

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE STAR AND THE WISE MEN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24TH, 1882, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."—Matthew ii. 1, 2, 9, 10.

SEE, dear friends, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ even in his state of humiliation! He is born of lowly parents, laid in a manger, and wrapped in swaddling bands; but, lo! the principalities and powers in the heavenly places are in commotion. First, one angel descends to proclaim the advent of the new-born King, and suddenly there is with him a multitude of the heavenly host singing glory unto God. Nor was the commotion confined to the spirits above; for in the heavens which overhang this earth there is a stir. A star is deputed on behalf of all the stars, as if he were the envoy and plenipotentiary of all worlds to represent them before their King. This star is put in commission to wait upon the Lord, to be his herald to men afar off, his usher to conduct them to his presence, and his body-guard to sentinel his cradle. Earth, too, is stirred. Shepherds have come to pay the homage of simple-minded ones: with all love and joy they bow before the mysterious child; and after them from afar come the choice and flower of their generation, the most studious minds of the age. Making a long and difficult journey, they too at last arrive, the representatives of the Gentiles. Lo! the kings of Seba and Sheba offer gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Wise men, the leaders of their peoples, bow down before him, and pay homage to the Son of God. Wherever Christ is he is honourable. "Unto you that believe he is honour." In the day of small things, when the cause of God is denied entertainment, and is hidden away with things which are despised, it is still most glorious. Christ, though a child, is still King of kings; though among the oxen, he is still distinguished by his star.

Beloved friends, if wise men of old came to Jesus and worshipped, should not we come also? My intense desire this morning is that we all may pay homage to him of whom we sing, "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given." Let those of us who have long worshipped

worship anew with yet lowlier reverence and intenser love. And God grant—oh, that he would grant it!—that some who are far off from him spiritually, as the Magi were far off locally, may come to-day and ask, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have come to worship him.” May feet that have been accustomed to broad roads, but unaccustomed to the narrow path, this day pursue that way till they see Jesus, and bow before him with all their hearts, finding salvation in him. These wise men came naturally, traversing the desert; let us come spiritually, leaving our sins. These were guided by the sight of a star; let us be guided by faith in the divine Spirit, by the teaching of his word and all those blessed lights which the Lord uses to conduct men to himself. Only let us come to Jesus. It was well to come unto the babe Jesus, led by the feeble beams of a star; you shall find it still more blessed to come to him now that he is exalted in the highest heavens, and by his own light reveals his own perfect glory. Delay not, for this day he cries, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

This morning let us try to do three things. First, let us *gather light from this star*; secondly, let us *gather wisdom from these wise men*; and thirdly, let us *act as wise men helped by our own particular star*.

I. First, then, LET US GATHER LIGHT FROM THIS STAR. May the Spirit of the Lord enable us so to do.

I suppose you have each one his own imagination as to what this star was. It would seem to have been altogether supernatural, and not a star, or a comet of the ordinary kind. It was not a constellation, nor a singular conjunction of planets: there is nothing in the Scriptures to support such a conjecture. In all probability it was not a star in the sense in which we now speak of stars: for we find that it moved before the wise men, then suddenly disappeared, and again shone forth to move before them. It could not have been a star in the upper spheres like others, for such movements would not have been possible. Some have supposed that the wise men went in the direction in which the star shone forth in the heavens, and followed the changes of its position: but it could not in that case have been said that it stood over the place where the young child was. If the star was at its zenith over Bethlehem, it would have been in its zenith over Jerusalem too; for the distance is so small that it would not have been possible to observe any difference in the position of the star in the two places. It must have been a star occupying quite another sphere from that in which the planets revolve. We believe it to have been a luminous appearance in mid-air; probably akin to that which led the children of Israel through the wilderness, which was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Whether it was seen in the daylight or not we cannot tell. Chrysostom and the early fathers are wonderfully positive about many things which Scripture leaves in doubt, but as these eminent divines drew upon their imagination for their facts, we are not under bonds to follow them. They aver that this star was so bright as to be visible all day long. If so, we can imagine the wise men travelling day and night; but if it could be seen only by night, the picture before us grows far more singular and weird-like as we see these easterns quietly pursuing their star-lit way, resting *perforce* when the ~~sun~~ was up, but noiselessly

hurrying at night through slumbering lands. These questions are not of much importance to us, and therefore we will not dwell long upon them.

