

I.

What? – Follow a star? That’s what the “wise men” did for many days. They left behind the comforts of home, families, and friends to make a dangerous journey westward, following a star. Some may say, “What do you expect? These men were star-gazers to begin with. They were fascinated by the appearance of such a bright star where they had never seen one before!”

Sure, these wise men probably knew a great deal about astronomy; but they were much more than astronomers. These wise men were followers of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Remember what they said to King Herod when they got to Jerusalem: **“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”** No doubt they had reference to the prophecy of that Old Testament astronomer, Balaam, who prophesied concerning the star of Judah in Numbers, chapter 24.

The wise men were probably strong-minded leaders, who were regarded very highly in their own cities and countries. They were accustomed to giving orders, rather than taking them. Yet they all followed that star! They were aware of the O.T. word of God concerning their Savior, and they followed its guidance. Later, when God warned them in a dream that they should **“not return to Herod,”** they did not question the Lord’s word to them, but took **“another way”** home. (Mt. 2:12)

Two thousand years after the first Epiphany of Jesus Christ, He still speaks to us as He did to the wise men. What he says is very simple: **“Follow Me!”** Following Him is what it means to be a Christian. Whatever you want to DO or BE in this life, you need to decide one thing above all else. Each day you need to make the decision all over again: “What shall I do with my Savior today?” As you decide that, your pathway in life unfolds for you.

Led by His gracious invitation, you may choose to follow Him as the wise men did, or as did Matthew, Philip, Peter, and Paul. Or you may choose NOT to follow Him, like the multitudes who followed another voice. That other voice has also been calling for followers down through the centuries. The result is that those who have chosen NOT to follow

Christ, greatly outnumber those who do!

II.

But if the great majority of people do not follow the star of Jesus, why should we? If we were to ask Noah why he continued to obey the Word of God when all the world went the other way, what would he say?

He would answer from Scripture: "Because I found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and in Him was salvation; but apart from Him was death and destruction." The worldwide flood proved that Noah was right, and the whole world was wrong!

What would Lot, Abraham's nephew say about the reliability of the voice of the majority? He would tell us that to follow the majority rather than the voice of God is to prefer "fire and brimstone" to life! The terrible destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah proved that Lot was right!

The wise men were Gentiles. Why should they have gone to worship Jesus, the King of the Jews, when no one else in Herod's Jerusalem would do that?

Why did Peter and the twelve continue to follow Jesus, when after his sermon in the synagogue of Capernaum, we read that "**many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more**"? Why? Peter answers: "**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**" (John 6)

You see, whether or not we follow Christ, is a matter of life and death! Following Christ is safety for sinners like us. Following anyone or anything else is death. And the majority has never been any good at making the right moral and spiritual decisions.

But isn't it hard to think of ourselves facing life and death decisions every day? Don't we tend to think that the life and death decisions are being made in the war-torn areas of the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan? We need to be reminded that we Christians are involved in a spiritual struggle with far great consequences than any political warfare.

To the extent that we are followers of Jesus Christ, our lives will be blessed, even when they are not easy to live. On the other hand, to the extent that we do NOT follow Christ, our day-to-day lives will lack real meaning and joy; and our burdens and sorrows will become magnified!

You younger children, isn't it true that you have trouble and sadness when you refuse to follow the commands of your Savior when He tells you to **"obey your parents in all things"** – tell the truth, confess your sins, and love one another? And what about us, the "older" children of God? Jesus says, **"Come unto Me"** with your sins and troubles; **"be thankful," "search the Scriptures," "Pray!" "Love one another,"** and so on. When our lives become empty, troubled and frustrated, it is because we do NOT come to Him with our sins, we are NOT thankful, we do NOT search the Scriptures, we do NOT pray, and we do NOT love one another.

Why does our Savior command us to follow Him? Does He only want to burden us with His commands? Why does He want us to hear His Word whenever we have opportunity? Is it because He wants to deprive us of Sunday morning "sack-time," and moments of fun and pleasure for our bodies?

You know the answer. He is **"the Good Shepherd"** of His sheep. He leads us **"in the paths of righteousness"** unto everlasting life **"for His name's sake."** Why then should we follow that Star? Because He is the Lover of our souls. It is our great Friend from heaven Who says to us, **"Come, follow Me"!**

III.

So we may ask Him: Where, Lord, do You lead me? When we were children playing "Follow the Leader," we were supposed to follow wherever our leader led us. But didn't we sometimes wonder if our leader knew where HE was going? Jesus leads us only along the path that He Himself has already gone.

His is the path of humility, obedience to our God, and loving concern for others. If we ask, "Lord, how can we go where You have gone?" He answers: **"Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."** (1Tim.6:11) **"Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them who call on the lord out of a pure heart."** (2Tim. 2:22) This is what we call "sanctification." It is what Paul also called, **"Fighting the good fight of faith."** (1Tim. 6:12)

None of you needs to be told where to put such things as righteousness, godliness, faith, love, and patience into practice. You are in the best position to know the where each day.

But don't let yourself think that it is something small and insignificant to be a follower of your Lord Jesus. The Good Shepherd asks it of His sheep because He loves us. May we then be taught by the Spirit of Christ to say from our hearts with the hymnwriter: **"Savior, I follow on, guided by Thee."**

IV.

But how far shall we follow that Star? The wise men certainly did not know how far they would have to follow the star of Bethlehem. As they grew tired of the long journey, they probably prayed much more near the end than at the beginning. Which is harder for those of you who run marathons – to begin a 10K run or to finish it? Which is harder – to begin building a house or to finish it? To begin a marriage or continue in it? You know. It's the same with almost everything we set out to do.

In the beginning we may be all excited about the adventure, the challenge, or the idea. But then comes all the work, revision, frustration, and disappointments. We may grow tired of it all. We become distracted by everything that requires less effort to enjoy. What a pity when we fail to finish the good work we have started. For the reward has always belonged to the one who finishes, not the one who starts.

Shall we follow our Savior only as long as it is easy for us, only as long as we do not suffer, only when it is convenient? Wouldn't we rather say with the Apostle Paul at the end of our earthly lives: **"I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing."** (2Tim. 4:7-8)

Therefore we pray:

"Holy Jesus, every day
keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds, Thy glory hide." Amen.