

The Director

Series: The Glory of Christmas

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

December 24, 2021

Welcome again to Christmas Eve worship. Thank you for joining us on this very special night, a night when we can finally have a few moments of peace, unlike trying to get ready for Christmas.

A mother was preparing for large Christmas Eve family gathering. She had been giving out orders all day like a drill sergeant: "Pick up your things! Don't get your clothes dirty! Put away those toys."

Well, her 4-year-old daughter had been underfoot all day, so she sent her to the next room to play with their wooden Nativity set.

As the mother scurried around setting the table, she overheard her daughter talking to her toys in the same tone of voice the mother had used: "I don't care who you are, get those camels out of my living room!"

Anyone feel like the mother? Anyone feel like the 4-year-old daughter? Anyone feel like the camel?

For the last four weeks during the season of Advent, our series has been "The Glory of Christmas." Let's look at an overview.

VIDEO: CHURCH PROMO.

We have met Mary, the 31 week pregnant former soccer mom, who discovered God's plans for her, though disruptive for what she had for her life, helped her to remember to rely on the Good Shepherd. We met Joseph, who was radically underqualified for what he is about to do, which tells us that God uses all of us for His glory. And of course, method actor Shepherd who didn't bathed for a month who realized he was the keeper of the most important message that's ever been kept. Then Tony, the wiseman, who knew Who the center of the story, the glory of Christmas is: Jesus.

Tonight, we met Joel the Director.

VIDEO: THE DIRECTOR

An aspect of the glory of Christmas is that everybody can be the star in the Christmas story. To be clear, this is not about everybody who plays getting a participation trophy without actually being on the winning team. Rather, this is simply about literally doing what the star in the Christmas story did: shine bright in a dark setting and point people to the Savior. In a sense, we get to be His star that points people to THE STAR: Jesus, the true Glory of Christmas.

Have you ever noticed the descriptor of the star in the Christmas story? From Matthew's account, we read:

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? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."¹

The star pointing others to the Savior is described as the Savior's star. It was "his" star that rose in the sky and pointed those seeking Jesus to the place where Jesus

¹ Matthew 2:1-2 (ESV)

could be found. From a certain point of view, the star in the sky is like the director of the story. The director gives direction in such a way that everyone knows their place to best point the audience to the main point of the story. Once the director plays out that role, all that is left is for God to do what God does. Matthew goes on to quote Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount about being illumination in a dark setting that points the way to others.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.²

"Joel", our director from the video, did just what the Christmas star is meant to do. He did what he could to put everything and everybody in the story in their places so they could shine on the Savior in a way that everybody saw Jesus. That is what a director is supposed to do: make sure the lights shine on the true star at the center of the story. Jesus is the center of the glory of Christmas. And yet, everybody can be "His" star.

It is worth noting that playing the role of "His" star means continuing to shine and guide those seeking the Savior all the way until they find Him. The star in the story did not stop shining and guiding the wise men in verse 2. The star continued shining the way to Jesus while the journey was being made by the wise men.

After listening to the king, they 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 worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.³

People seek the Savior at different paces in life.

Some people later in life realized that there was a star right above their heads all the time showing the way to the baby in a manger, and they had missed it.

Others have gotten themselves too busy, or they've "grown up" and no longer have the time or inclination to look or believe in such things.

While others are looking for His star and follow it to find the Bethlehem child.

For these people, being "His" star means not giving up on guiding others until their paths cross His. Letting our light shine before others so they can see how our lives consistently love others and bless others out of a motivation to love God with all our heart is how we shine for the Savior in a dark world. Our love, motivated by Jesus, is a light in a dark world that helps dispel darkness and point people to the hope, peace, joy, and love found in Him and Him alone as the Savior of the world. It is the good news of the Gospel that we share not only through our words, but also with our lives.

Norman Vincent Peale tells the story of one Christmas when he was 15 and his father, a physician turned minister, received a call from a brothel in the red light district. The madam had a girl who was dying and was calling for a minister. Quietly, his father explained to his mother where he was going and called Norman to get his coat. His

² Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)

³ Matthew 2:9-11 (ESV)

mother protested that he was too young to go to a place like that, but he said, "There's a lot of sin, sadness and despair in life and Norman can't be shielded from it forever."