Only here is a first lesson: *if it should ever be that men should fail to preach the gospel, God can conduct souls to his Son by a star.* Ah! say not only by a star, but by a stone, a bird, a blade of grass, a drop of dew.

"Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere."

Therefore, despond not when you hear that one minister has ceased to preach the gospel, or that another is fighting against the vital truth of God. Their apostasy shall be to their own loss rather than to the hurt of Jesus and his church; and, sad though it be to see the lamps of the sanctuary put out, yet God is not dependent upon human lights, he is the Shekinah light of his own holy place. Mortal tongues, if they refuse to preach his word, shall have their places supplied by books in the running brooks and sermons in stones. The beam shall cry out of the wall, and the timber shall answer it. When chief priests and scribes have all gone out of the way, the Lord puts stars into commission, and once more in very deed the heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament is showing his handiwork. Sooner than lack speakers for the incarnate God, mountains and hills shall learn eloquence and break forth into testimony. Jehovah's message shall be made known to the utmost ends of the earth. God shall save his own elect; he shall give to Christ to see of the travail of his soul and to be satisfied. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Hallelujah!

Now, when the Lord does use a star to be his minister, what is the order of his ministry? We may learn by this enquiry what kind of ministry God would have ours to be if we are stars in his right hand. We also shine as lights in the world: let us see how to do it.

We notice, first, that star-preaching is *all about Christ*. We do not know what the colour of the star was, nor the shape of the star, nor to what magnitude it had attained; these items are not recorded, but what is recorded is of much more importance: the wise men said—"We have seen *his* star." Then the star which the Lord will use to lead men to Jesus must be Christ's own star. The faithful minister, like this star, belongs to Christ; he is Christ's own man in the most emphatic sense. Before we can expect to be made a blessing, dear friends, we must ourselves be blessed of the Lord. If we would cause others to belong to Jesus, we must belong wholly to Jesus ourselves. Every beam in that star shone forth for Jesus. It was *his* star, always, and only, and altogether. It shone not for itself, but only as *his* star: as such it was known and spoken of—"we have seen his star." As I have already said, there is no note taken of any peculiarity that it had except this one, that it was the star of the King. I wish that you and I, whatever our eccentricities or personalities may be, may never make so much of them as to attract men's attention to them. May people never dwell upon our attainments or our deficiencies, but may they always observe this one thing, that we are men of God, that we are ambassadors of Christ, that we are Christ's servants, and do not attempt to shine for ourselves, or to make ourselves conspicuous: but

that we labour to shine for him, that his way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all people. Brother, it is well for us to forget ourselves in our message, to sink ourselves in our Master. We know the names of several of the stars, yet they may each one envy that star which remains anonymous, but can never be forgotten because men who sought the King of Israel knew it as "*his* star." Though you be but a very little star, twinkling for Jesus; however feeble your light may be, be it plain that you are *his* star, so that if men wonder *what* you are, they may never wonder whose you are, for on your very forefront it shall be written, "Whose I am and whom I serve." God will not lead men to Christ by us unless we are Christ's heartily, wholly, unreservedly. In his temple our Lord uses no borrowed vessels; every bowl before the altar must be his own. It is not consistent with the glory of God for him to use borrowed vessels. He is not so poor as that comes to. This lesson is worthy of all acceptance. Are you in a hurry to preach, young man? Are you sure you are Christ's? Do you think it must be a fine thing to hold a company of people listening to your words? Have you looked at it in another light? Have you weighed the responsibility of having to speak as Christ would have you speak, and of yielding yourself in your entire personality to the utterance of the mind of God? You must be consecrated and concentrated if you hope to be used of the Lord. If you have one ray, or ten thousand rays, all must shine with the one design of guiding men to Jesus. You have nothing now to do with any object, subject, design, or endeavour, but Jesus only: in him, and for him, and to him must you live henceforth, or you will never be chosen of the Lord to conduct either wise men or babes to Jesus. See ye well to it that perfect consecration be yours.

