

# 15.12.24 am: Good News for the Wise Men

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. A warm welcome to the service today. Good to see some visitors back with us as well.

Some who are returning home after a while away and some who may be here for the first time. And it's great to see all those who are visiting along with those who are coming week by week. There's tea and there's coffee served at the end of the service.

So if you're able to stay behind, it would be good to get the chance to chat and have fellowship together. One or two notices, you've had most of them on the screen.

You've had the email. So I'll just draw attention to a couple of these. First of all is to remind you that this evening the service is at the usual time, it's at 6 o'clock.

But this evening we're having a communion service. So at the end of the service we'll have a simple, short time of communion. And I'll take that service myself.

[ 0 : 58 ] God willing. That said, although it's not the communion season, we still come together around the Lord's table. And I believe that there are some who know the Lord, who are trusting the Lord, and have not yet come to take that step and make that profession.

And if you are in that category, if you're trusting Jesus, if he has saved you, but you haven't yet professed your faith in him, please come and speak to me at the end of the service.

And we'd be very happy as a session to meet with you and welcome you in. The session will meet at half past five before the service begins tonight. The service is at next Sunday.

to remind you that the morning service is a Christmas family service. So it's a service that will be pitched very much for the young ones. Although hopefully there's a message for all of us there.

And the young ones will sing at that service too. So that's 11 o'clock next Sunday morning, the family service. And at 6pm, as we have each year, there's the lessons and carol service.

[ 2 : 05 ] We'll have the various readings and carols and prayers in between. So be encouraged to come to these services and also maybe ask people who wouldn't normally come.

It's a time of year where everybody seems to celebrate Christmas. And the name Christ is at the beginning. It's central in this season.

So let's take the opportunity to ask people who might not usually come to come and to remember the Lord Jesus and his birth. The final thing is just to say that it's with great sadness that we heard on Friday evening of the passing of Rory McKenzie.

Most of you will have heard, I'm sure. He was an elder in the congregation in Scalpe. He was a very popular preacher here as well.

I remember just after lockdown when we had services on YouTube, week by week when people would preach, you'd get a couple of hundred views maybe. When Rory would preach, it would be quadrupled.

[ 3 : 13 ] He was a man who was used powerfully as a preacher and as a faithful servant in the school, being salt, being light as one who trusted the Lord.

So we know now he has gone to be with the Lord and our prayers and our sympathies are with all of the family.

The likelihood, I'm told, is that there'll be a funeral on Tuesday with a wake on Monday night, but that's not yet confirmed. And so when that's confirmed, we'll hear in due course.

But let's keep the family in prayer at this time as we give thanks for Rory's life. Let's now worship God and we'll sing to his praise.

We'll sing from Mission Praise 644, the words on the screen. The first Noel, the angels did say, was to Bethlehem's shepherds in fields as they lay.

[ 4 : 12 ] We'll stand to sing in just a moment. The first Noel, the angels did sing, For different they have shepherds in fields as they lay.

Their fields ready, and they keeping their sheep. On our golden church night that was so deep, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Lord is the King of Israel.

And wise men from our country far, looked up and saw a guiding star, they travelled on by night and day to reach the place where Jesus lay.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Lord is the King of Israel.

A deadly end, they entered in, or bend in me, they worshipped Him.

[ 6 : 36 ] They offered Him in His presence their gold and earth and frankincense.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Lord is the King of Israel.

And let us all sing praises to our heavenly Lord.

For Christ has a salvation and brought, and with His blood and night has bought.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, for this King of Israel.

[ 8 : 05 ] And Scott will now lead us in a word of prayer, please, Scott.

Let us pray together. Our Father in heaven, we give thanks to you for this day that we have received from your hand.

We give thanks to you for that you watch over us and keep us and sustain us. And you are the mighty creator of heavens and earth. And Lord, as we draw near to you, that we do so with praise in our hearts, thanking you for all that you have done for us.

