

God With Us

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[0 : 00] Well, let me just extend the warm welcome that you've had from JT and Stuart again this morning. And I hope that everyone has been able to enjoy whatever your plans were for this week.

When you come through the door on a Sunday morning like this, people say, how was your Christmas? And I think the answer for most of us is the same, busy. And certainly when you have a small child, then it becomes even busier.

But it's good for us to be together again. And I just, as I said, I just want to extend that warm welcome. It's good to see some visitors with us.

And it's good to see, which is interesting because it slightly ties into what we're going to be thinking about this morning. It's good to see even families that are represented here who are visiting family and loved ones that are not able to be with us.

But it is good to see you here this morning. And we think about some family members that are dear friends and good church members here in Brunfield and not able to be with us through a number of different circumstances.

[1 : 05] And we pray for them regularly. And hopefully, what I'm about to say in our section in Matthew chapter 2, hopefully it just resonates with us. Now, let me read the passage and then I'll pray and then we'll get into some of the detail.

And it's found in Matthew chapter 2. We've been in Matthew for a couple of weeks. And we've transitioned between the Christmas story into what we were thinking about last week, which again was still within the Christmas story where those magi, these wise men came.

And Ian took us through the first 12 verses. We're going to break in at verse 13 and we're going to read to the end of the chapter. Matthew chapter 2, verse 13.

When they had gone, that is the wise man, the magi that we were just referencing there, 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.

[2 : 23] And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet, Out of Egypt I called my son. When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the magi, he was furious and gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity, who were two years and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the magi.

That 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.

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.

So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets that he would be called a Nazarene.

[3 : 44] I'm sure that God will add his blessing to the reading of his word. Now let's just commit our time and the next few minutes to God for his blessing.

Our Father, we come before you again this morning. And as we approach this passage, in all of its complexity and difficulty, our Father, we just, we ask that as we consider the early part of our Lord's

life, our Father, that you'd speak to us in the circumstances in which we find him. Our Father, we just commit ourselves to you this morning. We know that you know all of our needs. Our Father, we know that you're able to fulfill far more abundantly than all that we can think or ask. Our Father, you know each and every situation that finds itself before you this morning. The weeks that we've had, the preparation of our hearts for this morning. Our Father, we just pray that you would speak and that your voice may be heard. That we might understand who you are. Your great purpose in sending your son into this world. [4 : 57] And our Father, we just pray that as we listen to your voice, our Father, that we might be ready to respond to it. And so, our Father, we just ask that you be with us this morning as we consider your word.

For we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So, over the last few weeks, for anybody who hasn't been here, up to the run-up to Christmas, we were doing a little series called God With Us.

And I haven't given my message this morning a title, but I think we could probably not end with God With Us, because you're going to find that that doesn't end. But I would just like to reuse our little title this morning, God With Us.

You might not have noticed that in the passage as we had started. But most nativity scenes stop at these words that we've thought about peace and angels and joy.

But yet, when we come to Matthew's gospel, that's not what Matthew writes, or it's not what Matthew finishes on. Matthew tells us that almost immediately after Jesus was born, that he is forced, his family is forced to run for their lives.

[6 : 09] There's no silent night. There's no soft lighting. There's no calm. Instead, there's a fear of, there's a sense of fear.

There's urgency. And we find danger. Which is an interesting segue into our passage this morning, because there will be those today who are not feeling peaceful at all.

We think of these nice, warm, fuzzy words at Christmastime, but actually there will be those who have come and gathered this morning who are not peaceful. Everything is not calm and bright. Some of us will be worried about our safety, and not necessarily physical safety, even though some of us might be worried about that, as we look around at the world, and what's going on in the world, and what's going on in our land, etc.

Some of us might be anxious about the future. Some might be grieving things that we did not choose. And some people might even feel displaced.

[7 : 11] That might be physical. But I think for many of us, it might be more emotional. It might even be spiritual. Spiritually that we feel displaced. When we come to Matthew 2, it reminds us of this truth that we had in that title that I just mentioned, God with us.

And as we look through these 10 verses, and there's so many different ways that we could have looked at these 10 verses this morning, but as we look at these 10 verses from verse 13 to 23, I want us just to be reminded of that truth that God is with us.