Note next that true star-preaching *leads to Christ*. The star was Christ's star itself, but it also led others to Christ. It did this very much because it moved in that direction. It is a sad thing when a preacher is like a sign-post pointing the way but never following it on his own account. Such were those chief priests at Jerusalem: they could tell where Christ was born, but they never went to worship him; they were indifferent altogether to him and to his birth. The star that leads to Christ must always be going to Christ. Men are far better drawn by example than driven by exhortation. Personal piety alone can be owned of God to the production of piety in others. "Go," say you: but they will not go. Say "come," and lead the way: then they will come. Do not the sheep follow the shepherd? He who would lead others to Christ should go before them himself, having his face towards his Master, his eyes towards his Master, his steps toward his Master, his heart towards his Master. We are so to live that we may without boasting exhort those around us to have us for an example. Oh, that all who think themselves to be stars would themselves diligently move towards the Lord Jesus. The star in the east led wise men to Christ because it went that way itself: there is a wisdom in example which truly wise men are quick to perceive. This star had such an influence upon the chosen men that they could not but follow it: it charmed them across the desert. Such a charm may reside in you and in me, and we may exercise a powerful ministry over many hearts, being to them as loadstones, drawing them to the Lord

Jesus. Happy privilege! We would not merely show the road, but induce our neighbours to enter upon it. We read of one of old, not that they told him of Jesus, but that "they brought him to Jesus." We are not only to tell the story of the cross, but we are to persuade men to fly to the Crucified One for salvation. Did not the king in the parable say to his servants, "Compel them to come in." Assuredly he girds his own messengers with such a compelling power that men cannot hold out any longer, but must follow their lead and bow at the King's feet. The star did not draw, "as it were with a cart rope," nor by any force, material and physical; yet it drew these wise men from the remote east right to the manger of the new-born child. And so, though we have no arm of the law to help us, nor patronage, nor pomp of eloquence, nor parade of learning, yet we have a spiritual power by which we draw to Jesus thousands who are our joy and crown. The man sent of God comes forth from the divine presence permeated with a power which makes men turn to the Saviour and live. Oh! that such power might go forth from all God's ministers, yea, from all God's servants engaged in street-preaching, in Sunday-schools, in tract-visitation, and in every form of holy service. God uses those whose aim and intent it is to draw men to Christ. He puts his Spirit into them, by which Spirit they are helped to set forth the Lord Jesus as so lovely and desirable that men run to him and accept his glorious salvation. It is a small thing to shine, but it is a great thing to draw. Any cast-away may be brilliant; but only the real saint will be attractive for Jesus. I would not pray to be an orator, but I do pray to be a soul-winner. Do not aim, beloved brethren, at anything short of leading men to Jesus. Do not be satisfied to lead them to orthodox doctrine, or merely to bring them to a belief in those views which you hold to be Scriptural, valuable as that may be. It is to the person of the incarnate God that we must bring them; to his feet we must conduct them that they may worship him: our mission is not accomplished, it is a total failure, unless we conduct our hearers to the house where Jesus dwells, and then stand over them, keeping watch over their souls for Jesu's sake.

Once more, the star which God used in this case was a star that *stopped at Jesus*: it went before the wise men till it brought them to Jesus, and then it stood still over the place where the young child was. I admire the manner of this star. There are remarkable stars in the theological sky at the present time: they have led men to Jesus, so they say, and now they lead them into regions beyond, of yet undeveloped thought. The gospel of the Puritans is "old-fashioned"; these men have discovered that it is unsuitable for the enlarged intellects of the times; and so these stars would guide us further still. To this order of wandering stars I do not belong myself, and I trust I never shall. Progress beyond the gospel I have no desire for. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When the star had come to the place where the young child was, it stood still: and so should the gracious mind become settled, fixed, immovable. The wise men knew where to find that star, and where to find the young child by it: so be it with us. Oh, you that have hitherto been diligent in leading souls to Christ, never indulge for a single moment the notion that you need a

broader philosophy or a deeper spirituality than are to be found in Jesus. Abide in him. Cry, "Oh God, my heart is fixed. My heart is fixed." There is nothing beyond Christ which is worth a moment's thought. Do not lose your paradise in Christ for another taste of that tree of knowledge-of-good-and-evil which ruined our first parents. Stick you to the old points: your one subject Christ, your one object to bring men to Christ, your one glory the glory of Christ. Standing by your Lord, and there alone, from this day to the last day, you will secure a happy, honoured, and holy life. They said of Greece after her fall that it had become so ruined that you might search for Greece in Greece and fail to find it: I fear I must say that some professed preachers of the gospel have roamed so far away from it that you cannot find the gospel in their gospel, nor Christ himself in the Christ they preach. So far have some diverged from the grand essential soul-saving truth beyond which no man ought to dare to think of going, that they retain nothing of Christianity but the name. All that is beyond truth is a lie; anything beyond revelation is at best a minor matter, and most probably is an old wives' fable, even though he may be of the masculine gender who invented it. Stand you to your colours you who hope to be used of the Lord. Abide so that men shall find you in twenty years' time shining for Jesus and pointing to the place where the Saviour is to be found, even as you are doing now. Let Jesus Christ be your ultimatum. Your work is done when you bring souls to Jesus, and help to keep them there, by being yourself "steadfast, unmovable." Be not carried away from the hope of your calling; but hold fast even the form of sound words, for it may be that in letting go the form you may lose the substance also.

