

# Following the Star

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, if we could, for a short while, we could turn back to that passage that we read, the gospel according to Matthew and chapter 2.

Matthew chapter 2, we'll be looking at Matthew 1 as well, but Matthew chapter 2, and we're going to read again just the first two verses. It says there, Now, boys and girls, as I said, it's lovely to see you all here this morning for our family service, and I hope that you're all awake.

I know you had a busy time in school, but I hope you're wide awake today, and that you'll pick up your sticky star on the way out, and you'll get your star mix that you didn't pick up. It's all sitting inside Star Wars bowls, because today is a starry theme.

And we'll talk about the stars in a moment, but I'm sure that you're all getting excited for Christmas, are you? Yeah? Are you all excited? Yes.

Okay, so you are awake. That's good. How many sleeps are left? Three. So you are counting. You're all counting. Three sleeps left of Christmas. And at this time of year, well, we buy Christmas presents, don't we?

[ 1 : 4 2 ] And we send Christmas cards, and we put up the Christmas tree, and we have lots of decorations, and we have Christmas parties, and Christmas concerts, and Christmas family services, and Christmas carol services, which is on tonight, by the way, eight o'clock in the Clamacquarie.

So there's lots going on to do with Christmas, and it's all building up to Christmas Day. How many sleeps? Three. Yeah, okay. It's all building up to Christmas Day, because on Christmas Day, we get to open all our presents, and we come together for, I'm sure, a big Christmas dinner, and we play with our toys, and we play with games, and we have lots of fun, don't we?

So there's so much excitement around Christmas, and it's good to be excited. But it's also good to remember what it's all about, isn't it? Who's it all about? Jesus.

Well, that's good. You are listening. So we have to remember that it's good. It's good to remember that it's all about Jesus. And we have to remember Jesus, because Jesus is so important, and we can't forget about Jesus in all that goes on at Christmas.

Jesus is important. We always have to remember who Jesus is, and why Jesus came. Because Jesus is the most important person in the whole wide world.

[ 2 : 5 6 ] And he's the only person I want everyone in here to know, and to love, and to follow. And this morning, I want us to think about Jesus, and learn about Jesus, and how important it is to follow Jesus using all these stars that you can see.

Can you see all the stars? Can you see them? Yeah. Is there a few? Yeah, there's a few stars. That's good. The reason there's lots of stars is because of the wise men, and what the wise men asked King Herod.

We just read that in the Bible. The wise men said, Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw a star when it rose, and have come to worship him.

And I want us to think about this passage that we read together, and I want us to think about it under three headings. Three headings. Forecasting the sun, following the star, and finding the saviour.

Forecasting the sun, following the star, and finding the saviour. Now, I'm going to ask you what these headings are at the end. So you have to be listening. You really have to be listening.

[ 4 : 02 ] Forecasting the sun, following the star, and finding the saviour. So first of all, we're looking at forecasting the sun. Forecasting the sun. We were told, as we read in Matthew chapter 1 at verse 20, it says that, As Joseph 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. Now, boys and girls, have you ever gone outside when it's really, really dark?

Yeah? You've gone outside when it's really, really dark, and have you ever looked up and saw all the stars? Yeah? You've looked up and you've seen all the stars? Now, hands up if you've ever slept outside.

Slept outside? Maybe in a tent? Or have you slept outside just under the stars? You know, I'd love to do that one night. Maybe not this time of year, but maybe in the summer. Bit too cold just now.

We don't want to sleep outside just now. But I'd love to sleep outside under the stars. But you know, boys and girls, if you were to go outside at night, and you were to look up and it's all dark, and if you didn't see the stars, what do you think would be in the way?

[ 5 : 23 ] What was that, Anna? Clouds, yeah. Clouds would stop you seeing the stars. So, sometimes we can't see the stars at night because there are lots and lots of clouds in the way.

Now, the stars are still there. They're behind the clouds, but you can't see them because the clouds are in the way. And so, what would we have to do? What would we have to do if we were going to plan our stargazing a wee bit better?

What would we have to do? What would we have to look at in order to plan our stargazing so that it's not on a cloudy night? Anybody? You can just shout it out. No.

What would you have to watch? Something on the telly you'd have to watch. Any ideas called a weather? What is it? The weather. You'd have to watch a weather forecast, wouldn't you?

Now, what's a weather forecast? What is it? It tells you about the weather. It's that boring thing that adults usually watch at the end of the news, isn't it? It tells you what the weather is going to be like before it actually happens.