We kind of think of it on the lead up to Christmas, don't we? And then as soon as it's Christmas done, then sometimes we forget all about it. And that's what I want to focus on this morning. I mean, you may have come to this passage, and there's some great historical narrative within here.

And as I was preparing for it, I did think to myself, let's get into the history. But there's people here that are far more clued up about that period in history than I am. And I'm sure that they would come and maybe correct me afterwards.

So let's not necessarily just focus on the historical element of this passage. We might have also just focused on prophecy being fulfilled, and we will think about that slightly this morning, because there's a number of prophecies that Matthew records for us in here, and we will think about them.

[8 : 35] But it brings us to our series, which we'll take into the new year, which is Kingdom Come. And it is very much establishing. And what Matthew does in his first couple of chapters is he establishes that Christ is King, that the Messiah is that Jesus is the Messiah, that he is the King.

It takes us through in chapter one that we thought about his lineage. It takes us through how he's come into this world. It takes us through all of his credentials. And Matthew is really setting out his stall in his book, in his gospel, that Christ is King.

But God with us was a little title of our series. And God is with his people, even when life becomes a bit unstable, when it becomes unfair or when it becomes unsafe.

And before we get into our passage in great detail, let me just embellish what I was talking about there in terms of what Matthew is setting out to do and the kind of context of our chapter that we're in.

Chapter two demonstrates the birth of Jesus Christ, that it wasn't an accident of history or in history, but it was under divine and precise fulfillment of prophecy.

[9 : 45] It was unfolding. The narrative that we have in chapter two is unfolding under God's sovereign hand. The scene that we are looking at this morning was set during the reign of Herod the Great.

And there are other Herods, but we mark this one as Herod the Great. And even though he did great things, he was great things. He was a ruthless leader installed by Rome, whose insecurities exposes the contrast between his temporary earthly power and heaven's true king.

Last week we thought about the wise men coming and these magi that arrived from the east. The east reveals Christ's kingship was recognized far beyond Israel.

Maybe that's a glimpse into the plan that will be revealed in Christ to us. These wise men were guided by a star, as we thought about last week, and they come seeking the one who is born king of the Jews.

That is an echo of what we read about in Numbers chapter 24. And as I say, we're not going to focus specifically on the prophecies and the historical context of them and how they are fulfilled within Jesus, but that is one of the echoes that we see from the Old Testament.

[11 : 10] But Herod's response is fear. It's not worship, as Ian reminded us last week. And Jerusalem shares in that disturbance.

It's a telling indication of their spiritual blindness. And even though that we're going to point the finger at Israel today, some of what I'm going to say I hope lands with us.

You know, when questioned, as we have thought about last week, when he summoned those, when questioned, the Jewish leaders and the scribes, they correctly identified that Micah chapter 5 affirms or prophesies that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.

But there is one point that I just want to maybe mention this morning, and it is this. Knowledge of Scripture does not guarantee obedience to it.

You'll see a point that we might come on to later. These wise men, sorry, these scribes and the priests that were summoned by Herod, they knew exactly what the Scripture said, but they were unwilling to be obedient to it.

[12 : 29] And as the Magi then come and they worship, Herod plots this atrocity, this murder, this slaughter of Bethlehem's children.

And that also fulfills a prophecy that we read about in Jeremiah chapter 31, portraying Israel's long history of sorrow under corrupt leadership.

Then, as we come into our section this morning, we see that God intervenes through direct revelation, and he sends Joseph into Egypt. And again, Matthew tells us here that this is a fulfillment of prophecy, and it takes us back to Hosea chapter 11.

And through originally, though that is originally referring to Israel, it shows that Jesus is the true Son who perfectly embodies Israel's calling. Often what we read about in the Old Testament that is written about Israel, or written to Israel, we see that it is fulfilled in Christ.

And that is one of, that is, I think, a purposeful tact that Matthew takes as he's writing his gospel here, and really establishing who the Messiah is. And then upon returning to Israel, the family settles in Nazareth, fulfilling what the prophets spoke collectively.

[13 : 50] And even though there's no direct quote for this one, that he would be called a Nazarene, but I think it's maybe a colloquial term that Matthew is picking up, that the Messiah would come, he would be humble, he would be despised, as we think about in Isaiah 53, and that it was unexpected.