II. Now that we have somewhat rejoiced in the light of the star, let us see if we can GATHER WISDOM FROM THE WISE MEN. Perhaps you have heard the "much speaking" of tradition as to who they were, whence they came, and how they travelled. In the Greek church, I believe, they know their number, their names, the character of their retinue, and what kind of ornaments were on their dromedaries' necks. Details which are not found in the word of God you may believe or not, at your pleasure, and you will be wise if your pleasure is not to believe too much. We only know that they were Magi, wise men from the East, possibly of the old Parsee religion—watchers if not worshippers of the stars. We will not speculate about them, but learn from them.

They did not content themselves with admiring the star and comparing it with other stars, and taking notes as to the exact date of its appearance, and how many times it twinkled, and when it moved, and all that; but *they practically used the teaching of the star*. Many are hearers and admirers of God's servants, but they are not wise enough to make fit and proper use of the preaching. They notice the peculiarity of the preacher's language, how much he is like one divine, how much he is unlike another; whether he coughs too often, or speaks too much in his throat; whether he is too loud or too low; whether he has not a provincial tone, whether there may not be about him a commonness of speech approaching to vulgarity; or, on the other hand, whether he may not be too florid in his diction. Such fooleries as these are the constant observations of men for whose souls we labour. They are perishing, and yet toying with such small matters.

With many it is all they go to the house of God for: to criticise in this paltry fashion. I have even seen them come to this place with opera glasses, as if they came hither to inspect an actor who lived and laboured to amuse their leisure hours. Such is the sport of fools; but these were wise men, and therefore practical men. They did not become star-gazers, and stop at the point of admiring the remarkable star; but they said, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." They set out at once to find the new-born King, of whose coming the star was the signal. Oh, my dear hearers, how I wish that you were all wise in this same manner! I would sooner preach the dullest sermon that was ever preached than preach the most brilliant that was ever spoken if I could by that poor sermon lead you quite away from myself to seek the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the one thing I care about. Will you never gratify me by enquiring after my Lord and Master? I long to hear you say, "What is the man talking about? He speaks about a Saviour; we will have that Saviour for ourselves. He talks about pardon through the blood of Christ; he speaks about God coming down among men to save them; we will find out if there is any reality in this pardon, any truth in this salvation. We will seek Jesus, and find for ourselves the blessings which are reported to be laid up in him." If I heard you all saying this I should be ready to die of joy.

Is not this a good day on which to set out to find your Saviour? Some of you that have postponed it long, would it not be well to set out at once ere this expiring year has seen its last day? These wise men appear to have set out as soon as they discovered the star: they were not among those who have time to waste in needless delays. "There is the star," said they; "away we go beneath its guidance. We are not satisfied with a star, we go to find the King whose star it is!" And so they set out to find Christ immediately and resolutely.

Being wise men, *they persevered in their search after him*. We cannot tell how far they journeyed. Travelling was extremely difficult in those times. There were hostile tribes to avoid, the broad rivers of the Tigris and the Euphrates to cross, and trackless deserts to penetrate; but they made nothing of difficulty or danger. They set out for Jerusalem, and to Jerusalem they came, seeking the King of the Jews. If it be true that God has taken upon himself our nature, we ought to resolve to find him, let it cost what it may. If we must circumnavigate the globe to find a Saviour, the distance and the expense ought to be nothing so long as we may but reach him. Were the Christ in the bowels of the earth, or in the heights of heaven we ought not to rest till we come at him. Everything that was necessary for their expedition the wise men soon gathered together, regardless of expense; and off they went following the star that they might discover the Prince of the kings of the earth.

