



**SERIES: A SEASON OF HOPE**

**SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD**

**Friday, December 25, 2020**

**Scripture: Matthew 2:9, John 8:12, Matthew 2:10, Ephesians 2:1, John 3:16, Luke 2:11**

**TITLE: The Greatest Gift**

Matthew 2:9 (ESV) says, “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.”

These wise men knew to follow the light of the star. The star was their guide to find this Messiah – the Savior. They knew it might lead them over desert, over mountains, through streams, but those obstructions didn’t matter. They were just part of the journey, when following the star. Just like the star was the guide for the wise men, so too Jesus Christ is our light and our guide for life.

If you read the Gospels, eight times Jesus is recorded, saying, “Follow me.” Eight times Jesus declares Himself as the One we must follow as His people. We are to say “No” to ourselves, and say “Yes” to Jesus and His calling.

In John 8:12, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

So many people today feel that following Jesus is restrictive. It’s oppressive. It’s contrary to our desires. Yes, it is contrary to our desires. Our natural desires are bent for total selfishness and self-destruction. But to say it’s restrictive and oppressive, I say, “Wrong.” It’s actually liberating and freeing. When we follow Christ as our guide in life, it’s freeing. In fact, Jesus said that He came, so people might have life to the fullest. Life to the fullest is a life following Christ.

**\*What is the result of this life of following Christ?**

Look at Matthew 2:10: “When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.”

When they saw the star they rejoiced. They knew it was leading them to their Salvation - To the

thing they've longed for: peace with God – Salvation - Hope and hope eternal. Jesus Christ – the light - would bring them true joy.

Today, Jesus is still the light and is still the true source of joy. But in order to experience joy, you must first be alive. Dead things don't experience joy, because they can't. They're dead.

Ephesians 2:1 (NLT) says, "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins."

You see, whether we like to acknowledge it or not, we are all born spiritually dead. You can't experience true joy – true peace - when you're dead. And dead people can't bring themselves back to life. They need a Savior, because they are sinners: Truly dead in their sin.

There are two kinds of people today: those who admit they're spiritually dead, in need of a Savior, and those who refuse to admit they're spiritually dead.

For those of us who admit that we're spiritually dead, there is no greater gift than the gift the world received that first Christmas Day.

John 3:16 (ESV) says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

We were all dead in our sins, but God in His love for us, offers us freely a gift of life through the light of the world: Jesus Christ. That's the true message of Christmas.

Luke 2:11 says, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

God, in His great love for us, sent Jesus Christ to Earth 2000 years ago, to save us from our sin. He sent Christ to bring us from death to life - From life in the darkness, to life in the light; from a life of slavery of sin, to a life of freedom in Christ, and life to the fullest.

It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you've done. It doesn't matter what anyone thinks of you. Today, because of Jesus Christ, the true light, you can experience true joy and peace with God, and with each other. But you have to admit you're spiritually dead – a sinner in need of a Savior. Admit this, and receive God's gift of Jesus Christ. Believe that Jesus Christ came into this world and lived a perfect life. Believe that He died on a cross, He was buried, and rose again.

God offers you this gift of Salvation freely, if you choose to receive it. That's why we celebrate Christmas. That's what Christmas is all about.

Merry Christmas.