

Matthew Chapter 2 v 1 -18

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 December 2014

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Matthew in chapter 2, and read from verse 1 through to verse 18. Can I encourage you to stay for lunch, even if you've not prepared to come for lunch.

There's always plenty of food, so please don't feel you're imposing. If you haven't come prepared to stay for lunch, we'd love to continue to have fellowship with you. And just to say, I never thought I'd hear Richard say in the notices, put a present in Santa's sack from the front of this church building.

So, well done Richard. Well let's read together from God's Word. Remember last week we began looking at the three angelic visits that Joseph has.

So we looked at the first of those last week, and then we're going to look at the second of those angelic visits this week. So Matthew and chapter 2, beginning at verse 1.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?

[1 : 14] We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him. When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

In Bethlehem in Judea, they replied, For this is what the prophet has written, But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.

For out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel. Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him. After they had heard the king, they went on their way, And the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them, Until it stopped over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. And coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, And they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

[2 : 28] And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, They returned to their country by another route. When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.

Get up, he said. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, For Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, Where he stayed until the death of Herod.

And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet, Out of Egypt I called my son. When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, He was furious.

He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity, Who were two years old and under, In accordance with the time he'd learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled.

A voice is heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, And refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more.

[3 : 35] Well, if the children at Sunday school and creche would like to go out now, please. Thank you. So if you've got a Bible there to hand, Then if you turn to Matthew 2, That will be something of a help to you, I'm sure, As we think about this second angelic visit To Joseph, The husband of Mary.

Many years ago, When I was, I think about 11 or so, My parents took me and my brother to Alton Towers, A theme park in the Midlands.

Perhaps the only time I think we've been. And I have to admit that At that theme park, I was a bit of a sissy, Because all the big roller coasters And all the big rides, I was too scared to go on them.

And my younger brother and my dad Had to go on all those big rides. And I didn't. I think I remember, I seem to remember I was brave enough To go down the water splash.

But that was about the limit Of my courage at the time. Those great roller coasters Frightened me. Well, I don't know whether you're somebody who enjoys Roller coaster rides Or not.

[4 : 50] But let's be honest, There are times in our lives When we feel as if our life, We're living on a roller coaster. We feel as if we're going up and down.

It may well be, of course, That in your life, Even at this time, You feel as if you're on the ascent. Things are going well for you. You're sort of rising up higher. Perhaps in your career, In your job, Or in your education.

Things are going well. You're being promoted and so on. It may be in the area of your own family. Seeing grandchildren being born, Or whatever it may be.

Or in sports, Or friendships, Even in the church. You feel things are on the ascent. Things are going well. Things are rising up. But then perhaps, Suddenly, There's that whoosh.

There's the turning, Or the change of direction, From the crest, Lurching downward. That's the bit I didn't like. I didn't mind going up a bit on a roller coaster.

[5 : 50] It was a going down bit on the roller coaster. I didn't like. My stomach used to sort of come out my mouth. And various other things as well. But we won't go into that. But you go headlong down. You're zooming down.

You're going down into what seems like a dark abyss. I seem to remember that at Olent Towers, They had one of the scariest strides. It was called the black hole. Where basically, Most of the action took place in pitch darkness.

Life can be like that. All going well. And suddenly, Whoosh, Things, The ground gives way. You're on this downward trajectory.

Things just seem to be heading Into a deep hole. Well, If we look at the events in the life of Joseph, Particularly from verses 13 of chapter 2, It would seem to me that Joseph must have felt He was on that downward sort of side Of a roller coaster in his life.

Suddenly, It takes a terrifying descent. Suddenly, He's told that Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. Things are going terrifyingly bad.

[6 : 59] You see, Up to that point, He was on the ascent, Wasn't he? Everything was going great for Joseph. Ever since he'd sort of married Mary Just over a year or so ago, Everything in his life was going tickety-boo.

They'd been chosen by God To be those that would care for and raise the Messiah, The Savior of Israel. And at his birth, As we know from Luke, They had the wonderful confirmation of God's promises As the shepherds came to them, Telling of the angels, Who told them all about what God was planning to do Through this little boy.