At length they came to Jerusalem, and here new trials awaited them. It must have been a great trouble to them when they asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" and the people shook their heads as if they thought the question an idle one. Neither rich nor poor in the metropolitan city knew anything of Israel's King. The ribald

multitude replied, "Herod is king of the Jews. Mind how you speak of another king, or your head may have to answer for it. The tyrant brooks no rival." The wise men must have been more astonished still when they found that Herod was troubled. They were glad to think that he was born who was to usher in the age of gold; but Herod's face grew blacker than ever at the bare mention of a king of the Jews. His eyes flashed, and a thunder-cloud was upon his brow; a dark deed of murder will come of it, though for the moment he conceals his malice. There is tumult all through the streets of Jerusalem, for no man knows what grim Herod may do now that he has been roused by the question, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Thus there was a ferment in Jerusalem, beginning at the palace; but this did not deter the wise men from their search for the promised Prince. They did not pack up their bales and go back and say, "It is useless to try to discover this questionable personage who is unknown even in the country of which he is King, and who appears to be terribly unwelcome to those who are to be his subjects. We must leave to another day the solution of the question: 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?'"

These earnest-minded seekers were not dispirited by the clergy and the learned men when they came together. To the chief priests and scribes the question was put, and they answered the enquiry as to where Christ would be born, but not a mother's son among them would go with the wise men to find this new-born King. Strange apathy! Alas, how common! Those who should have been leaders were no leaders; they would not even be followers of that which is good, for they had no heart towards Christ. The wise men rose superior to this serious discouragement. If the clergy would not help them they would go to Jesus by themselves. Oh, dear friend, if you are wise you will say, "I will find Christ alone if none will join me: if I dig to the centre, I will find him; if I fly to the sun, I will find him; if all men put me off, I will find him; if the ministers of the gospel appear indifferent to me, I will find him: the kingdom of heaven of old suffered violence, and the violent took it by force, and so will I." The first Christians had to leave all the authorized teachers of the day behind, and to come out by themselves: it will be no strange thing if you should have to do the same. Happy will it be if you are determined to go through floods and flames to find Christ; for he will be found of you. Thus these men were wise because, having started on the search, they persevered in it till they found the Lord and worshipped him.

Notice that they were wise because, when they again saw the star, "*they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*" While enquiring among the priests at Jerusalem they were perplexed, but when the star shone out again, they were at ease and full of joy: this joy they expressed, so that the evangelist recorded it. In these days very wise people think it necessary to repress all emotion, and appear like men of stone or ice. No matter what happens, they are stoical, and raised far above the enthusiasm of the vulgar. It is wonderful how fashions change, and folly stands for philosophy. But these wise men were children enough to be glad when their perplexity was over, and the clear light shone

forth. It is a good sign when a man is not ashamed to be happy because he hears a plain, unmistakable testimony for the Lord Jesus. It is good to see the great man come down from his pedestal, and, like a little child, rejoice to hear the simple story of the cross. Give me the hearer who looks not for fineries, but cries out, "Lead me to Jesus. I want a guide to Jesus, and nothing else will suit me." Why, truly, if men did but know the value of things they would rejoice more to see a preacher of the gospel than a king. If the feet of the heralds of salvation be blessed, how much more their tongues when they tell out the tidings of a Saviour. These wise men, with all their mystic learning, were not ashamed to rejoice because a little star lent them its beams to conduct them to Jesus. We unite with them in rejoicing over a clear gospel ministry. For us all else is darkness, sorrow, and vexation of spirit; but that which leads us to our own glorious Lord is spirit, and light, and life. Better the sun should not shine than that a clear gospel should not be preached. We reckon that a country flourishes or decays according as gospel light is revealed or withdrawn.

Now follow these wise men a little further. They have come to the house where the young child is. What will they do? Will they stand looking at the star? No: *they enter in*. The star stands still, but they are not afraid to lose its radiance, and behold the Sun of righteousness. They did not cry, "We see the star, and that is enough for us; we have followed the star, and it is all we need to do." Not at all. They lift the latch, and enter the lowly residence of the babe. They see the star no longer, and they have no need to see it, for there is he that is born King of the Jews. Now the true Light has shone upon them from the face of the child; they behold the incarnate God. Oh, friends! how wise you will be if, when you have been led to Christ by any man, you do not rest in his leadership, but must see Christ for yourselves. How much I long that you may enter into the fellowship of the mystery, pass through the door, and come and behold the young child, and bow before him. Our woe is that so many are so unwise. We are only their guides, but they are apt to make us their end. We point the way, but they do not follow the road; they stand gazing upon us. The star is gone; it did its work, and passed away: Jesus remains, and the wise men live in him. Will any of you be so foolish as to think only of the dying preacher, and forget the ever-living Saviour? Come, be wise, and hasten to your Lord at once.