And I think that's what is referred to as when he talks about that the prophets said that he would be called a Nazarene. So Matthew chapter 2 teaches us that prophecy is not merely in words, but it is in, or only in a spiritual sense, as some people would maybe lead us to believe.

But Matthew has shown us that prophecy is fulfilled in literal, physical history. And some of the predictions, the prophetic predictions for the future, will come to pass, and they will also come to pass.

Some of them will be spiritual, but they will be literal and physical fulfillment of some of the promises that have not yet been fulfilled. Some of those are through suffering and obedience, but they demonstrate God's unassailable purpose.

And that's what we want to think about this morning. I want to look at this passage in a slightly different way, as I've mentioned, but I want, even just slightly different to my normal style, I want to pick up one or two themes that lie just beneath the context of the casual reading that you would normally come across if you were just to read this passage.

[15:21] First of all, you'll see that I've got four simple points that I want us to think about this morning. And the first one is this, God's guidance. We read this in chapter, in verse 13, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt.

You know, Joseph doesn't receive this message in some kind of quiet, prayerful retreat. Sometimes that we think we have to be closed in and God will speak to us.

No, actually, he received this in what looks like a moment of crisis, even though Joseph might not have understood it at the time. But regardless of that, God speaks clearly.

And his instruction is direct. He says this, get up, take the child and flee to Egypt. There's no explanation of how long that will be. There's no promise of ease.

It's just obedience. We see here that Joseph doesn't argue. He doesn't delay. In fact, it actually says, and I may be stretching it, but I think it's in the passage here, it says he obeyed.

[16:32] Well, I'm saying that he obeyed that night because it says here, and he arose and took the child and his mother by night. Instant obedience. You know, many of us want spiritual clarity in our lives without disruption.

We want God's guidance as long as it fits our timeline, as long as it fits our comfort, as long as it fits our finances. But under God's guidance, we see that that's not the case.

Sometimes God's guidance changes our plans. It interrupts our stable situations. It maybe asks us to go when we'd rather stay. And some of us might be here right now as we finish 2025 and as we contemplate a new year, we might think about this in terms of our employment or our relationships or a calling that is making us nervous or a conviction that we can't ignore.

But I just want to pause for a little second and say this, that faith is not just believing that God speaks or that God speaks to us.

Faith is obeying when he does. You see that in Joseph's life. Obedience or obeying is a word that we don't, in fact, mostly we don't like to hear that word at all.

[18:00] It kind of irks us a little bit. Most of us don't like to obey. I've got a 20-month-old son and it's quite evident that he often doesn't like to obey.

And as much as we sometimes try and discipline ourselves, I think that irks us all the way through our lives. We don't like that word obedience and we don't like to obey. But notice carefully that Joseph obeys perfectly.

And in that perfect obedience, unfortunately, he still becomes a refugee. We're not going to necessarily, as I say, think about the kind of historical narrative, but there's many, many Jews at that time around that period that we are thinking about of where Herod was reigning.

There's many Jews that escaped for refuge in Egypt. But following God does not guarantee us safety. It doesn't guarantee us comfort.

It doesn't guarantee us predictability or earthly prosperity. That's something else that you will find from people who teach a false gospel.

[19:01] That if you follow God then everything will be alright. And yet from our passage this morning, I want to show us that that is not guaranteed to us. In fact, actually, we were talking about this on the car on the way in.

The Lord Jesus actually maybe indicates that the opposite might be true. But what it does do in our passage this morning is it shows us this. It shows us that His presence is with us.

That's why I thought we would follow on with a little card that says God with us. Not only His presence with us but His purpose for us. Jesus begins His life and He's displaced, He's vulnerable and He is dependent.

I can't imagine what it would be to run to another country hundreds of miles with a newborn baby. We're expecting a baby in a couple of months and with all the faff that goes with that, I can't imagine. Even just going with Chris away for, you know, 50 miles away with a two-year-old at

Christmas time is a lot of faff but I can't imagine bundling up a newborn baby or a toddler as we are probably in this reading here and taking them hundreds of miles into another country.

But I wonder as a believer do we find ourselves like that? Do we find ourselves displaced? Do we find ourselves vulnerable, dependent? You know, we're in the world but we're not off it.

[20 : 19] we're open to attack from a hostile environment but we should be wholly dependent on God. You know, for anyone who has ever thought, yeah, I'm living as a Christian, these things shouldn't happen to me.

