic bats and tried to beat the dog. And it was horrible. It was so bad.

And I remember after that moment, just feeling so much guilt. Like, what have I done to this poor animal? Who am I? What kind of a human being does that?

I felt wretched to the core. And I remember going to church and feeling, hearing this one thing about the Christian life. And then coming back to home and feeling just totally dirty, shame, condemned.

[6 : 59] And there's this gap between my faith and my experience. Maybe some of you are feeling that even today. How about this one? Have any of you ever experienced an addiction that you just cannot kick?

Some sort of compulsive behavior. Some sort of thing that you know is unhealthy. It's a self-destructive pattern that you just can't seem to stop. And every Sunday you come home and you say, this is my week.

I'm going. And then Thursday afternoon, Wednesday, whatever it is, you find yourself falling into it again. Perhaps a moment of anger. Perhaps a moment on the internet. Perhaps a substance. Something that you say, I must. I try to stop this and I cannot. I believe that God is with me and yet I cannot stop this. Another gap between what we believe and what we experience.

Lastly, how many of us, how many of you have ever felt oppressed at some point in your life? Overwhelmed by the forces that are pressing into and against you.

[7 : 57] Perhaps it was emotional. Perhaps it was social, physical. Perhaps, you know, you can picture poison. Perhaps it's a boss or a commanding officer. Someone who puts this pressure on you.

That you're just, how am I supposed to endure in my job, in my family, in this sort of pressure? Perhaps it's an unjust professor. Perhaps it was cruel parents and you grew up in a home where it was not safe to be a little child.

Perhaps it was an abusive sibling or a friend. Perhaps it's bigger, like an unjust government that you had to flee from or unjust laws. Perhaps it's bigger than us. We know Christians around the world

who experience, they know from the minute they become a Christian, they face an uphill battle of constant pressure to reject the faith.

Facing tremendous opposition and oppression. So they claim and they believe one thing and yet all of us, they feel this gap in what it feels like to be a Christian, right?

And what I'm trying to peel back is that for many of us there's this gap, this distance between what we believe, what we study in the Bible, and what it feels like to walk out the Christian life. I know that students feel this gap. I know that I feel this gap. And if I know human nature, that probably many of you feel it too. Day in, day out, we feel and experience the opposite. And if that's you today in any one of these things, then the good news is this text speaks exactly to that moment. To that moment of, what do I do with this gap? God provides his word.

[9 : 27] Today, our text shows us the miracle of the gospel, which is our union with Christ, as Matthew talked about, thinking about adoption. And then it gives us four word pictures, four word pictures that begin to fill out or flesh out and describe what our union with Christ is and how it speaks to the gap, the daily gap that you and I often feel, that when life afflicts us, we run to our union with Christ, meditate on, chew on these word pictures, and are equipped, once again, to love God and love neighbor.

And so today, as we study God's word, we're going to look at this in three ways. First, we're going to look at quickly, what is union with Christ? What is union with Christ? Second, we will meditate on, briefly, these four word pictures. And next, we will ask, lastly, how do we respond? How do we as a church, how do we as families, individuals, respond to our union with Christ? And so let's dive in.

The union with Christ, the miracle of union with Christ. And so we'll give a quick overview. Look down at your text with me, again, at verse 30. It says, and because of him, you are in Christ Jesus. Because of him, you are in Christ Jesus. If we were to go up one verse, it would say here, that he is saying, he's talking about how God has done things in our lives. Verse 29, we say that when he says God, he's talking specifically more about the Father.

The Father, he says, because of God, because of him, because of God, you are in Christ Jesus. Some of our translations say it is from him, from God, you are in Christ Jesus. Now, what does this mean?

It means that out of God or source of God, flowing from God, the Father, we are in Christ Jesus. We are connected to Christ Jesus. And right here in these few words, these four words, because of him, is perhaps the single most important doctrinal claim of the Christian faith, which is this, that salvation comes exclusively from God. Salvation comes exclusively from God.

God is the source. God is the actor, the first author of our salvation. Because of God, because of him, not because of your own effort, not because of your own performance, not because of your own deserving.