These men were wise, last of all—and I commend their example to you—because when they saw the child *they worshipped*. Theirs was not curiosity gratified, but devotion exercised. We, too, must worship the Saviour, or we shall never be saved by him. He has not come to put away our sins, and yet to leave us ungodly and self-willed. Oh you that have never worshipped the Christ of God, may you be led to do so at once! He is God over all, blessed for ever, adore him! Was God ever seen in such a worshipful form before? Behold he bows the heavens; he rides upon the wings of the wind; he scatters flames of fire; he speaks, and his dread artillery shakes the hills: you worship in terror. Who would not adore the great and terrible Jehovah? But is it not much better to behold him here, allied to your nature, wrapped like other children in swaddling clothes, tender, feeble, next akin to your own

self? Will you not worship God when he thus comes down to you and becomes your brother, born for your salvation? Here nature itself suggests worship: O may grace produce it! Let us hasten to worship where shepherds and wise men and angels have led the way.

Here let my sermon come to a pause even as the star did. Enter the house and worship! Forget the preacher. Let the starlight shine for other eyes. Jesus was born that you might be born again. He lived that you might live. He died that you might die to sin. He is risen, and to-day he maketh intercession for transgressors that they may be reconciled to God through him. Come, then; believe, trust, rejoice, adore! If you have neither gold, frankincense, nor myrrh, bring your faith, your love, your repentance, and falling down before the Son of God pay him the reverence of your hearts.

III. And now I turn to my third and last point, which is this: **LET US ACT AS WISE MEN UNDER THE LIGHT OF OUR STAR.** We too have received light to lead us to the Saviour: I might say that for us many stars have shone to that blessed end. I will, however, on this point content myself with asking questions.

Do you not think that there is some light for you in your particular vocation, some call from God in your calling? Listen to me, and then listen to God. These men were watchers of the stars; therefore a star was used to call them. Certain other men soon after were fishermen; and by means of an amazing take of fish the Lord Jesus made them aware of his superior power, and then he called them to become fishers of men. For a star-gazer a star; for a fisherman a fish. The Master-Fisher hath a bait for each one of his elect, and oftentimes he selects a point in their own calling to be the barb of the hook. Were you busy yesterday at your counter? Did you hear no voice saying "Buy the truth and sell it not"? When you closed the shop last night did you not bethink yourself that soon you must close it for the last time? Do you make bread? and do you never ask yourself, "Has my soul eaten the bread of heaven?" Are you a farmer? do you till the soil? Has God never spoken to you by those furrowed fields and these changing seasons, and made you wish that your heart might be tilled and sown? Listen! God is speaking! Hear, ye deaf; for there are voices everywhere calling you to heaven. You need not go miles about to find a link between you and everlasting mercy: the telegraphic wires are on either side of the road, God and human souls are near each other. How I wish that your common vocation would be viewed by you as concealing within itself the door to your high vocation. Oh that the Holy Spirit would turn your favourite pursuits into opportunities for his gracious work upon you. If not among the stars, yet among the flowers of the garden, or the cattle of the hills, or the waves of the sea may he find a net in which to enclose you for Christ. I wish that those of you who conclude that your calling could never draw you to Christ would make a point of seeing whether it might not be so. We are to learn from ants, and swallows, and cranes, and conies; surely we need never be short of tutors. It did seem that a star was an unlikely thing to head a procession of eastern sages, and yet it was the best guide that could be found; and so it may seem that your trade is an unlikely thing to bring you to Jesus, and yet the Lord may so use it. There may be a

message from the Lord to thee in many a left-handed providence; a voice for wisdom may come to thee from the mouth of an ass; a call to a holy life may startle thee from a bush, a warning may flash upon thee from a wall, or a vision may impress thee in the silence of night when deep sleep falleth upon men. Only be thou ready to hear and God will find a way of speaking to thee. Answer the question as the wise men would have answered it, and say, "Yes, in our calling there is a call to Christ."