[ 6 : 23 ] The weather forecast tells us what the weather is going to be for the next few days. It's whether it's going to be raining or sunny or windy or cloudy or snowy.

It's a weather forecast. It tells us what's going to happen beforehand. And you know, that's similar to what happens here in the passage that we're reading.

The angel appeared to Joseph. And when he appeared, he was forecasting. But the angel wasn't forecasting about the weather. The angel was forecasting about the Saviour.

He was forecasting about the Son of God. The angel was telling Joseph what the Saviour was going to be like long before he was born. And the angel was forecasting about the Son of God.

Saying to Joseph, Mary your wife will bear a son. You shall call his name. What was he to be called? Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins.

[ 7 : 21 ] Yeah. So nine months before Jesus was born, the angel was forecasting. He was talking about what was going to happen in the future. He was telling Joseph what was going to happen beforehand.

That was nine months before. But you know what's amazing? Is that an Old Testament prophet called Isaiah. Now, he was also forecasting about the Son of God.

Isaiah was foretelling what it would be like before the Son of God would be born. Now, how many years do you think? You can guess. How many years do you think that Isaiah was talking before Jesus was born?

So Isaiah lived long before Jesus. How many years do you think? Any guesses? A thousand. How many? A thousand. Seven.

A wee bit more. Eight. Eight. No. A lot, lot, lot, lot, lot, lot, lot more. A thousand. Seven hundred. A hundred. A hundred. A hundred years.

[ 8 : 25 ] Seven hundred years. So seven hundred years before Jesus was actually born, Isaiah was talking about it. And telling people that this Savior was going to be born.

And that's what we read. Seven hundred years. So that's what we read in verse 22. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel. Now another question for you. What was the name Isaiah used to talk about Jesus?

What did he call him? Emmanuel. Yeah. Now does anybody know what Emmanuel means? No. Any ideas? It tells you in the Bible actually.

Which means God with us. Or with you. Yes, he is. Emmanuel means God with us. So God came to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ.

[ 9 : 22 ] But when the angel was forecasting about the Son of God, what was the name that Joseph was to call his son? Jesus. Does anybody know what the name Jesus means?

No. Good guess though. Any ideas? Savior. Isn't it? Or salvation. Yeah. And that's what Joseph was told, wasn't it?

Call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. And you know, that's why Jesus was born into the world. He was born into the world to take away our sins.

But how did he take away our sins? He died on the cross, yeah. He died on the cross to take away our sins. So we looked at forecasting the Son.

And how the promised Savior would be born into the world. But secondly, we see following the star. So forecasting the Son. You remember this? What is it called? And then following the star.

[ 10 : 24 ] So forecasting the Son and following the star. We see that in verses 1 and 2. We're told that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king. And wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?

For we saw a star when it rose, and have come to worship him. Now, as we said, boys and girls, when you go outside at night, and it's really dark, and you look up into the sky, and there's no clouds, what do you see?

And what else do you see? Do you see a moon? Yes, that's right. You see the moon, and you see the stars. Now, can you see stars in church today? Yeah. Have you counted them all?

Can you count them all? Yeah, 24. 24? No, there's more than 24. Well, there's probably about 48. Yeah, I think I put up about 60 of them. So there's about 60 odd stars here.

But if you were to look into the night sky, how many stars are there? How many? 1,000. 1,000. Oh, more than that, surely.

[ 11 : 32 ] Millions. There's millions and millions and millions of stars. Have you ever tried to count them? Yes. Have you? Did you win? Did you count them all? No. No. Can you count all the stars?

1,000. No. But you know what's amazing? It's that we were singing earlier in Psalm 147, that God has not only made all the stars in the sky, he's made all of them, but he's also counted them all.

He's counted all the stars in the sky, which means that God knows the exact number of stars in the sky. Isn't that amazing? But more than that, God hasn't just made the stars.

He doesn't just count the stars. He names them all. He gives names to all of the stars. Isn't that amazing? And so, boys and girls, when you go outside and you look up at the stars, you might not be able to count all the stars, but you can think, well, God has counted all of them.

God has made them, and God has given all of these stars a name. It's amazing. But you know what's even more amazing, is that even though God has made all the stars in the world, and counted them and named them, what's amazing, is that God is interested in you.

[ 12 : 47 ] Do you know that? God is interested in you. And that's what that man called David learned about when he looked up into the night sky. We were singing about that in Psalm 8.

The other Psalm we were singing. Because David, this man, he was later a king. When David looked up into the sky, just like you go and do, he looked up into the night sky, and he saw all these stars that God had made, and God had numbered, and God had named.