And now, Just some time later on, He's just had this visit from these strange foreigners. These men who'd come with these gifts of gold and incense and myrrh, And talking about a star that had led them, And about how this, And that worshipped him, And there'd been this wonderful sense of God's presence.

It was so amazing. You know, He's on a great high. Things were just getting better, And better, And better. But then we get to verse 13.

It's almost as if you can hear the door shut on the house, As the three wise men leave. And then suddenly, Terrible, Devastating series of events breaks in.

[8 : 16] When they'd gone, An angel came and said, As soon as they'd gone, The angel comes, In the middle of the night, While he's sleeping in bed, And tells him, Get up, And escape to Egypt.

Herod's looking to kill the child. I wonder if you're in the descent, In the roller coaster of life at the moment.

I wonder if you feel as if, That you're falling. You know, You have those terrible dreams, Don't you? I had a terrible nightmare last night. We were singing that song, At this time of giving, And it was going completely wrong.

And terrible. And the musicians were being awful. And so it's a nightmare, Because they're not like that at all. They're wonderful. But it had all gone wrong, And everything was falling apart. And it's one of those dreams you wake from, You know, And you're actually still dreaming.

That you dreamt it. But anyway, Never mind. That's another. But here's a, Maybe you feel like you're in a nightmare situation, And the world is falling out from underneath you.

[9 : 19] And you're on this downward trajectory. You're falling from a great height. It's something that's been out of your control. Because it usually is. It's unemployment, Perhaps.

Or bereavement. Or a serious deterioration in your own health. Something else has broken into your life. And from that place of being at the peak, And the summit of things going well, Now things are going tragically badly.

That's how Joseph must have felt, I believe, At this time. And though we recognize that Joseph's experience are unique to him, As each one of us, And particularly, Of course, That the events surrounding this messenger from God, Is that unrepeatable event concerning the Christ.

Yet Joseph, We recognized last week, Is a believer. He's somebody who has faith in the living God. And he's somebody who experiences the need of God's guidance and help, In the situations and circumstances of life.

And so what does God have to say to us, Through the messenger? What does God have to say to you and I, In our lives? Perhaps particularly, As we feel things are getting difficult.

[10 : 41] Well, The first thing that's very important to recognize and to acknowledge, And of great comfort to us, Is this, That God knows what's going on. Even if we don't.

God knows what's going on. Verse 13, The Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. Get up, He said, Take the child and go with his mother to Egypt. Stay there till I tell you, For Herod is going to search for the child.

Joseph didn't know what Herod's plan was. Joseph had probably never met Herod. But God knew what his plan was. Often those times of disappointment, Those times of dissent, Those times when things suddenly go wrong, Are so hard, They're so stomach-turning, Because they catch us by surprise.

They catch us off guard. We're not prepared for them. If only we could brace ourselves for them. If only we could sort of prepare our minds for them in some hand, Or somehow know beforehand what was going to happen.

We might be able to prepare ourselves, Steal ourselves. But we never get that chance. It's bang. Things fall out of place.

[11 : 49] Because we can't know the future, Can we? We can't know what's around the corner. We can't know what somebody else is thinking. Yes, but we can't.

But God can. And God does. That's the clear thing here. God knew. God knew before the event, What Herod was planning. God knew before the men were sent, As soldiers to kill.

God knew what was going to happen. God was prepared. God knows. So it is with us. It's not just with Herod. It's not just with Jesus. But so it is with us.

He knows what's around the corner. He knows what's coming up. He knows the thoughts of other people, As well as ours. God isn't caught off guard.

God isn't taken by surprise. Because he is God. He's the beginning. He's the end. And therefore it must follow, Surely that if God knows, What's going to happen, It means also, Amazingly, wonderfully, He is in control.

[12 : 59] He's on the ball. He knows what's going to happen next. Because he is sovereign in it. See, God knew all about Herod.

The sort of king he was. Probably Joseph knew all about Herod as well. And knew what a fearsome man he was. Herod had been king for 30 years over Judea.

But what Joseph would have known about him would have been terrifying when he heard. That he is planning to kill him. Here's just a little bit of background information on Herod the Great.

He was appointed to be king of Judea back in 40 BC. By the Roman Senate. With the consent of the emperor, Octavian. When he came to the country, he had to fight a three-year war in the country to gain possession of it.