Well, let me put it to you this, that our passage says otherwise. Sometimes obedience will lead us into hardship and not away from it but it is never outside of God's will.

God's guidance speak to us, God's guidance speaks to us because it is God's will and the narrative that we see here not only is to fulfill prophecy but it is God's will.

It was planned before the foundations of the earth. Which brings me on to the second point which is this worldly resistance. When Herod realised verse 16 to 18 when Herod realised that he had been outwitted he was furious.

The reaction of Herod I think exposes a timeless truth and it is this that Jesus threatens false power. Now I don't necessarily or I don't only mean that Jesus threatens those in power but it threatens false power.

[21 : 38] You see I don't think Herod was afraid of a baby. I'm a bit nervous about a baby but I'm not afraid of a baby. No, Herod he was afraid of losing control and I wondered this morning because I want to make this really real for us this morning I wonder if we are afraid of losing control.

We think we are in control. We think we have the power in our lives. We think we can do what we want. We want to be in a sense for many people they want to be God in that sense.

They want to dictate all the rules they want to be in control of their lives and in a sense this is where Herod is he wants ultimate control false power in that sense.

I wonder if we are clinging on to false power we think we've got all sorted out who has got plans for 2026 already all sorted out all laid out where you're going on holiday where you're going to move what job you're going to get all that kind of stuff it's false power.

God is in control in our little section here we're going to see that false power actually is very ugly power without humility is ugly and it often results in violence Herod responds with this cruelty and he orders the murder of innocent children it's a dark moment in history and it's one that we have seen time and time and time again when you see despots and rulers that just want to cling on to power that ultimately belongs to God and they make a mess of it and I don't think Matthew skips over it or softens it in that sense it's right there on the page just the brutality of what Herod was willing to do Ian reminded us last week which was that he went the lengths of killing his own family members his own sons and his wife because of his insecurity in that sense we still live in a world like that a world where innocent people suffer because of corrupt leadership where pride produces violence where power protects itself at all costs

[23 : 39] I just refer back to what Ian said again Ian said last week that Matthew's gospel is gritty and it's right up to date in many cases it's so similar to the situations we see in our world today but I think our passage here just reminds us that in a sense human nature never changes and it also gives us the confidence to call out the atrocities that we see in this world you know Christian faith doesn't deny it this is what I go back to when sometimes we hear this preaching where you know when you give your life to Jesus then all will be well and you'll be blessed and you'll have seen that nonsense on the television and that kind of thing but Christian faith is not a denial of these hard situations it's not pretending that everything is okay it acknowledges the grief and the injustice and the pain that is caused by our sinful world and God's word takes time and room to record the grief that we see here

Matthew quotes Jeremiah he says a voice was heard in verse 18 a voice was heard in Ramah weeping and loud lamentation you know God doesn't rush past our sorrow or this sorrow he records it and he doesn't rush past our sorrows you know some of us are carrying grief today loved ones that in human terms the loss of loved ones that in human terms doesn't make sense we carry pain that we didn't choose we have questions that are not answered and yet the Bible makes it clear that God sees the tears that we cry in the night the hidden pain the hole that's left in our lives and the Christian hope is not pretending that it doesn't exist it is trusting God within the pain God with us which is the point of our little which is the title for our little consideration this morning God with us which brings me on to the next point that we're going to look at this is point number three which is

this sovereign triumph

God is in control verse 19 to 21 verse 19 and Herod died and an angel of the Lord appeared Herod dies but God's plan continues does that not give us a hope this morning does it not make you smile even in some of the chaos that happens in our lives and in our world it gives us hope tyrants fade but God remains God is always there he's always been there and he always will be there God with us I noticed here that I've written down that evil has an expiration date it's probably not what we think about when you're in a situation and you think this world is so evil and it will never end and yet Herod dies he believed he can control the future that's why he killed his sons he killed his wife he killed the babies that were the boys that were under two year old in that region of Bethlehem and in the surrounding vicinity he thought he was in control but one thing he could not stop was God's promise and so many others have tried the same haven't they so many others have tried to do away with Christianity who have put roadblocks in the way in fact it was the same when Jesus was crucified they said we will not have this man to reign over us

