

“Our Guiding Light”

Date: January 6, 2019

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: Matthew 2:1-12

Text: Epiphany

Themes: Discipleship; God’s guidance; Christ our example

Charlie Brown and Lucy are sitting outside on the grass one night, looking up into the sky full of stars. Charlie Brown tells Lucy he wants to believe there is one tiny star among all the millions of stars he can see that he can call his own, just as he is one person among the millions of people on earth. Charlie turns to Lucy and asks, “Does that make any sense?” Lucy replies, “Sure it does, Charlie Brown. It means you’re cracking up.”

The wise men from the East probably suffered some verbal abuse too, when they announced their plans to follow one bright star in the heavens, to wherever it would lead them. Others may have thought their long journey would prove futile, but the wise men persisted until it led them to the birth-place of the new-born king.

As we begin a new year, our thoughts naturally turn to the future. I think all of us are hoping that this new year will be better than the last one. And so I ask you, “Whose star do you follow?” Do you put your hopes in the politicians, or have you given up on them a long time ago?

Or, maybe you like to follow the stars of Hollywood and the field of entertainment. Or perhaps you begin every day looking at your horoscope. Maybe you follow the stars of astrology? All of us have something that we follow, and I wonder what, or who guides your life?

My sermon this week has to do with *following*. The wise men from the East followed a star, and it guided them to the One who would bring salvation to the world. The word we Christians use to describe that behavior is *discipleship*. To be a disciple of Jesus means *to follow Him*.

In a world that has lost its moral compass, Jesus is the one true way to know God's truth. Many people today are lost without a guidance system. Oh, they may have a geo-positioning device known as a GPS that allows them to tap into satellite technology which tells them exactly where they are on planet Earth. But when it comes to finding their position in relationship to God, many people are absolutely lost.

The Greek word for sin is hamartia; it literally means "to miss the mark." It's an analogy from archery. God sets the target, that is the standard for right behavior, and we take aim by the way we live our lives. Sin reveals we have missed the mark. We have not lived by God's standards. All of us, not just some of us, not just the really bad people, but all of us have missed the mark.

So, how do we find the mark; how do we hit the target more often and more accurately? The military now has lasers that attach to soldiers' weapons, so they can more accurately aim and hit their targets. That tiny beam of red light zeroes in on the enemy, and shows the soldier where they need to aim.

Jesus Christ is the moral laser that God has given to the world to help us zero in on our moral behavior. When we follow Jesus, putting into practice the things he taught and following his personal example, we are more likely to hit God's target. Obviously not by killing enemies, but by living the Gospel.

Jesus Christ shows us the way. He is the way, the truth and the life. Following Him leads to eternal life. In a world that has become more confused about right and wrong, we need to let the light of Jesus Christ shine in our lives. He is our guiding light to show us the way to live in this coming new year.

Lloyd C. Douglas was the author of the novel *The Robe*, which became a very popular movie several decades ago. Mr. Douglas lived in a boarding house when he was a student. He remembers that on the first floor of the boarding house lived a retired music teacher, who was in poor health and who was unable to leave his apartment.

Douglas and the music teacher developed a friendship and a daily ritual. Each morning Douglas would come down the steps from his apartment, open the music teacher's door and ask, "What's the good news?"

The music teacher would pick up his tuning fork; tap it on the side of his wheelchair and say, "*That's* middle C! It was middle C yesterday; it will be middle C tomorrow; and it will be middle C a thousand years from now. The tenor upstairs sings flat; the piano across the hall is out of tune, but *that*, my friend, is middle C!"

As we move through life we look for that place, and for those familiar bearings, those unchanging certainties, on which we can depend. In a world that is constantly changing, and changing faster now than at any other time in history, we need something to hang onto that will not change. It's hard to find in this world of ours.

Like driving through a fog bank at night, we peer into the New Year, wondering what's ahead of us. The future will undoubtedly have its share of bad news, damaged relationships and misfortune.

But in the midst of all this chaos, you can still depend on the light of Jesus Christ to shine brightly. He is the light of the world and He will show us the way. Scripture tells us the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. God is still with us and nothing can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing!

You can count on it. You can set your bearings by it. You can recalculate your GPS by it. For you and me, Jesus is middle C. He was middle C yesterday; He will be middle C tomorrow; and He will be middle C a thousand years from now. The world outside sings flat; the devil down the hall is out of tune. But, my friend, Jesus Christ is the middle C of the world. Do I hear an Amen?!

When we open our hearts and ask Jesus to be the GPS of our lives; when we choose to follow His star; when we allow Jesus to be our moral laser beam; then we will come closer to knowing and doing God's will.

In the coming of Jesus, we have seen God. Let us follow that light, our guiding light, just as the Wise Men did, so that we too may be wise. Amen? Amen!