And Lord, we, at this time of year, are especially mindful that you sent your Son, Jesus Christ as our babe in the manger, to be our salvation and to be our King, to be the greatest of news that would ever come into this world, that we may not die, but that we may live if we believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so bring us to see Him in all His beauty, as our babe in the manger and as a man on the cross, someone that had deep compassion and love for us, that He would give us life for each and every one here, that we may see and behold what great love He has for us, and that He would be willing to die in order that we might be clean, that He would give up being in heaven, that He would come and save us from our sins.

[ 9 : 50 ] And so we pray today that You would open our eyes and unblock our ears to hear this gospel message, the gospel message of the coming Son, the gospel message of the Christ that died for us on the cross, the gospel message that we can be saved from our sins, that He will keep us and never let go of us, that He will hear our cries and our anxieties and our moans and our groans when we can't find the words to utter in prayer to You.

You know us in the depths of our hearts. And so we pray that we would know You today, that You would speak to us by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that Your Spirit would be over us through the words being read, Your praise being sung, and the word being preached to us.

Speak to us, we pray. Speak to our hearts and minds and bodies, that we may know You and come to trust in You as our Saviour. And we pray for any who have not professed You yet, but know You in their hearts as their Lord and their God, that You would draw them with Your great love, that they may be not ashamed of You, that they may join with the Lord's people in praising You and being known as one of Yours.

So Lord, we pray that You would prepare our hearts to receive the Lord's Supper this evening.

Prepare us to sit there in remembrance of all that You have done for us, and that we often come acknowledging the weaknesses of our hearts, the doubts that we see in ourselves, the many faults that we acknowledge, but knowing that it is not of ourselves that we come.

It is all because what He has done for us, that He is our Saviour, that He has loved us, that He would die for us. It is all of what Christ has done.

[ 12 : 02 ] And so, help us to remember the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful Counselor.

And Lord, we just pray for those who need You today, those who are anxious for themselves or loved ones, and we pray especially for those who mourn.

We remember the Mackenzie family in particular. And we just pray that they would know Your loving arms around them as a comfort to them, for You are the God of all comfort, that You would be known as a God that would bottle up their tears and draw near to the brokenhearted, knowing also the promise of the believer, the promise that the Christian receives of life eternal, the blessed

gift of life and glory in the presence of His Saviour.

What a thought, what a promise. we thank You for His example, and we thank You for the great inheritance that He leaves His family, and each of us here, that He is with His Lord, that He is eternally safe.

The door of sin has closed, never to enter in to that place. what a thought, that You should save people such as we are, that You would be mindful of us.

[ 13 : 45 ] So Lord, we pray as we draw near to Your Word that You would speak into our hearts, that we would know You in a way that we have never known You before, and that we would call upon You to guide us and help us and keep us in every step of life.

Watch over us we pray. In Jesus' name we ask all these things. Amen. Amen.

Thank you, Scott. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please? Amen. How are you all this week?

All good? All good? Put your hand up if you go to school. So all of you, almost all of you, some of you might be at Scolari, but all of you are at the school.

Now, for the primaries and the secondaries, can you tell me, can you remember, what happened at school on Thursday at lunchtime?

[ 15 : 16 ] Michael? Hot chocolate. Hot chocolate. So there was, tell us what happened. We had, what did you get?

What did you get given? A hot chocolate with a candy cane that had, it told you what a candy cane. Yeah, yeah, we'll get the candy cane message in a wee second.

So you were given a hot chocolate, did you have marshmallows on top? Yep. Marshmallows on top, and with the hot chocolate, you got given a? Candy cane. A candy cane. A candy cane. And so, Calmy and his team were busy working, serving these hot chocolates and, and candy canes.

I think it was Fiona's idea, actually, that we would, that we would give these things out in the school. So, I wonder, I wonder if you can remember in candy canes what do you normally do with candy canes before you eat them?

You hang them on the Christmas tree. So candy canes are something that comes up at Christmas time. You don't generally have candy canes in the middle of summer. But at Christmas time you have candy canes and you put them on the tree and maybe on Christmas day or maybe before you just take them down and you have a wee snack before breakfast.