He was a brave man. Skilled in the art of war. He was clever. He was educated. But he was extremely suspicious. And terribly cruel.

[14 : 01] And so as soon as he gained power, he put to death the entire royal family. Who were in power. Including his own wife. Who was a member of that royal family.

And the two sons of his own that she bore. By these acts of bloodshed. By his love of Rome and customs. By the burdensome taxes he placed upon the people.

He was so alienated from them. That even though he restored the temple and made a wonderful building. He was never able to regain their favor.

This act of murdering these boys. Was really almost the final act of his bloody reign. So God knows all about us.

God knows all about the circumstances we are going to face. As well as the ones we already face. So God knows. But what does the angel have to say then to Joseph?

[15 : 05] Get up. Take the child and his mother. And escape to Egypt. What we learn is this. From that message that was given to Joseph.

Things get worse. Often before they get better. Things get worse before they get better. Here he's told. That he has to flee for his life.

With his wife. With her son. To Egypt. He's got to go on the run. He's got to leave everybody behind. It's a dreadful situation.

It wasn't just that God said. Herod's going to kill you. That's a real downer. But I'm going to protect you. No. Herod's going to come and kill the child. And now you've got to go on the run.

You've got to go on the run to Egypt. Of all places. Now if you know anything about your Bible. Then you'll know that Egypt was the place. You just didn't want to go. If you were one of God's people.

[16:02] It was the place of course where Moses had been. And all the people had been enslaved. But also throughout the Old Testament. It was the place that God scorned. It was the place that God told his people off.

For looking to for help. Or running to in times of trouble. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. All spoke against and condemned God's people. Because they kept looking to Egypt.

Instead of looking to God for help. They kept running to Egypt. Instead of turning back to the Lord in repentance. It was a picture of human help.

Of human trust. It was a picture of unbelief. And yet God says to Joseph. Go there. To Egypt. Go on the run.

Leave your home. Things get worse. Before they get better. I'm sure you've experienced that yourself. I'm sure that you may be even experiencing that now.

[17:01] Things aren't getting any better. I've prayed about the situation. I felt like things are going hard. I felt like things are difficult. And I've prayed. And I've prayed. But Lord where are you?

This is worse than before. It's a bit like when Moses. When we come to this part in Exodus in the new year. Remember Moses first went to the people. And he went to Pharaoh.

And he said to Pharaoh. God says let my people go. So Pharaoh says right then. Take away their straw from making their bricks. Make it more difficult. Make it harder. But actually that's the case.

All the way through the Bible. That we find. That often God deals with his people. By bringing them through more difficult times. Before things get better.

Think of Joseph. The first Joseph. The young Joseph. Who his brothers hated so much. That they decided they were going to kill him. But then changed their minds. And thought they'd make a few coppers out of him.

[17:58] And sell him into slavery. That's pretty bad. That's pretty awful. He's sold into slavery in Egypt. But then it gets worse. Then he's falsely accused of evil. And he's thrown into prison. How low can it go?

Think of Gideon. One of the judges. God sends him with an army. Which is a tenth of the size. Of the Midianite army. They had 300,000. He had 32,000.

But God says that's too many. I'm going to chisel it down a bit. So he chisels it down. So he's only got 10,000. That's pretty bad. But then God says no. That's still too many. 300 is all he's left with.

Against 300,000. Think of Shadrach. Meshach and Abednego and Daniel. Taken from their homes in Judah.

Taken into exile into Babylon. Pretty bad. But then Shadrach and his friends. Are told that unless they bow down. To a golden statue. They're going to be thrown into a furnace. A fiery furnace.

[19:00] Heated much hotter than ever before. Does God step in. And they don't go in the furnace. No. They go in the furnace. Before things get better.

What about Daniel. And the lions. Honouring God. Not only. Thrown into the lion. Into the lion's den.

I wonder where you are. Dear friends. On that descent. Perhaps you're already at the bottom. I've got to the bottom of it. I can't go any lower. I'm in the lion's den. I'm in the furnace. I'm down.

As far as I feel. I can possibly go. So what do we gain from encouragement here?

So far it's not been very encouraging. Has it? Yes God knows. But actually things are getting worse. But here. Listen to the words. Of the angel.