Then, again, *what should you and I do better in this life than seek after Christ!* The wise men thought all other pursuits of small account compared with this. "Who is going to attend to that observatory and watch the rest of the stars?" They shake their heads, and say they do not know: these things must wait; they have seen *his* star, and they are going to worship him. But who will attend to their wives and families, and all besides, while they make this long journey? They reply that every lesser thing must be subordinate to the highest thing. Matters must be taken in proportion, and the search after the King of the Jews, who is the desire of all nations, is so out of all proportion great that all the rest must go. Are not you, also, wise enough to judge in this sensible fashion? Do you not think, dear friends, it would be well to use all to-morrow in seeking Jesus? It will be a leisure day, could you spend it better than in seeking your Redeemer? If you were to take a week, and give it wholly to your own soul, and to seeking Christ, would it not be well spent? How can you live with your soul in jeopardy? Oh that you would say, "I must get this matter right; it is an all-important business, and I must see it secure." This would be no more than common-sense. If you are driving, and a trace is broken, do you not stop the horse, and set the harness right? How, then, can you go on with the chariot of life when all its harness is out of order, and a fall means eternal ruin? If you will stop driving to arrange a buckle for fear of accident, I would beg of you to stop anything and everything to see to the safety of your soul. See how the engineer looks to the safety-valve: are you content to run more desperate risks? If your house were not insured, and you carried on a hazardous trade, the probability is you would feel extremely anxious until you had arranged that matter: but your soul is uninsured, and it may burn for ever,—will you not give heed to it? I beseech you be just to yourself,—kind to yourself. Oh! see to your eternal well-being. You are not certain that you will get home to dinner to-day. Life is frail as a cob-web. You may be in hell before yon clock strikes one! Remember that. There is not a step between you and everlasting destruction from the presence of God if you are as yet unregenerate; and your only hope is to find the Saviour, trust the Saviour, obey the Saviour. Wherefore, like these wise men, put everything on one side, and set out now upon an earnest, resolute, persevering endeavour to find Jesus. I was about to say—resolve to find Jesus, or to die; but I will change the words, and say—resolve to find him, and live.

When we do come near to Jesus, let us ask ourselves this question, "*Do we see more in Jesus than other people do?*" for if we do, we are God's elect, taught of God, illuminated by his Spirit. We read in the Scriptures that when these wise men saw the young child they fell down

and worshipped him. Other people might have come in and seen the child, and said, "Many children are as interesting as this poor woman's babe." Ay, but as these men looked, they *saw*: all eyes are not so blessed. Eyes that see are gifts from the All-seeing One. Carnal eyes are blind; but these men saw the Infinite in the infant; the Godhead gleaming through the manhood; the glory hiding beneath the swaddling bands. Undoubtedly there was a spiritual splendour about this matchless child! We read that Moses' father and mother saw that he was a "goodly child"; they saw he was "fair unto God," says the original. But when these elect men saw that holy thing which is called the Son of the Highest, they discovered in him a glory all unknown before. Then was his star in the ascendant to them: he became their all in all, and they worshipped with all their hearts. Have you discovered such glory in Christ? "Oh!" says one, "you are always harping upon Christ and his glory. You are a man of one idea!" Precisely so. My one idea is that he is "altogether lovely," and that there is nothing out of heaven nor in heaven that can be compared with him even in his lowest and weakest estate. Have you ever seen as much as that in Jesus? If so, you are the Lord's; go you, and rejoice in him. If not, pray God to open your eyes until, like the wise men, you see and worship.

Lastly, learn from these wise men that when they worshipped they did not permit it to be a mere empty-handed adoration. Ask yourself, "*What shall I render unto the Lord?*" Bowing before the young child, they offered "gold, frankincense and myrrh," the best of metals and the best of spices; an offering to the King of gold; an offering to the priest of frankincense; an offering to the child of myrrh. Wise men are liberal men. Consecration is the best education. To-day it is thought to be wise to be always receiving; but the Saviour said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." God judges our hearts by that which spontaneously comes from them: hence the sweet cane bought with money is acceptable to him when given freely. He doth not tax his saints or weary them with incense; but he delights to see in them that true love which cannot express itself in mere words, but must use gold and myrrh, works of love and deeds of self-denial, to be the emblems of its gratitude. Brothers, you will never get into the heart of happiness till you become unselfish and generous; you have but chewed the husks of religion which are often bitter, you have never eaten of the sweet kernel until you have felt the love of God constraining you to make sacrifice. There is nothing in the true believer's power which he would not do for his Lord: nothing in our substance which we would not give to him, nothing in ourselves which we would not devote to his service.

God give to you all grace to come to Jesus, even though it be by the starlight of this sermon, for his love's sake! Amen.

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