[ 16 : 36 ] And the candy canes they help us to remember Jesus and what Jesus did for us.

I thought it was a little bit unfair that only the primaries and the secondaries got chocolate. The Scolari's didn't get chocolate. So if you listen really well today look at all these Freddos.

If you get the answers and you listen well there's Freddos to take to Sunday school. So who can remember how the candy canes help us and teach us to know about Jesus?

Who can remember? I don't want to pinch on you all the time Michael. Benjamin? You hang them on the tree and so you hang them on the tree at Christmas time.

Have you got a tree in your house? Is that a big sparkly tree? Yeah. So you hang that on the tree and what do the candy canes tell us about Jesus?

[ 17 : 42 ] Look at the different colours. What colours do you see? Oh So the red is for the blood of who?

Jesus. Jesus. So Jesus he was born into this world and he he lived Johnny listening he lived and he went to the cross and he died his blood was shed we're going to remember that tonight at communion and why was Jesus' blood shed?

Why? What did he do that for? Why did he die? Who did he die for? Emily? He died for us to take away our sin.

So we see the red and the red reminds us of the the blood of Jesus that he shed for us. What about the other colour?

What other colour do you see? White? What does white speak to us about? A few different answers about this one if you think about it.

[ 18 : 54 ] Something to do with your heart. Is your heart always white? No. Is my heart always white? No. It's never white and pure is it?

No. Because of of that thing called sin that makes your hearts dark. but what can wash your hearts to make them clean and white?

The blood of Jesus. There's a verse I think it's in Isaiah at the beginning of Isaiah and God says through Isaiah he says come and let us reason together let's make a deal though your sin is like red like scarlet even though it's like a huge stain God says I will make your hearts as white as snow. So the only heart that was ever white all the way through life the only person who never sinned who was always white was Jesus.

So the red reminds us of Jesus' death his blood the white reminds us of Jesus' heart and how he can make our hearts clean if we believe in him and what can you see what does the shape of this look like?

[ 20 : 09 ] You usually hang it on the tree like that don't you? But if you turn it upside down what do you see? We'll come to that well we can do that Okay What do you see there?

I need a teacher to teach me here J and what does J stand for? Jesus Jesus So the white reminds us of Jesus' heart and how he can make our hearts clean The red reminds us of his death his blood The shape reminds us of the letter J because he was given the name Jesus because he would be the saviour and the last thing you got a second ago is what does that remind you of?

Shepherds The shepherds crew so you might see Alistair Nardazig getting off his quad he's probably got something like that in his hand A shepherd's crook it's called and that reminds us that Jesus is the Lord our shepherd and one of the amazing things and the really special things about knowing the Lord Jesus as our shepherd is that he's with us all through life and then when he when we get to death because we've been talking about Roddy he knew who's died but when we are trusting in Jesus when he's the Lord our shepherd he promises to take us right through death safely into life that's everlasting so you're all going to get a candy cane you can hang it on your tree and let's remember and trust the Lord Jesus okay

Michael it's quite hard to open but yeah it's all good things come to those who wait let's pray heavenly father we thank you for sending your son Jesus into this world and we thank you that he came into this world and he was born we remember that this season and we thank you that he lived a perfect pure white sinless life the life that we can never live we thank you that he went to the cross to die the death that our sins deserved and we thank you that we're promised that when we believe in the Lord Jesus and ask him to be our saviour he makes our hearts white he makes our hearts clean and he gives us the promise that even though we die we have life that's everlasting because Jesus has overcome death and he takes us into everlasting life when we believe in him so we pray that you would help us over this

Christmas season to remember and to trust in the Lord Jesus and we ask all these things in Jesus name amen we're going to sing now I'll give the chocolates and the canes to one of your teachers you can maybe get them at Sunday school and we're going to sing from mission praise 740 the words are on the screen we three kings from odian are we three kings shall for we are may in gifts we travel afar feel that fountain move that mountain for over yonder star oh star of wonder star of night star with royal beauty bright westward leading still proceeding guide us to thy perfect light born a king on battle and plain for thy pain to crown him again king forever sneezing never know that us all to pray oh star of wonder star of night star with royal beauty bright westward!

