

**Holy Trinity Sunningdale**  
**Sunday December 27, 2020**  
**Reading – Matthew 2:1-12**

Happy Christmas to you and your families!

The story of Christmas has been told so many times. I wonder how many times you have heard it and yet, you are here this morning to hear it again! Training to be a teacher, I was told that to keep the attention of the children, I must use stories. When I began to lead trainings and deliver workshops, I realised how important it is to use stories to hold the attention of my participants or my listeners. And when I was training for ministry, many books I read on preaching and sermons highlighted the important role stories play in keeping people engaged in what I am saying.

It is therefore very interesting and quite exciting for me to re-discover year after year that God comes to us at Christmas as a story. Of course, we connect with him day to day through stories in the Bible and the sharing of personal stories. I wonder why stories are so important? Especially at Christmas in the kind of year like 2020. I think that it is only stories that can stretch our imaginations enough for us to begin to be amazed by God's coming down to earth in Jesus. More than at any other time, the central message of the Christmas story is not only relevant but very much needed. The message that tells us that at Christmas love has come into a loveless world for love is at the heart of the universe. Our God is love!

The story read to us today is the visit of the wise men from the east to Jesus. Matthew did not tell us much about the wise men. We don't know where they came from and how many they were. How did they even know that the star represented the Messiah? What the story in Matthew does is to stretch our imagination, and we begin to think that they must have been quite rich and important to be able to undertake the perilous journey and give such expensive gifts. We think, they certainly believed that the sign they were witnessing was the stuff for kings which must be why they called on Herod first. But whatever their initial misconceptions, they recognised Christ when they found him. As they rise from their worship and make their joyful way out of the story they had truly played their part in witnessing to the whole world the way in which God plans to free the universe and bring it into union with himself.

These men travelled thousands of miles to see the King of the Jews. When they finally found him, they responded with joy, worship and gifts. How different from the approach we often take today. We expect God to come looking for us, to explain himself, prove who he is, and give us gifts. The lesson in this story is that those who are wise still seek and worship Jesus, not for what they can get but for who he is.

This morning, I want share with you the Christmas story as presented in the Word for Today's meditation for Christmas Day based on the response of the wise men to Jesus. "They saw the young child ... and fell down, and worshipped him." Matthew 2:11.

He was born in the humblest of settings, yet heaven above was filled with the songs of angels. His birthplace was a cattle shed, yet a star brought the rich and noble from thousands of miles away to worship him. His birth was contrary to the laws of life and his death was contrary to the laws of death, yet no miracle is greater than his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection and his teachings.

He had no cornfields or fisheries, yet he spread a table for 5,000 and had bread and fish to spare. He never stood on expensive carpeting, yet he walked on the waters and they supported him. His crucifixion was the crime of crimes, yet from God's perspective no less a price could have made possible our redemption.

When he died, few mourned his passing, yet God held a black cape over the sun. Those who crucified him did not tremble at what they'd done, yet the earth shook under them. Sin never touched him, corruption could not get hold of his body, the soil that was reddened with his blood could not claim his dust.

For over three years, he preached the Gospel. He wrote no book, he had no headquarters and he built no organisation. Yet, two thousand years later, he's the central figure of human history, the perpetual theme of all preaching, the pivot around which the ages revolve and the only redeemer of the human race.

At this season of celebration and gift-giving, let us join the wise men who fell down and worship him. This morning, like the wise men, let us bend the knees of our hearts before the King of kings and the Lord of lords and offer him the gifts of our lives. Amen.

**Dolapo Ogunbawo**

## Prayers

Our prayer is responsorial.

Lord arise and shine

**Make known your glory**

God of wonder and of light, by the guiding of a star the wise men came to worship your Son. May your church be a beacon to draw all people to kneel at your presence. Give grace to all who share your name to proclaim your praise.

Lord arise and shine

**Make known your glory**

God of power and might, news of your Christ-child's birth filled Herod with fear. Transform the hearts of all in political office to serve your Kingdom with joy and with the offering of gold enable them to place before you all their power and aspiration.

Lord arise and shine

**Make known your glory**

God of mystery and wisdom, in your Son you make known the purpose of your love. Bless our homes and those with whom we share joy and laughter, pains and sorrows. United in a common humanity, may we come to share the promises of Christ.

Lord arise and shine

**Make known your glory**

God of healing and restoration, we seek your anointing presence on all who suffer, all who are ill and all who are anxious. We thank you, Father God, that through the many trials and pains of 2020, you are with us, we are held in your hands and your love has never wavered. You are still our King, our provider and our refuge. May our hearts thrill and rejoice in you always.

Lord arise and shine

**Make known your glory**

God of glory, your radiance fills the heavens and our prayers rise to you like incense. Hear us as we lay before you those who have died in faith and fear. May we all come to see the dawning light of your glory.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**