Matthew has established Christ as the king and yet they say we will not have this man to reign over us but he is king of kings and he's lord of lords his kingdom will be eternal his purposes will be fulfilled and the scripture tells us his enemies will be brought to nothing I was thinking about him this morning written by Henry Light it's not one that we've sang here for a long time but it says this it is not for us to be seeking our bliss or building our hopes in a region like this we look for a city that hands have not piled we long for a country by sin undefiled you know sometimes this world feels overwhelming there is political chaos you just need to spend any time on twitter or x if I'm up to date you spend any time on x you will find out that it is political chaos it's cultural hostility and I think more closer to home there is moral confusion that is the world that we live in but remember this there is no government there is no ideology there is no power struggle a structure that is eternal save that which God has planned before the foundations of the world

God is not reacting to the events and the situation that Herod has created here no God is reigning he is in control and he was in control then he is in control now and God continues to guide his people step by step I want you to notice again that Joseph is guided step by step the angel comes and speaks to him and tells him to get to Egypt he then comes again and he tells him he can come back it's not all at once it's one step at a time it's something that we thought about recently when we thought about walking walking free in Galatians chapter 5 whether or not we were just going to walk in partnership with the spirit well I think it is the same here when we think about God's sovereign triumph he wants us to obey some of us want the full road map but God often just gives us the next fatal step

[29 : 27] I wonder as we finish this year if there is something ahead of us and God just asking us to take that simple step it might be this morning that there are people and for some of this message you might have already closed your eyes and you're not really absorbing what we're saying that could just be because you're a little bit tired this morning you've had a busy week it could be though that you've never come face to face with Jesus as your saviour you've!

never been willing to take that step of faith you've never been willing to respond to God's call into your life well the invitation is still there in fact often when we're preaching the gospel we would maybe reference in revelation behold I stand at the door and knock well that is true this morning he is the invitation is there for us to come to God to take that step of faith to trust in him to realise that the baby that came into the world as we've thought about in this last week came into this world to be a saviour he came into this world to go to a cross and to suffer there on our behalf and another old hymn that we've probably never sang in this hall for a long time was this only a step to Jesus it is that step of faith that we should take but I slightly digress some of us want that full roadmap up front we want to know what it's like and yet we don't see that in this passage here with

Joseph this morning you know my challenge is this morning that when we hear God's voice are we humble do we humble ourselves ready to! trust but trust is not knowing everything trust grows by just walking obediently in what God has already revealed to us and sometimes I think this is true in my own life sometimes he just shows the next step ahead and as long as we are willing to take it as long as we are willing to trust him then we should be confident and we should be comfortable in the fact that God said I am with you God with us and God triumphs over evil his plan continues he is with us and that is why on this third point that I want us just to finish on is this the sovereign triumph of God but it takes me to our last point and this is maybe not something that we are going to necessarily like this morning but it is this quiet providence so when I talk about providence

I mean God's purpose God's plan and God's provision within our lives quiet providence we read here when we come to this last little section in verses 22 and 23 that Joseph settles in Nazareth you know Nazareth is not an impressive place it's not strategic it's not prestigious in fact later people would ask as we read about in John's Gospel later people would ask can any good thing come from Nazareth we were having a discussion at the beginning of the long conflict but at the beginning of the recent conflict that started between Israel and Palestine and one of Rachel's if she doesn't mind me saying this but one of Rachel's aunt had been there and had been in Israel at the time and as she was coming to the airport they asked her where she'd been and she said she'd been in Nazareth and there was a disgust in the border guards question about why she had been in Nazareth still a place that is despised even today that is what

Nazareth was like and yet the little point I want to make this morning is this that God chose humility over hype Jesus grows up unnoticed unknown ordinary in human terms as we might say I think for many of us we live in a culture where we're obsessed with visibility we're obsessed with success it's a culture where it's all about us where we want to be the next big thing where and you hear this so often and I have to smile fake it until you make it well that's not the way that God works God works in quiet faithfulness he works in the hidden obedience he works in ordinary routines I want to just dwell on that for a few minutes this morning because I think that should give us confidence it should give us hope it should be a comfort to us and our lives might not feel impressive our obedience may feel unseen but God chose this place in Nazareth for his son that's where he grew up that's where he learned obedience that's where he fulfilled his father's will it was God's purpose it was God's plan it was God's provision