[ 25 : 02 ] westward gleaming still proceeding! guide us to the perfect light! star star light of light star of!

!!!!!!! star of star!

! with of bright! westward gleaming still proceeding guide us to perfect light!

!! is is perfume! Death death and calm is blown!

star shining star of shining! star of star of star of night star with royal beauty bright!

[ 26 : 20 ] westward gleaming still proceeding guide us to thy perfect light! glorious thou behold him arise king God and sacrifice and saints hallelujah amen earth reprise O star of wonder star of light star royal beauty bright!

westward leading still proceeding guide us to thy perfect light!!

O lightNING Remember to pray for them as they go through.

And let's pray. Let's read now from God's word. And we'll read from Matthew chapter 2. We'll read verse 1 to verse 12.

Matthew chapter 2, reading at verse 1. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?



We pray that we wouldn't think that we know everything about this passage. We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would teach us and that you would guide us, that you would lead us, that we would see what the wise men saw and even more, that we would see the glory of Jesus the Savior. We pray for the young ones in Sunday school and those who are in creche. And we ask, Lord, that you would bless them, that they would grow up to know you and to trust you. We thank you, Lord, for how receptive and how open and how believing they seem to be when we speak to them of the things of God. And we ask that that would not be snatched away, but that they would trust you in their early years and walk with you all the days of their lives.

[ 37 : 11 ] We pray for those who are not with us this morning, those who are at home watching online, those who may be sick and who are struggling, those who are in hospital.

We remember Hannah again and ask that your hand would be upon her. We pray for those who are lonely, who are on their own at home or who may be in care homes and who feel distant from their family and even distant from us as a congregation.

We pray, Lord, that you would draw near to them and that you would minister to them where they are. So help us, Lord, we pray. Cleanse us from sin. Empty us of all that is of self.

Take away every distraction and give to us a sense of expectation, a sense of reverence, that we are in the presence of God, the God who speaks. Help us to listen, we pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So over these last couple of weeks, we have been looking at the good news.

[ 38 : 22 ] We have noted the fact that you go to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and these books, they are gospels. Gospel means good news. And so we've been thinking particularly about the good news about the birth of Jesus and how the birth of Jesus was communicated, who it was told to, and how it impacted the different people in the Christmas story.

Last Sunday morning, we thought about the good news for Jacob as it came to Jacob. Jesus was the answer to all the promises that God had given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and so on.

We see in what we might consider to be the dry opening verses of Matthew, we see that God is a God who works through the generations and who keeps all his promises.

We thought about the fact that the birth of Jesus was good news for Joseph and for Mary, although it wouldn't have seemed like good news when it was first announced.

And this morning, I'd like us to consider the good news of the birth of Jesus for the wise men, the men who came from the East looking for this child.

[ 39 : 44 ] He was said to be the king of the Jews. So we start with a star. The first point this morning is the star, because that's how it all began for the wise men.

So if your Bibles are open, verses 1 and verse 2. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?

For we saw his star when it rose, and have come to worship him. So it begins with a star.

And it's a star that has come onto the radar of these wise men. And if we ask the question, Who were the wise men? The answer is, we don't know very much about the wise men.

We could go back to the carol that we just sang a minute ago, and we could ask a few questions of the carol. Were these wise men, were these magi kings? Well, maybe they were kings.

[ 41 : 04 ] Probably not, though. We certainly don't know that they were kings. Were there three of them? Possibly. But possibly not.

It could have been more. It could have been much more. The truth is, we don't know. Certainly, these magi, these wise men, they were academics.

They were, you could say, scholars. They were university professor types. One commentator says, We must confess that we know little about these men.

The word translated wise men, magi, refers to a group of scholars who studied the stars. Their title connects them with magic, but they were probably more like astrologers.