[11 : 50] Our order of worship has a reflecting quote on page seven. I encourage you to reflect on that this week. It says, in other religions, it is always man we see at work trying to obtain some redemption from evil. But in the Christian religion, the work of man is nothing. It is God who works, acts, intervenes in history. Skipping down, it says, the counsel of God teaches us that the work of redemption is from beginning to end. The work of God. And that is what this first clause in our text today says, because of him, because of God, you are in Christ Jesus. We bring nothing to our salvation except the desperate need for it. Behind those words, because of him, is the whole promise plan that God has been weaving, as Ephesians tells us, from the beginning of history, before anything happened, of God's saving actions towards his people, towards you when you have faith in Christ. So because of him, you are in

Christ Jesus. The main clause of this verse, the sentence, the grammatical core is, you are in Christ Jesus. That's the main thing that Paul wants to get across to us in this. You are in Christ Jesus. That's his point. And the Bible is full of those two words, in Christ. And what I desire, if I had one hope for each one of us walking out of here today, is to have a bit of a more full picture for our hearts to settle into the beauty of that truth of being in Christ. In Christ means that it is God's work to join us to him. Romans 6 tells us that in our baptism, we are united to Christ in his death and in his life so that what happens to Christ happens to us. And so that when we are united with Christ, the things that happens to Christ, all the benefits, as Matthew talked about earlier, the benefits that are Christ become ours. Now, this can be somewhat challenging for us to understand.

It feels vague. It feels out there. So think of it this way. When I was in college, I went to school in the middle of New York City, right? Strange place to go to college. And I went to a small Christian

school in New York City. The school had almost nothing to boast about. It was not remarkable in any way except one. The school was in the basement of the Empire State Building, right? Very strange place, terrible for academics. But it was pretty cool, you know? We went to the Empire State Building. It was, you know, it was kind of a tourist trap. But I remember there were often times that I would have friends who would come to New York City and they would want to visit. And they would, you know, so we would, and they would want to go up the Empire State Building because it's, you know, it's a tall building. It's in New York City. And so they would come to visit us in New York and they would come to the Empire State Building during tourist season. And the line to get to the elevators would go down the long block and then all the way down several streets. And so if they were going to come, you know, they had maybe an afternoon in New York. They didn't want to stand in line for hours and hours, right? And so they, you know, to get up to the Empire State Building. But because I was a student,

I had the tenant key. I had a tenant pass, right? And so what I could do is I could just flash my tenant badge and anybody who was with me got to skip the line and go straight up to the top. [15:11] And not only that, they got half price tickets, right? And so a little silly thing, but it gets the point across. Without, my friends would have had to wait in line. But because of their union with Jonathan, because they were connected with Jonathan, the benefits which were mine, that is being a tenant of the Empire State Building became theirs. The benefits became theirs. They received the benefits of being tenants of the Empire State Building. Now, being united to Jonathan in college was a, that was not a great thing. You got to go up the Empire State Building.

Look, think about what our text tells us, that we are united to Christ. The benefits of the second person of the Trinity. The one who has been involved in the creation and loving plan of God from all history. The one who the Father has been dotting on, adoring, and loving for all time. All of his benefits become ours through faith in Christ. Those become truly wonderful, delighting benefits. That is infinite blessing and benefits. So this in Christ, in him language, it's all over the Bible. And often, it's very easy for us to pass over because it's two words. And it's so, it's all over the place. And it's so short. It's easy. But it could be possibly the most theologically dense and spiritually nutritious theological idea in the whole Bible. That you are in Christ through faith. So when you read your Bible this week, both on your own and as a family in worship, pay attention to the times where it says you are in

Christ and stop in that moment and reflect once again, everything that is Christ's becomes mine. And I don't, not because I'd done anything to deserve it, but because it's God's free grace, his love towards me. So that's what our union with Christ is. But again, it can still feel out there. It can still feel vague. And so Paul, in his generosity to us, he gives us four word pictures to describe, to fill out our union with Christ. So the benefits of Christ, they're great. And he gives us, he gives us four pictures. He says, and because of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us or who became for us.

He gives us four things, wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. And so what I'd love us to do is to reflect on each of these word pictures and see how do they fill out and how do they minister to our hearts, to our communities in the gap. And so let us first reflect on wisdom. Christ, because you are in him, Christ became to us, for us, wisdom from God. What does this mean? Well, wisdom is a huge theme in the book of 1 Corinthians. It's especially all over the first two chapters. And so in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2, Paul is contrasting and comparing worldly wisdom with the wisdom of God. Worldly wisdom, Paul tells us, comes in sophisticated speech, intellectual knowledge, power, the ability to get people to manipulate human beings into doing what you want them to do. The ability to explain what is human life and why are we here. [18:21] If you look at chapter 2, verse 6, it says, it is the wisdom of this age or rulers of this age. All over in chapter 12, it says, I mean, in chapter 2, 12, he says, it is not the wisdom that of God, that it's Greeks who are seeking some sort of esoteric knowledge that is not affiliated with God in any way.