Norman and his father walked through the snowy streets and came to the house where they were led upstairs to a young frail woman barely older than Norman. As his father sat on the edge of the bed, the girl whispered that she had come from a good Christian home and was sorry for the things she had done and the life she had led. "I've been so bad, so bad."

His father put his hands around the small hand of this girl and said, "There are no bad girls or boys, just ones who sometimes act badly. They are no bad girls or boys because God made you and God makes all things good. Do you believe in Jesus?" The girl nodded and then Norman's father led her to ask God for forgiveness.

Then he said, "God loves you, His child who has strayed, and has forgiven you and no matter when the time comes, He will take you to your heavenly home."

Peale wrote, "If I live to be 100, I will never forget the feeling of power and glory that came into that room as my father prayed. There were tears streaming down the faces of the women gathered there, and mine too, because every sordid thing, everything corrupt was simply swept away. There was beauty in the place of evil. The love born in Bethlehem was revealing itself again on a dark, dismal street in Cincinnati and nothing could withstand it. Nothing. So that was the gift I received that Christmas... that even among the sad and forlorn, no one can be lost because of past mistakes."

The glory of Christmas is that you get to be "His" star that helps illuminate a dark world as long as it takes for those who need to meet Jesus to do so. Many times, the lives we live, the words we say, the experiences we share with others are what God will use to shine a light on what is missing in someone else's life. God often does what God does when we make our lives available to burn bright for His glory and as a result, draw people to the One who we worship, adore, and follow as Savior and Lord.

As we live our lives as "His" stars, pointing people to the Messiah while shining brightly in whatever darkness God has placed us, we are on our way to being what is described in the Old Testament book of Daniel.

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.⁴

Our role as "His" stars will keep shining brightly throughout eternity as we keep pointing people to Him. This is an aspect of the glory of Christmas. We have a role in this story. We get to be "His" star that points to THE STAR.

May our lives and our words, our works and worship, all point people to Jesus. If we will be faithful to shine, Jesus will be faithful to save. We see this metaphor of being light in darkness and being used for the saving purposes of our Savior surfacing in the Bible over and over again as we read.

Ephesians 5:8 says:

for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.⁵

Jesus said in John 8:12:

⁴ Daniel 12:3 (ESV)

⁵ Ephesians 5:8 (ESV)

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”⁶

This Christmas, may we each experience an aspect of the glory of Christmas as we play the part of “His” star. May our lives shine bright and consistently until all whom we have the privilege and responsibility to help guide are able to find themselves in the presence of the One who came to save us: Christ Jesus.

There once was a good and kind man, generous to his family and upright in his dealings with others. But he didn’t believe in all of that incarnation stuff that churches proclaim at Christmas time. It just didn’t make sense and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just couldn’t swallow the Jesus story, about God coming to Earth as a man.

His wife asked if he would go with her and their children to the Christmas Eve service. He said, “I’m not going with you. I would feel like a hypocrite, for I do not believe. I’m going to stay home.” So, he stayed, and they went to the midnight service.

Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier and then he went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper.

Minutes later, he was startled by a thudding sound. Then another... and then another. At first, he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against the living room picture window. But when he went to the front door to investigate, he found a flock of birds huddled outside miserably in the snow. They’d been caught in the storm, and in a desperate search for shelter, they had tried to fly through his large window. That is what had been making the sound.

Well, he couldn’t let the poor creatures just lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter. All he would have to do is to direct the birds into the shelter.

Quickly, he put on a coat and boots, and he tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light so the birds would know the way in. But the birds did not come in.

So, he figured that food would entice them. He hurried back to the house and fetched some breadcrumbs. He sprinkled them on the snow, making a trail of food to the yellow-lighted wide open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds ignored the breadcrumbs, instead, they flapped around helplessly in the snow.

He tried catching them but could not. He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around and waving his arms. Instead, they scattered in every direction... every direction except into the warm lighted barn.

And that’s when he realized they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me. That I am not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how? Any move he made tended to frighten them and confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed because they feared him.

He thought to himself, if only I could be a bird and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to the safe warm ... to the safe warm barn. But I would have to be one of them so they could see... and hear... and understand. If only I could be a bird.

⁶ John 8:12 (ESV)

At that moment the church bells rang. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind, playing the glad tidings of Christmas.

And he sank to his knees in the snow... realizing that was exactly what Jesus did... for him... for you and me.