So we don't know very much about the wise men. We're not told very much in the text about the wise men, but we do know that they were experts in the stars.

[ 42 : 14 ] And we know that it was a star that took them from the east to Jerusalem with these very specific, these very persistent questions questions about Jesus.

So it begins with a star. It's the first point. And I wonder if you and I can think back. If we are, if we are Christians, what was it that first brought you and I to start asking questions about Jesus?

If you think back, what or more likely who first brought you to Jesus?

It probably wasn't a star. You probably didn't get up one morning or head to your front room with a telescope and look up in the sky and see a peculiar star that caused you to think and start asking questions about Jesus.

It probably didn't happen that way. But it might have been a star that brought you to Jesus in the first instance.

[ 43 : 39 ] It might have been some kind of trouble in life. It might have been a bad report from the doctor. It might have been a family crisis or the loss of a job or a broken relationship.

It might have been clouds or a storm that brought us to Jesus. So often it's clouds of sadness that kind of just come in.

It's maybe a feeling of being low. sometimes it's when we are in a state of grief that we we start to look and search and long for Jesus.

Or it may have been a person. For most of us here I know quite a few of your testimonies. And for a lot of you here when I look out it's a person.

Somebody you worked with maybe. Somebody in your family. A friend. Sometimes somebody who really annoyed you.

[ 45 : 01 ] And that's the person that God used in the first instance to bring you to Jesus. God can use all these things to bring us to Jesus.

The God who as we sang in Psalm 8 who put the stars in their place who ordained where they will go in the cosmos. That God he remembers us.

That's the amazing thing. That we are remembered by him. That he is an interest in us. That he shows kindness. He shows grace to us. He reaches out to us.

He can even use the stars to bring wise men to Jesus. So it began with a star. Point number one. Point number two is the scriptures.

Because the stars are where the search for Jesus began. But it wasn't just the stars that God used to direct these wise men.

[ 46 : 05 ] The wise men verse two. They had heard of he who has been born king of the Jews. So they've seen a star. A peculiar star.

A star that is of great interest to them. And they've heard this message. They've heard this prophecy. They've heard of he who has been born king of the Jews. So where did they hear that? Well they heard that from the scriptures. Because that's where all the prophecies about the king of the Jews to be born were found. It was in the scriptures. But here's a question.

How did academic scholars university professors from the east from the far east how did they know anything about the Jewish scriptures?

well let's ask another question. Where precisely were these wise men from? We're told the east but where more precisely is the east?

[ 47 : 13 ] Well one of the commentators legs says these men come from the east which probably means Babylon. And that gives us a clue as to how these men knew about the scriptures.

This is partly speculative but it's highly likely. They probably heard about this Messiah this king that was to be born through a man called Daniel.

Remember Daniel? If we go back into the Old Testament there's a whole book about the life of Daniel. Daniel you remember from Sunday school stories he was kidnapped as a young man.

He was taken into captivity. He was relocated against his will. Where was he relocated? Where was he taken against his will? He was taken to the east.

He was taken to a place called Babylon. And the plan that the Babylonian authorities had for Daniel was they just planned to reprogram him. The same way that we reset our phones, we reformat our phones, that was their plan for Daniel.

[ 48 : 34 ] They wanted to reformat him. They wanted to knock out of him all the strange beliefs about the God of Israel and they wanted to fill his head and fill his heart with all the things of this world of Babylon.

But Daniel you remember he believed in the God of Israel. He belonged to the God of Israel and he remained faithful even in Babylon to the God of Israel.

So even though many people had it in for Daniel, even though many people tried to stop Daniel, he kept on praying to the one true God.

He kept on filling his head and his heart with the word of God and almost certainly Daniel, whilst he studied in the University of Babylon, would have told the scholars about the scriptures because this was what was so filling Daniel's life.

He was so consumed with the word of God. He was so much looking forward to the promise of salvation, to the story of this saviour, of this king of the Jews that was to be born.

[ 49 : 54 ] And so almost certainly Daniel, as he studied ancient texts, he would have spoken to them about this text and told them about Jesus.