[20 : 01] God has a purpose in this. God has time in this. God has a plan in this. See encouragement is this. We will only be down.

For a short time. It seems like a long time. But it will be a short time. The angel says. Stay there until I tell you.

Stay there until I tell you. It's not going to be. Stay there forever. Run away forever. Be down forever. It's only for a time.

Now we know of course. That when we're in those downward descents. A minute feels like an hour. And an hour feels like a day. And a day feels like a week.

And a week feels like a year. It feels like we're never going to. Bottom out and come up the other side. It feels like we're never ever going to. Come through. But our comfort dear friends is this.

[21 : 01] That God knows the time. When he'll bring us up again. And God works according to his timetable. And not ours.

He works to his calendar. And not ours. We think. Just like the Old Testament psalmists. Again and again. They say. How long oh Lord. That's how we pray. How long oh Lord.

Must we be like this. How long oh Lord. Must I go through this. How long oh Lord. Must I keep on going down. But the Lord does know how long. And he set a time limit on it. It will not be forever.

It will not last forever. Just as he sent Joseph into Egypt. So he shall bring Joseph out of Egypt.

That's why we have Matthew giving us this commentary. And telling us that this fulfills God's word in the Old Testament. Verse 15. So was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet.

[22 : 00] Out of Egypt I called my son. It doesn't read. Into Egypt I sent my son. But out of Egypt I called my son. The nightmare. The nightmare must end.

It's a promise of hope. It seems hopeless. And in one sense without God it is hopeless. But with God there is hope. Because he has a time.

And he will bring you out. In his time. There's one more thing that we need to grasp hold of for ourselves here.

Which is so, so important. And it's hard for us to take hold of. But it's this. It's only in the going down.

That there's a lifting up. It's only in the disappointment. That actually God brings salvation. When Herod realized that he'd been outwitted by the Magi.

[22 : 58] He was furious. He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem. If God had not told Joseph the bad news. Of Herod's intention to kill Jesus.

If he'd not sent him out. From his own people into Egypt. Then a much greater disaster would have befallen him. Than the discouragement and disappointment of what he did face.

Joseph and his little family would have been killed. Along with those other families in Bethlehem. But God in his great mercy. Brought them through difficulty.

Disappointment and discouragement. To rescue and save them from something worse. Now in saying that dear friends. Does not belittle the troubles and the pain.

And the suffering. And the heartache that we go through now. But what God has spared us from. We do not know. And it may have been.

[23 : 58] Almost certainly. Even worse. We don't know this side of heaven. What God has protected us from. We don't know this side of heaven.

What God has done. In bringing us through times of difficulty and trial. To bring us to that place. Where we might be rescued and saved. And that just doesn't go for the discouragements.

And the difficulties. Of the life of the Christian. That also goes for the difficulties. And struggles. That you as a non-Christian face. God is always at work.

To bring you to himself. He is putting upon you. Precious. To show that without him. You cannot live. You cannot go on. You cannot know.

Him. And that eternal life he brings. God often uses. Sorrows and difficulties. And trials. To bring us to himself. God. Therefore we are brought back.

[24 : 56] To this great principle. Of Christian living. And it is living by faith. Living by faith. These seasons of discouragement. Disappointment.

These times when the roller coaster. Is charging downwards. Are times when we are thrown. Upon the love of God. When we are thrown. Upon the faithfulness of God.

And the promises of God. And the mercy of God. And the grace of God. When we have nothing to hold on to. When we have got nothing left. But him. Then we have everything that we need.

And we lack no good thing. We have got to do just like. Joseph did here. We have got to live by faith. And do as God commands us.

See it wasn't enough in one sense. Was it for Joseph to be warned. It wasn't enough for God to send the messenger. And say get up and go. Joseph had to do something. And we see just how obedient he was.

[25 : 52] Verse 14. He got up and took the child and his mother. During the night. So you can imagine the situation. There he is. He's sleeping soundly in the bed. It's one or two o'clock in the morning.

God visits him with this message from an angel. Get up and get to Egypt. Joseph doesn't say. Well I'll turn over. Have a few more hours sleep. Get up in the morning. And then I'll go. Now he does it. Straight away.