And he looked at them all, and David said, why would God care about me? This world is so, so big. Why would God care about me? Why would God be interested in me?

I'm so tiny in comparison to this wonderful universe. Why would God pay attention to me? And you know what David discovered by looking at all the stars and seeing the moon?

You know what he discovered? It's that God cares about us. And that God loves us. And he's interested in us. God is really interested in us.

[ 13 : 53 ] And God loves us so much. So much that he gave his only, what? His only son. Son, yeah. Isn't that what the Bible tells us? John 3, 16.

I'm sure you know it, don't you? For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Yeah. So, boys and girls, and adults too, God loves us so much that he even used a star to lead the wise men to Jesus. And they were called wise men.

Why do you think they were called wise men? Do you think they were clever? Yeah. They were wise men because they were astrologers. They studied the stars and they saw the special star in the sky and the wise men, they would have known that it was special and then they began to, what did they start doing?

They followed it. They followed the star. But the wise men, they didn't just follow the star down to the end of the road, did they? They followed the star for miles.

[ 15 : 01 ] They went from the far east and they went west. And can you guess how many miles the wise men followed the star for? No, more than 100.

Kerry? A thousand? A wee bit more than a thousand? A thousand, one million, no. So, it's been worked out by someone, not me, that the wise men followed God's star in the sky for about 1,426 miles.

And they worked it out because the journey was from about Tehran in Persia all the way to, where did they go to? Bethlehem in Israel.

1,426 miles. And the wise men followed God's star all the way until they found the Saviour lying in a manger. The wise men followed God's star and God's star led them all the way to who?

Who were they going to find? Jesus, yeah. And you know, we all need to be wise too, don't we? Don't we? But the only way to be wise is to be like the wise men who followed God's star.

[ 16 : 19 ] And for us, God's star is the... the Bible. God's star is the Bible because the Bible makes us wise. The Bible makes us wise to salvation.

The Bible is just like the star that led the wise men because the Bible gives us direction and the Bible gives us guidance and the Bible leads us to Jesus.

And when we read the Bible in church or we read the Bible in Sunday school or in school or at home, it's the Bible that will make us wise. It's the Bible that will make us wise.

It's the Bible that will give us direction and guidance so that we'll be able to find the Savior, Jesus Christ. And that's what I want us to think about last of all, finding the Savior.

So what was the first point? Forecasting the... forecasting the sun. So it was talking about the promised sun. He was going to come into the world. Then we talked about following the...

[ 17 : 19 ] the star. And that the wise men, they followed the star and we need to follow the Bible because it directs us to Jesus. But lastly, we see the wise men, and they found the Savior.

They're finding the Savior. So forecasting the sun, following the... star, and finding the... Savior. Finding the Savior.

That's what they did. We see that in verse 7. Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him.

After listening to the king, they went in their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him.

[ 18 : 22 ] Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and mar. So how did the wise men find Jesus?

How did they find him? Did they use a map? Did they use a map? No, they followed the star, yeah. So they didn't use a map. They didn't use GPS.

They didn't use Google or Ask Alexa. They used, they followed the star that God had provided for them, didn't they? That's amazing. And the wise men, they followed the star all the way to where?

Bethlehem. And they followed the star because for the wise men, finding the saviour was the most important thing in all the world. And you know, boys and girls, finding the saviour is the most important thing in all the world.

Finding Jesus as your saviour, it's more important than anything. More important than your house, more important than your car, your school, your family, your friends. Finding Jesus as your saviour is even more important than Christmas.

[ 19 : 29 ] Do you know that? Finding Jesus as your saviour is more important than Christmas because that's what Christmas is all about. It's all about finding Jesus as your saviour.

Christmas is all about finding Jesus as your saviour. And that's why these wise men followed the star. They wanted to find the saviour. But what did these wise men do when they found the saviour?

What did they do? They worshipped him. Yeah, they worshipped Jesus. The wise men, they fell down on their knees and they worshipped Jesus. And that's what we should do too, isn't it?

We should follow the star, which is the Bible, and it should lead us to Jesus so that we'll fall down and worship Jesus. We're to give praise and honour and glory to Jesus because he's the King of Kings and he's the Lord of Lords.

But when the wise men reached Jesus, they gave him something, didn't they? What did the wise men give Jesus? There was three presents, wasn't there?

[ 20 : 36 ] Kerry. Gold. Frankincense. Frankincense, yeah. We were in the school on Wednesday and they said Frankenstein, but that's...

Frankincense and mud, yeah. So gold, frankincense and mud. And they were really expensive gifts. They were gifts fit for a king because, well, I don't think anybody in here...