Daniel, he lives in Babylon. He dies, still following, still faithful.

And then 500 years after the death of Daniel, the good news that Daniel shared, led these scholars, these wise men, to Jesus.

They see the star, they ask the question, they hear about this text, and they set off on what, if I remember rightly, was over a month's journey, to look for the one who was born to be the king of the Jews.

And you know, there's great encouragement for us in that. Because it's not just me, but every Christian, we're called to share the good news about Jesus.

[ 51 : 27 ] And when you and I share the good news about Jesus, more often than not, whether you're standing at this lectern, and you're preaching a sermon, or you're sharing a message in the shop, you share the message, and 99 out of 100 times, you see no response.

There's no apparent impact. And that's often the way it is. I preach, you preach, we speak, we share.

We may not see much impact in our time, but God may use the words that we share way down the line to bring somebody that we may never see in this world to Jesus.

peace. I was speaking a week last Saturday with Norman McKeever, your old minister, and he was on the phone to Angus Alec, I called in for a visit, and Angus Alec passed me the phone, and we had a wee chat, and he was telling me that he had not long come back from a visit to the hospital, a man from Uist had been taken into the hospital with cancer.

So Norman, he knew of the man, and he went in to visit him, to encourage him, and to see him. And when he got to the hospital, he was, he went to encourage, but he came out double encouraged, because this man that he just went to come alongside to give an encouragement to, he discovered unbeknown to him, this man was converted.

[ 53 : 14 ] He was approaching the end of his life, but he was soundly, brightly, solidly converted. He was a Christian. And so Norman spoke to him and said, tell me how it all happened.

And the way it happened, he said, was that it all happened through the scripture. There's no great drama, no flashing lights, no big noise, but just as he was dealing with the storm that had come into his life, scripture texts that were shared with him 50 years previous in the Sunday school class, the Holy Spirit brought back to his mind and he believed.

And here he was approaching death with no fear and with that blessed assurance that Christ was his savior.

Where was the Sunday school teacher? Long gone from this world. She may have sat there week by week thinking, what's the point? He's not listening to a word I say.

And yet God, the Holy Spirit, took these texts that she faithfully shared and brought them with great power, saving power, into this man's life.

[ 54 : 53 ] So the star in the sky and the scriptures that were shared took these wise men to Jerusalem. But just before we move on, we have to note the fact that there's a problem here.

Because we see the wise men and they've arrived in Jerusalem and there's a stir because what on earth are they doing there and everybody's noticing them. But the problem is they're looking for the king of the Jews that's to be born, but he isn't going to be born in Jerusalem.

So where would he be born? That was the question that the wise men asked Herod. And Herod, who was clearly unsettled by the news of a king that was incoming, he passed this question on to his religious staff.

So look at verse 3 to verse 6 as we have this conversation recorded. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.

They were probably terrified as to how Herod would react. He was a notoriously violent and unpredictable guy. Herod was troubled, all Jerusalem with him, and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, all the theological, the religious staff that he had, he assembled them and

he inquired of them, verse 4, where the Christ was to be born.

[ 56 : 17 ] They told him, in Bethlehem in Judea. For so it is written by the prophet, and you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.

So there's the wise men, standing there in the middle of Jerusalem, looking at their maps, trying to figure out where on earth are they going to find this child to be born.

They've got their questions, they go to Herod, he calls the staff, the staff open up the scriptures. They go to a wee book called Micah, and in Micah chapter 5, verses 5 and 6, which is quoted here in the text, they find that if they want to see this king, they have to go from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. And so off to Bethlehem the wise men go with their questions and in their search to find Jesus. Just a word of application before we move on to point three. Question number one, where do we find our answers? You know, all of us have questions.

[ 57 : 52 ] all of us are looking for answers to the meaning of life. All of us are looking for answers as to who we are, what our identity is, where we've come from, what our purpose is, where we're going.