He believes God's word. And he acts upon it. Uncomfortable as it was. Painful as it was.

Difficult as it was. To go in the middle of the night. In the pitch dark. And go out. And follow the path to Egypt. Let me say to you dear friends.

That there is no other way. To come up again the other side. In God's good time. You have to trust him. And take him at his word. And you've got to act upon it. And that means acting upon it now.

[26 : 50] And so again. I would lay before you this. This urgent plea dear friends. If you are not a Christian this morning. If you have heard again and again. The voice of God speaking to you. About putting your faith in Jesus.

And you've put it off. And you've turned over. And you've gone back to sleep. Then let me say to you. Act now. Take God at his promises. Take Christ as your saviour.

Follow and trust in him. Obey his word which says. Repent of your sin. And put your faith in Christ. Don't put it off. And if dear Christian friend.

You're on that downward. Rollercoaster ride. You know God has been speaking to you in it. Then hear what he's saying.

Take him at his word. And do what he says. You see we may feel like we're going out into the night.

[27 : 56] When we take God at his word. It may feel like a step into the dark abyss. It may feel as if there's no one there to support and hold us. It may feel as if. If we trust in God.

Who's to say that. He won't let us down. That the darkness won't increase. That things won't get worse. Just listen to these words of the psalmist.

In Psalm 139. Does he echo something of your. Hearts. If I say. Surely the darkness will hide me.

And the light become night around me. Even the darkness will not be dark to you. The night will shine like the day.

But darkness is as light to you. May the Lord give us light to see. In the darkest of times. That he has a purpose in these things.

[28 : 53] And that he in his own time. Will bring us up. And that he is. Our faithful God. Let's pray together.

We thank you.

Our Father and our God. That. We cannot hide anything from you. And we thank you. Our God. That we don't need to hide anything from you.

We don't need to put on a face. A mask. A pretense. We don't need to be somebody. That we think everybody else wants us to be. We thank you that with you.

We can be. And must be. Ourselves. And we come to you again. Oh Lord. You know us. For some of us. Things are well. For some of us. Things are on the ascendancy.

[29 : 50] For some of us. Lord. We can rejoice in your goodness. And faithfulness. And thank you. That you have been so kind. And sustaining of us. And yet Lord.

We know that. For some of us. You know that we feel ourselves. That we've gone over the brink. And we're still. Helter scouting downwards. And we keep asking.

When are we going to get to the bottom? When are things going to change? When are we going to come out of the darkness? And so Lord. We thank you that you know. Where we are. And we thank you that you are.

Where we are. You know all that is coming. Our way. And you know that though things. Seem to us to be getting worse. Rather than better. Yet Lord. You have a time.

And a purpose. To bring us back up. To bring us out. And Lord. If the reason that we haven't come out. Is because we're still in our sin.

[30 : 45] And we continue to reject your grace. We continue to. Love darkness rather than light. Then Lord. Bring us to that place. Where we see. We have no help but you.

Give to us repentance and faith. To turn. Turn away from our folly. And our foolish pride. And yet for many of us. Lord. It may well be.

That we are in this place of darkness. Not because of our sin. Not because we have acted wrongly. Or wickedly. But because oh Lord. We are living in a sinful.

And a broken world. And we ask again oh Lord. That you would give us eyes to see. That we are safe in your hands. That Lord we are being led by you.

Through this dark time. Because you have a purpose for our good. Our blessing. Our salvation. And though we can't see it. And though we can't even understand it.

[31 : 41] Lord give us that faith. To trust you. The one who sees in the dark. The one who is our light. In every place. We ask oh Lord.

That you would bring us through. And bring us through. To your praise and glory. And bring us through oh Lord we pray. In such a way. That our lives.

May give. Joy. And encouragement to others. Who struggle. We thank you again. For the life of Joseph. And how you dealt with him. Thank you that you deal with us.

Likewise. With great grace. Patience and love. Give us that faith to trust you. And to walk by faith. Day by day. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

And now to him. Who is able to keep you. From falling. And to present you. Before his glorious presence. Without fault. And with great joy.

[32 : 43] To the only wise God. Our saviour. Be glory and majesty. Power and authority. Through Jesus Christ. Our Lord. Before all of time.

Today. And forevermore. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.