But he says that that is not the wisdom that we get, but we get the wisdom that is from God, the wisdom that is God and an incredible power that comes from that. And this has struck home for me in a way that I've, in the last few weeks, I'll get through this, but it's been hard for me the last few weeks.

Many of you know that my mom died two weeks ago. And that's been a really hard thing for my family. I was really close with my mom. And so I've been reflecting on, as Matthew asked me to

come and speak, how the wisdom of God ministers to us in that family. My mom's had cancer for three years, and she was a godly woman. She loves and trusts Jesus, and she's with Jesus. And watching my mom die has made me realize how necessary the wisdom of God is, something that can transcend the human knowledge in the face of death. Because in the wisdom of God, we see God pulling back the curtain a little bit in small ways on what he is doing in our life. Because apart from that, my mom dies and she's gone. I have no hope of seeing her again. I have, I just, she's gone. There's nothing for me to cling to. But with the wisdom of God, that is his word given to us, all of a sudden I have hope. I have insight. I have the ability to look beyond this pale of death and say, no, my mom is with Jesus.

No, God is doing something redemptive in her life, in my family's life, in our world, that there is life after death. That God is, that he has a redemptive and life-restoring plan. And suddenly death begins to make sense. At least it becomes livable. That without the wisdom from God, my mom's gone. There's no hope. But with the wisdom of God, we can say, no, God is at work in some mysterious way. I can trust and know that I will see her again. Amen, brother. Yes, that she is, she is more alive than she ever has been. Friends, that is the wisdom of God that begins to fill into the gap of my mother is gone, but I know she's with Jesus. And that is, that it comes to us because we're united with Christ.

The wisdom of God is deeply comforting to us, that she is with Jesus, though her body is in the grave, her soul is with Christ. And that only comes through God working in our lives. And so suddenly what feels foolish, the Greeks in Acts 17, when they talk about the resurrection, they laugh at Paul. The idea of a person becoming alive again, what is foolish all of a sudden becomes believable, comforting, hopeful.

[21 : 16] Foolish ideas like blood cleansing sin, like people becoming alive again. Things that feel too good to be true, we can say, no, because of the gospel, because of our union with Christ, they are not just hopeable, but true. It means that God shows us behind the curtain that Jesus crucified, far from being foolish, is the best and only hope in our world. So that when I feel that gap, when you feel that gap, we can remember we are united with Christ. My mother is united with Christ. And we have a sense, a peak of the heavenly vision of God's good plan. Next word picture Paul gives us is the word picture of righteousness. Because of him you are on Christ Jesus who became to us righteousness. And this is the famous word picture that lit the Protestant tradition of which we are all heirs aflame. It's the word that Martin Luther studied and he saw that those who are righteous are declared so by faith alone in Jesus that we are united, connected to Jesus. Christ's benefits are ours by having faith in Christ and we are declared righteous. Righteousness is legal language. It is the way and behind legal language is the idea of guilt.

The idea of beating dogs and deserving to be condemned for it. That we are all as human beings born into sin. We are guilty of sin. That we are not just people who sin, but that we are sinners to the deepest part of who we are. That we are corrupted by guilt and we deserve God's wrath and punishment for it.

And we all feel this. Each week we feel the guilt and the shame of the deepest part of who we are. And verse 30 tells us that Christ became for us righteousness. The cleansing, the eradication of the guilt and the shame that we feel. Christ becomes righteousness on our behalf. That no, we do not go and clean ourselves or earn our own justification. That Christ gives it to us freely. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us how this works.

For our sake, God made him, that is Jesus, to be sin. Who knew no sin? So that in him, you hear it? In him, we might become what? The righteousness of God. By faith, by trusting in Christ, we become united to Christ.

And his perfect record, his benefits become ours. And our shame, our guilt, our condemnable becomes Christ's.

[23 : 57] And when this happens, God issues the eternal, not guilty verdict. Though we are guilty, we are vindicated. We are declared righteousness. How does this have application in our lives today?

Well, this word picture cares for us, ministers to us in the gap moment of when we sin. Of those moments this week where we do something, we snap at our spouse or we're mad at our roommate or we say something on the social media, whatever we do, that moment where we go, oh, I did it again.

I'm guilty. In this gap, the righteousness of Christ says that does not speak to who you are. Yes, you are a broken person who still may sin. But at the end of the day, you are united to Christ through faith. His perfection is yours when you trust in him. Through Christ, you are not guilty of sin.