These are the big questions. Where are we going to get answers to life's big questions? Not in the stars, not in the horoscopes on page 75 of the daily record or whatever it is, in the scriptures. You want to know the answer to life's big questions, the eternal questions? You have to be in the Bible. And one more point on application.

Where do we find Jesus today? Because we can't go to Bethlehem. where do we find Jesus today? Where do we find the true and good king? The righteous and the just king, the kind king, that our souls long for.

[ 59 : 04 ] Where do we find him? Well, we don't find him in Eastern religions. The wise men have tried that. We don't find him in mysticism or spiritualism or new age thinking.

We'll find a whole lot of confusion there. We find them in the scriptures. See, in this book that we come back to week after week after week, there was good news for the wise men.

And in this book there is good news for us today, if we will open it, if we will be in it. The star, the scriptures, thirdly, briefly, we have snares, or one particular snare.

We often sing the hymn, here, Amazing Grace. And one of the lines in that hymn, Amazing Grace, is, through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come.

And these wise men, they have a snare to negotiate. It's not straightforward, this journey, this search, there is a snare to negotiate, and the snare is a name, and his name is Herod.

[ 60 : 32 ] So verse seven, we read there, 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.

So who is Herod? Well, we've said already, Herod is the king, and so Herod is not delighted about this news of a new king that was being born.

This is not good news for him. Because Herod wants to be ruler of his own life, and Herod wants to ensure that he has some kind of longevity in terms of being the ruler of his own area, his own province, his own kingdom.

And so Herod is not willing to submit to Jesus. He hears the news about Jesus the king, but he will not submit to this king. And that's a sad story, but it's a common one.

There are still many Herods. We still find the spirit of Herod rising up within us. There are many people who don't want Jesus as king.

[ 61 : 56 ] There are many people we could say, even as a culture in our country today, at the societal level, we want rid of Jesus.

Get him out of schools. Get his word out of hotels and hospitals. We want rid of Jesus. That was Herod's intention.

And Herod is so determined to get rid of Jesus, he goes to shocking and bloody lengths to try to get rid of Jesus.

You can see that in the second half of this chapter. But at this point, Herod, he plays along with the wise men. He isn't straight. He doesn't tell them about his concerns.

He doesn't tell them about his bad intentions. He just wants to know, where is this Jesus? Where is this child? So I can destroy him. And so as the wise men head off, unbeknown to them, there is risk.

[ 63 : 09 ] There is great danger. And there is a need for wisdom. There is a need for protection for these wise men.

And they get that wisdom and they get that protection because God the Holy Spirit meets them in a dream. And they are able to sidestep Herod.

Verse 12 says, being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. They sidestep Herod. They managed to avoid the snare.

But the point and application for us is that in any search for Jesus, and whenever we want to act on the good news about Jesus and either become a Christian or profess our faith in Christ, we can expect snares.

If you've never given your life to Jesus and you're feeling that sense of being drawn, expect resistance. Expect trouble.

[ 64 : 23 ] Expect snares. resistance. If you are here this morning and you are a Christian, you're thinking about sitting at the Lord's table for the first time, expect when you go and discuss this with whoever it is you might discuss it with, expect there to be trouble, resistance.

If you're a Christian who's at a distance and has been wandering far away for maybe a long time and you're hearing the call to come back, expect snares, expect resistance.

resistance. Because there's a spiritual battle going on here. We can't see Satan, but it's Satan who's behind Herod. Satan has an interest in keeping people away from Jesus, keeping people back from trusting and professing Jesus as Lord.

This spiritual journey that we are called to travel on is a journey where there are many snares, dangers, toils, and snares.

But the wise men teach us to keep on keeping on until we get to Jesus, until we trust Jesus, until we worship Jesus, until we profess that he is our Lord and our Savior.

[ 65 : 53 ] The star, the scriptures, snares that they managed to avoid. And finally, we read about salvation.

Verse 9 to verse 11. After listening to the king, they, the wise men, went on 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.

Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. So just as we head to a conclusion here, the wise men, they see the star, they follow the star, they follow the scriptures, they overcome the snares, and they come to Jesus.