Is anybody going to get gold in their stocking at Christmas? No. Well, you might get a gold chocolate coin. You might get that. But I don't think you'll get real gold unless there's somebody with lots of money here.

And you probably won't get frankincense or mud either because that was very expensive perfume. And maybe your mummy might get expensive perfume at Christmas.

But she probably won't get frankincense or mud because gold, frankincense and mud, it was for a king. It's always for a king. And that's what you'd give to a king. And as we said, Jesus, he's the King of Kings.

[ 21 : 37 ] And he's the Lord of Lords. But you know, it's not only the wise men who give gifts, is it? Jesus also promises gifts. And what gift does King Jesus promise to us if we ask him?

What do you think he promises? What present does Jesus promise to give us if we ask him for it? Eternal? Eternal life. Yeah, he promises to give us forgiveness and eternal life.

King Jesus promises to give to us the gift of forgiveness and eternal life when we ask him. But you know, does everybody in here have the gift of eternal life and forgiveness?

Do you think? What do you think? Yes? No? Maybe? We don't know. But what do we need to do if we don't have it? What do we need to do?

Ask. Ask, yeah. Ask. So those who don't have the gift of eternal life and don't have forgiveness, they don't have it. Why? Because they haven't asked, yeah.

[ 22 : 41 ] So boys and girls, have you asked Jesus for forgiveness? And have you asked him for the gift of eternal life? Yeah, we need to, don't we? You know, I wish I could give, give it to everybody.

I wish I could give everyone here and everybody who's not here, everybody who lives in Barvis, and further afield, I wish I could give to them the gift of forgiveness and eternal life. But you know that I can't.

Why? It's only who can give it to you. Jesus, yeah. Only Jesus can give you forgiveness and the gift of eternal life.

Only Jesus can make you a Christian. Isn't that right? Yeah. So you have to ask Jesus for yourself, don't you? And Jesus says, ask and you shall receive.

Ask and you shall receive. Now you're very, very good at listening. Ask and you shall receive. Now boys and girls, we're just going to finish. Do you remember the three headings?

[ 23 : 45 ] Oh. Tough? What's the first one? Four. Forecasting the sun. Sun. Following the star.

Finding the Savior. Now we're going to ask the adults on the way out, aren't we? See if they remember. Forecasting the sun, following the star, finding the Savior. Now I hope you all have a lovely Christmas and have lots of fun.

But remember, who is Christmas all about? Right, that's good. He is the most important person in all the world, isn't he? Yes. And he's the only person that I want everyone in here to know and to love and to follow.

You have to follow Jesus. Okay? So thank you for listening. You're very good at listening. We're going to say a wee prayer, okay? Clasp our hands, close our eyes. Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the wonder of who Jesus is, that he is a great Savior, a Savior who came into the world to seek and to save the lost.

And Lord, that we would see ourselves as those who are lost without a shepherd, but that we need to find this great shepherd, this great shepherd who has come seeking us.

[ 24 : 56 ] Lord, bless thy truth to us, we pray. Bless the children, we thank thee for them and for their young lives, that thou wouldst protect them and keep them. Oh Lord, draw near to them, we ask.

Watch over us, we pray, and bless our time together, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We're going to bring our time together to a close.

We're going to sing the words of Psalm 23. I know the boys and girls in Sunday school should know Psalm 23.

It's the shepherd's psalm. What better psalm to know and learn than the shepherd psalm? I remind you there's tea and coffee after the service, so please stay behind.

If you can, don't run away home. Stay for a time of fellowship. Psalm 23. It's on page 229. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

[ 26 : 03 ] He makes me down to lie. In pastures green he leadeth me, the quiet waters by. And we'll sing on down to the end of the psalm. Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me.

And in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be. So we'll sing the whole psalm to God's praise. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

He makes me down to lie. In pastures green he leadeth me, the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again, and me to walk God make within the path of righteousness for his own name's sake.

Yet, oh, I walk in death's dark will, yet will I fear none e'er.

[ 28 : 04 ] For thou art with me and thy Lord, and stop me comfort still.

My table love has furnished in presence of my my foes, my head thou dost with oil anoint, and my cup over flows.

Goodness and mercy and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and and in God's hands forever more my dwelling place shall be.

Lord, we give thanks to thee for the food that's prepared for us next door. Bless our time together and help us, Lord, to eat and to drink and to do everything to thy glory. And we ask, Lord, that as we part one from the other, that grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit would rest and remain with us all, both now and forevermore. Amen.