As Matthew read us in our assurance of pardon. I am not guilty of animal abuse. You are not guilty of the thing that you are thinking of right now when you trust in Christ.

That when we trust Christ, that guilt is not who we are. And this frees us from the downward shame spirals that we find ourselves in so constantly. Students are the worst at, oh, I did this. And so they spiral down into, I am a shameful, guilty, condemnable person. And righteousness of Christ says, you were, but you're not now because of what God has done in you, for you. And it empowers us to run as our adoption states into the arms and to cry, Abba, which is the term of endearment to our Father who loves us, not a judge who would condemn us. And that leads us to the next word picture, which Paul gives us sanctification. Christ becomes for us sanctification. What does this mean? Well, if justification is freedom from the penalty of sin, sanctification is freedom from the power of sin.

[25 : 53] Jesus became to us the power to holiness, to purity like God's perfect purity, to daily actions and lifestyles which more and more align with God's character and with his will, with his law.

And 1 Corinthians, in just chapter 6, a few chapters later, in chapter 6, verse 10, Paul writes this, all these sinful, wicked people who we all once were and are condemned in it, they won't inherit the kingdom of God, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There it is again, did you hear it? In Christ. So he says, Christ became to us sanctification, which means that it is possible increasingly in your life and in my life to live daily lives, daily marriages, daily singleness, daily community, daily church life, which more and more honors God, loves God, loves neighbor, is compassionate, is just, is righteous, is merciful.

It's not that God saves us and says, okay, I'll clean the slate. I hope you can clean up your system. I hope you can clean up your act. No, God saves us and then sends his spirit to be with us the whole step of the way. God gives us the power to increased obedience. Remember how I asked at the beginning, or I talked about feeling the gap in some sort of compulsive behavior or addiction, some sinful behavior that you can't do? Well, sanctification is the hope and promise of God not leaving you there. That God commits nothing less than himself, the third person of the spirit, to join you in that fight. And it's a long fight, this sanctification. I remember a few years ago, I'm a big runner. I was training for a marathon distance run outside of Aspen. And I could not just go out and run 30 miles. I had to train for it. And there were days where I would go out and run five miles and I'd pull something. And the next day I was like, man, I can't walk. I'm hurting. And I was like, am I getting any better? Am I going to be able to pull this off? And then the next day I'd run out and go run six miles. And slowly over time, you wake up one day, race day comes, and lo and behold, you go out and you run 30 miles. But there were many times in that run where I, in that training process where I was like, I'm weaker today than I was when I started. And perhaps that's how often our Christian life feels. You look at it on a week to week or a day to day basis and you say, nothing has changed. I'm the same person. I am just as broken. I'm still stuck in the same patterns. But then as you look back over your lifetime and you say, no, by showing up, by being consistent, the Holy Spirit has strengthened me. And there is growth. There is hope. I am not the same person that I was 10 years ago by the grace of God. That comes from union with Christ. That is our sanctification.

Here's the good news. Because of your union with Christ, you are not stuck in the same patterns of self-destructive, compulsive, sinful behavior. That there is hope in that. And if that strikes you, I'd love to hear what the Lord is doing. Or Matthew, one of the elders, would love to hear.

[28 : 59] How can we come alongside you and empower and equip you in your sanctification? Last word picture Paul gives us here, redemption. Because of him, you are in Christ Jesus who became to us, for us, for us, redemption. And this is the word picture that has to do with oppression, of being redeemed, bought back out of oppression. And the image behind redemption is a slave.

A slave who is oppressed and enchained under oppression. A lifetime of servitude. And we are, as Romans 6 tells us, we are enslaved to sin. And we are enslaved, as our confession says, to the misery of sin. We are sold into sin. And Christ's blood buys us out of it. It redeems us from the curse of sin. Ephesians 1 says, in him, there it is again, in him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sin. And our confession, or Westminster Confession, and shorter catechism, larger catechism, it speaks of the misery of the estate of sin. This is the misery of being an afflicted,