[34 : 27] I don't want that necessarily to contradict my first point I don't know if you remember what my first point was after 20 minutes but which was that God guides and we should obey that God's guidance and our obedience but I want us to see here that God works in our lives just where we are we don't need to be someone we don't need to go somewhere for many of us we won't be called to paid ministry or to serve abroad but God expects us just to enjoy and to serve him and to rely on him and to be in the circumstances in which we find ourselves and often that is in unexpected ways Matthew says that this was to fulfill prophecy that Jesus would be called a Nazarene do you know God's promises are sure something I think that I often forget and if you are like me then you will probably often forget that as well

God's promises are sure but they are not always predictable I think for many of us you might even just look back over the last few years and you see things that happened in your life situations that you that you had to face and deal with and it's only by looking back do you realise that God's hand was in it it might not have been predictable it's not what we would expect and it's not what you're planning for 2026 but the point is this that God is with us God with us and we see that we see this in the way that the promised Messiah enters into the world they were looking for a big majestic display of power and might a king that would that would ride in and all pomp and ceremony and that is not what is given it is a curveball that when we come to see how Jesus entered into this world not as a mighty warrior I mean we think of we think even of that you know tender route out of a dry ground unpredictable and yet

God's plan is sure and it will be fulfilled I wonder if we underestimate what God has placed us in our workplaces in our family in the season that we're currently in do we underestimate that God has that totally in control that his hand is on us that he is looking for us to obey his guidance you know God is not absent in obscurity he wasn't absent when Jesus was in Nazareth and he's not absent in our ordinary situation as well in fact that's actually where he's most active you know I just mentioned there the whole nation of Israel those that were waiting for the Messiah to come they were looking for a king to come and to be on a throne and yet we find this baby not on a throne but on the run where he knows fear and displacement and injustice and loss and I think that means that when we think about our situations when we think about walking through unstable seasons in our life we are never alone

Matthew tells us if we just kind of summarize what we've been thinking about here in Matthew chapter 2 Matthew 2 tells us subtly that God guides his people he sees their pain and he defeats evil every in his time might not be in our time might not be in the time that we expected but it is defeated and God works through humble obedience you know God is with us even when we feel unstable even when we feel uncertain even when we maybe even feel unsafe but I wonder where is God asking you to trust him today I want to finish our 2025 this is the last service that we'll have

here in 2025 and I wonder if I could just challenge us all including myself this morning where is God asking us to trust him right now in the uncertainty in the grief in our visions in our waiting you know like Joseph we may rise even when it's dark and follow where God leads it's a hard thing to do but that is what God is asking us there's a poem that I didn't write down some of you will know it and it's often recited at

New Year and it is about us it is about the Christian putting their hand into God's hand and stepping into the unknown and as we step over that New Year line on Wednesday night and we step into 2026 and all of these things might be going on in your head and there might be uncertainty and there might be things that you don't know and there might be chaos in a situation well we might just remember this little story of Joseph the story is actually not about Joseph the story is about Jesus but we might just remember the story about Joseph this morning that he even left in the dark and we might be in the dark in our situations but are we willing to follow God where he leads because the God who protected Jesus and Joseph and Mary and countless other followers after is still faithful today he is with us he will never leave us and these four simple points this morning which is maybe not where you thought we were going to go in Matthew chapter 2 of God's guidance that he speaks of the worldly resistance against him of his sovereign triumph and of his quiet providence in our life if we think about these four things and if we took them into 2026

[40 : 31] I think we would be doing well let's just commit ourselves to God as we ponder these things and we can ask the band to come up our gracious father we come again to you this morning and we thank you that you are in sovereign control and all of the details of our life even where it doesn't make sense our father we cling to you our father we just ask that as we consider these simple things this morning that we might be willing to hear your voice that we might be willing to take that step of faith and of trust and of obedience our father challenge us this morning just to wholly depend on you and as we consider this year that is before us our father we pray that we might just commit it to you that we might just commit our footsteps and our obedient walk to you our father that you might guide our steps that you might give us clarity even in the most ordinary day to day aspects of our life our father in our living and in our daily business our father we just pray that we might honour you in everything that we do and everything that we say our father challenge us as we go into this new year not to make earthly promises and resolutions our father but to make spiritual ones that we might love you more that we might serve you more our father but that we might depend on you more our father we just ask that you bless us that you be with us for we ask these things in Jesus name amen as