

## **Jesus, The Star of Bethlehem (A Christmas Message)**

**A Christmas Message reminding ourselves about the hope and beauty of the Bethlehem Star and all that this means for the world in terms of the incarnation.**

**25/12/20**

**I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.**

**Amen.**

**Let us pray:**

**O God, who haste made this most holy night to shine with the radiance of the true Light; grant, we beseech thee, that as we have known upon earth the mystery of that Light, so in heaven we may reach the full fruition of his joys; through thy same Son, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.**

**Amen.**

The Lord be with you.

An extract from today's Gospel reading:

*"The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

(John 1: 14)

This has been a rough year.

Many of us have lost loved ones, including myself. If you have been lucky enough not to have lost a loved one, I am sure that you are aware of someone who has? Furthermore, you may have lost your means of income, suffered from psychological stress or even worse. This year, thanks to Covid-19 and all of its consequences, has been a year of note and, sadly, it looks to continue for the foreseeable future.

When Revd Reeva contacted me a few days ago and asked me to stand in for the Christmas service, I was stunned by the news at the same time of the Bethlehem Star. I knew immediately that I had to somehow incorporate the Bethlehem Star into my Christmas message this morning.

For those of you who have missed the news recently, there has been an unusual aligning of two planets in our solar system, namely Jupiter and Saturn, which has created a rather bright star in the north-west evening sky. This occasion, in astronomy terms, is known as the Great Conjunction. This is a rare event and some scientists think that this may resemble the biblical Star of Bethlehem, also known as the Christmas Star, according to the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration – NASA.

Over the first three weeks of December, Jupiter and Saturn gradually came together and on the December the 21<sup>st</sup> seemed to amalgamate from the viewpoint of Earth, creating one giant star. This is an extremely rare event and only happens every twenty years. However, the last time these two giant planets were so close together was in 1623 and also in 1226.

Theologians have speculated that this same Great Conjunction that we witnessed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December may have in fact been the same Star of Bethlehem that guided the Three Wise Men from the east in the Gospel of Matthew.

*“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east.”*

(Matthew 2:2)

Now I am no astronomer.

The Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn may well have been evident to the Three Wise Men some two thousand years ago or it may have been some other celestial event or star. We will never know.

What I do know is this.

That a few days before we celebrate the birth of our Lord, we are reminded of the promises of the incarnation of Christ here on earth with a celestial event of note that we were able to witness and celebrate here on earth.

The Great Conjunction that you and I witnessed here on earth on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December is a reminder to us of many things... (If you missed the actual event, please go to the St Paul's Facebook page and see the photograph that I posted recently of the two planets aligned creating huge light like a giant star)

Firstly, as I mentioned previously, the bright star reminds each of us as Christians of the incarnation of Christ in the world every Christmas. Just a reminder for all of us that the incarnation is the central Christian doctrine that God became flesh and that God assumed a human nature and became man in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the second person of the Trinity. Christ was truly God and truly man.

Secondly, the bright star that we all witnessed in the north-west sky on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December is also a reminder to us of God's promises to each and every one of us. God has promised each and every one of us grace and salvation through forgiveness of our sins and a place in His kingdom.

Thirdly, the bright star reminds us of the hope of the Gospel and the love of Jesus in our lives. Never before has this been so important to all of us in terms of what we have all recently experienced with the pandemic. Many of us have lost hope, many of us have struggled, many of us have forgotten about the promises of Christ... here we are reminded of the hope that Jesus gives all of us, no matter the circumstances that we find ourselves in. Like the bright star in the night sky, which is bigger than all of us, so too is Jesus bigger than our problems and fears.

Fourthly, the Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn is a reminder to us of the Light of Jesus Christ in our lives. Just as the bright star lights up the darkest universe, so too does Jesus bring light into our lives. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, our everything. His light is our light.

Fifthly, the great star is a reminder of our direction. For centuries people have looked to the stars for navigation and direction. Jesus should be our "north" on

our personal compass. He should be the direction in which we are seeking and following. His star becomes our guide for our lives for what is righteous and good.

I just love the verse from Micah and here I have an opportunity to squeeze it in!

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.”

(Micah: 6:8)

Lastly, what can we do to be a star this Christmas?

How can you and I honour the incarnation of Jesus today in the real world where things are tough and not so easy?

Take a moment and listen carefully to this...

***This Christmas...***

***End a quarrel.***

***Seek out a forgotten friend.***

***Dismiss suspicion, and replace it with trust.***

***Write a love letter.***

***Share some treasure.***

***Give a soft answer.***

***Keep a promise.***

***Find the time.***

***Forgo a grudge.***

***Forgive an enemy.***

***Listen.***

***Apologise if you were wrong.***

***Try to understand.***

***Examine your demands on others.***

***Think first of someone else.***

***Be kind.***

***Be gentle.***

***Appreciate.***

***Laugh a little.***

***Laugh a bit more.***

***Express your gratitude.***

***Gladden the heart of a child.***

***Welcome a stranger.***

***Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of Earth.***

***Speak your love.***

***Speak it again.***

***Speak it yet.***

***Once again.***

On behalf of Revd Reeva, Fr Isaias and myself, I wish you and your loved ones a blessed and beautiful Christmas.

Be the star. Always.

Amen.

Fr Darron.