in a world afflicted by sin. The servitude, the oppression that sin forces on us. That we are incapable of saving ourselves from this. And that God, through Christ, is in the process of redeeming us, buying us out of that weight, that heavy weight of being oppressed by living in a world of sin and misery. How many times in the last month, in the last week, have you looked around your life, your church, your city, and your world, and said, oh, I feel the weight of a world broken? Read the news. You look in your own family, the oppressive weight of sin. I know I do. As a pandemic continues to ripple through our society, as persecution continues to afflict Christians internationally. As there's wars, and rumors of wars, as there's unjust politicians, as marriages are in conflict, as singleness feels like the most oppressive loneliness you've ever experienced. We live in a world that is oppressed by sin. And Christ became to us redemption, which is the promise that God is doing something. Remember, God is the actor in our salvation. God is doing something to redeem us from the power and the oppression of sin. Not that we have to come and dig ourselves out of it, but that God will do it. He will redeem us. He is redeeming us from sin. The good news of Jesus Christ risen and reigning is that it can't last forever. One of my mentor pastors tells me, he says, if the good news of Jesus is true, then the bad things cannot last. The good things can't be taken away and the best is yet to come. The bad things cannot last. The good things cannot be taken away and the best is yet to come. That is redemption and it is yours through Christ. Okay, so how do we respond? We'll move quickly through this. How do we respond if these word pictures, if our union with Christ is true? Well, our text tells us the core of this is you are in Christ Jesus so that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boasts in the Lord. We are united to Christ so that we may boast, glorify, worship the God who saves us. And so that is the right response. So first, we must not boast in ourselves. We cannot. We bring nothing to our own redemption. It is God who does it. And yet it is the human heart's tendency to seek to boast in ourselves. It is the human heart's tendency to try to appear wise. It is the human heart's tendency to try to justify ourselves, to sanctify, to change ourselves, to redeem ourselves. We are all, all of us, you, me, in some small way, seeking to justify ourselves, sanctify ourselves, redeem ourselves. You're trying to do that in some place. Perhaps it's in your job. You're seeking to earn or impress your peers through your performance at work. Maybe you're trying to fix your own anger or substance or addiction behavior on your own. Maybe you're trying to sanctify your crippling depression by just one more self-care regimen you found on Instagram.

Maybe you're trying to prove to yourself how worthy you are by what kind of a family you raise up and say, yes, I'm a valuable person because of what my family looks like. In all some small ways, we are all trying to wisen, justify, sanctify, and redeem ourselves. And in a tent of the day, that is boasting in ourselves. And our text tells us we must cease that, that we must turn to what God has done for us, see his plentiful redemption, justification, sanctification, and worship and boast in what God has done. So I ask you this week, where are you seeking to boast in yourself?

Where are the places in your story and your family and your life who are doing that? And I would say, stop. One, it can't work. It's futile. And two, you're robbing from the glory of God who is desperately saving you, who will work savingly in you. Second, our text calls us here, obviously, to deep, sustained, joyful worship, boasting in what God has done for us. What would it look like if your life rotated around boasting in the salvation of these word pictures in your life, in your marriage, in your family, in your story? How would it look if you, I mean, great love elicits great boasting. Have you ever noticed that? When you love something, you want to share it with your friends. If you see a great TV show, you don't go, I'm never going to share this with anyone. No, when you find a restaurant that you love, you call your friends and you say, let's go to this restaurant together. Let's watch this movie together. How can you boast with each other?

[35 : 08] How can you boast to your friends in what God has done for you? How can you apply these word principles so deeply that they sink into the core of who you are? There's a hidden application in this that says we are to call, we are called to share, boast about the hope of what God has done with those around us. There's, you know, when you find, like I said, great love elicits great boasting.

Great love elicits great boasting. Well, union with Christ is the greatest picture of love in our whole universe. So the greatest love in the universe should elicit in us the greatest boasting in the whole universe. Praising God, what have you done in my life? You've saved me. Telling our neighbors, our families, what has God done in my life? Well, he's saving me out of destructive behaviors.

He saved me from this sin-shame spiral that I could not free myself of. He's delivering me from the oppression of a broken world. Come and get in on this action. Let me tell you about this great God who is active in my life and in my world. Great love elicits great boasting. How are the ways? Where are you boasting of God's love, his redemption in your life? Today we see the majesty and the mystery, the miracle of our union with Christ. It's the best news in the world. It's the best hope for the world.

And if we soak in it, it meets us in those gaps. It meets us in those places where we wonder, is God active? And it connects it because of God's great love towards us. By faith, we're united to Jesus. And these word pictures show us that what is Christ becomes ours. And that challenges us of the places we boast in ourselves. And it calls us to boast in him. So I pray that each one of you would be a community, would be a congregation, families, marriages, singles, who soak the deepest part of your heart in the mystery of union with Christ and who boast in God's great love.

Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your grace. Thank you for the wisdom, the justification, the sanctification, the redemption that you give us in Christ.

[37 : 18] I pray that each one of us would be changed by this, that we would walk out of this building somehow more conformed to the image of Christ by the habits of singing, by the habits of worshiping you, and that we would indeed boast in you. It's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Amen.