And they teach us so clearly, and so simply, and so powerfully, what we are to do. Every one of us here this morning, what is it that you and I are to do morning by morning?

[ 67 : 23 ] We're to come to Jesus. The wise men show us that it's not enough to see a star, and have a spiritual experience, it's not enough even to be able to read the Bible, and quote the Bible, and know the Bible, in our heads, in our minds.

Herod's staff, remember, they could do all of that. But the tragedy with Herod's staff is that they knew the scriptures, they understood the prophecies, Jesus is five miles down the road, and they never come to see him.

one commentator says, these priests knew the scriptures and pointed others to the Savior, but they would not go to worship him themselves.

They quoted Micah 5.2, but did not obey it. They were five miles from the very Son of God, yet they did not go to see him.

What a tragedy. Are there any of Herod's religious staff here this morning?

[ 68 : 44 ] Is there anyone here who is an expert in knowing the Bible and understanding the Bible, and talking about the Bible, and telling others about the Bible, and encouraging people to go and see Jesus, and trust Jesus, and follow Jesus, and give their life to Jesus, and yet you never go?

What a tragedy. Back then. What a tragedy still today. don't be like Herod's staff.

Be like the wise men. Because the wise men, they came to Jesus. And by the time they got to Jesus, it was, as verse one says, it was after Jesus was born.

The scholars think he may even have been up to two years old. So just try and imagine in your mind's eye, these very important scholars from the East, men of weight, men of great gravitas, men with 16 letters behind their names, with gowns, and scrolls, men.

And they come into the house where Jesus was, and Jesus is just an infant. We see them at little fishes here on the Tuesday, all these wee torts, crawling around, and Jesus is just like that.

[ 70 : 34 ] Remember, there's nothing different looking about Jesus, there's nothing regal looking about Jesus, he's just an infant. and yet these wise men, they recognize him as king, and as savior.

And we know that from their reaction. Verse 10 says that they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. joy. It's what you and I should have. If we found Jesus, if he's our king, if he's our savior, we should be rejoicing exceedingly with great joy.

We shouldn't be growling in our hymn books. There should be praise bursting from our hearts.

Rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

You can't get any more powerful and emphatic than that. They have found the king. that their souls long for and so they're filled with joy. And verse 11 says they fell down and they worshipped him.

[ 71 : 52 ] These important looking men of great stature in a culture when you did not bow down and where children were nothing.

and they fell down and they worshipped him because they recognised that they were in the presence of God. And verse 11 says they offered him gifts.

Gold gold which was a gift for a king and frankincense which was a gift that was offered to God in worship and myrrh Which was a peculiar gift because myrrh was a spice that was used to anoint the body of someone who died.

And so even at this very early stage in Jesus' life there's a pointer to his death. There's a preview, there's a sign in the myrrh of what was to come.

This child was born to die so that we might live. We sang Myrrh is mine as bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom sorrowing sighing bleeding dying sealed in the stone cold tomb.

[ 73 : 53 ] That's what the myrrh was pointing forward to. The death of Jesus to the body that would be given to the blood that would be shed so that we could have salvation.

Salvation if we come to Jesus. Jesus. If we worship Jesus, if we profess our faith in Jesus as the wise men did.

So will you and I do that? That's the final question today. Will we come to Jesus in faith? Will we worship him in truth?

And will we profess our faith in him? And remember not just his birth, but also his death and his resurrection as we hear the call to come to the Lord's table.

Amen. let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word and we thank you for the call to come to Jesus.

[ 75 : 29 ] Give us eyes to see, give us ears to hear that call, give us faith and courage to come and persevere until we find Jesus, the one whom our souls long for, the one who is our saviour, the only saviour.

We pray these things in his name. Amen. We'll sing to conclude the words of Mission Praise 337 in the bleak mid winter.

NING!NING! Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. I would bring love.

[ 78 : 36 ] If I were a wise one, I would do my part. Yes, Lord, I did it in my heart.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forevermore.

Amen.