

J.D. Ousley
Sermon—Christmas18
Lk. 2
“Star Power”

In the Name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Amen.

At one time or another, many young people dream of becoming *stars*.

Maybe they would like to be part of a popular rock band. Or they wish they could land a role in a hit movie.

They fantasize about receiving the adulation of fans—being recognized in restaurants, being pursued by photographers, walking down the red carpet.

Now, this could hardly be the dream of *Jesus* when he was growing up. Tradition says he was born in “the little town of” Bethlehem. He then went on to grow up in the obscure village of Nazareth which was in the backwater region of northern Israel known as Galilee. His humble origins didn’t promise much of a future.

Yet tradition also says that Jesus was born *under* a star. That’s how the three wise men who travelled from the East were able to find him.

And in the end, Jesus transcended his modest beginnings. Born under a star, Christ came to manifest a star power of his own.

That power didn’t depend on the adoration of his fans—though as the mural around our high altar entitled, “Adoration of the Magi” shows, Jesus received reverence and worship from the time of his birth.

In fact, Christ’s power wasn’t of his own making. It flowed from the power of God. That’s why we say that the divine became “incarnate” in Jesus of Nazareth. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

This is a power that we can find, too.

It’s not the power of celebrities. It won’t get you the best seat in a restaurant. It won’t get you the corner office. It’s a different kind of power.

The Bible says that after the shepherds had seen the angels and heard their announcement of the birth of the Messiah, they “said to one another, ‘Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.”

To “go unto Bethlehem” is to follow the path of the shepherds spiritually. When we approach the Christ child in Spirit, we can find divine power.

But God’s power isn’t like the human kind. Divine power is often hidden. It can manifest itself in weakness. Yet sometimes that power arrives in our own lives.

Here’s an example of God’s power appearing in weakness: you may discover that God can affect your life for the better during those times when you feel *down on yourself*.

Think of those occasions when your life seems filled with frustration and failure. You don’t think that you can do anything right. You feel pushed and pulled by forces beyond your control.

What do you do when you’re feeling like that? Well, you can take stock of yourself and think about moving to a different spiritual dimension.

Like the wise men, you can follow the star of the Messiah. Like the shepherds, you can go unto Bethlehem and look for the holy child.

By the way, this is a good remedy for the post-holiday blues. Many of us feel our spirits sinking after New Year's Day, when the January cold settles in.

These times, you may find it helpful to go in the opposite direction from celebrities. Instead of looking for public recognition, you might decide to direct your attention inward. You can focus on how you're feeling *in your soul*.

For instance, you could ask yourself: Am I happy with *the feelings* that I'm having? Could I call them good feelings, feelings I'm proud of?

If I were to pray about those emotions, what would I say to God about them? Is there too much anger in my soul? Is it possible that there's not enough love?

Then after we've carried out this self-examination, we can ask, how might I change things in my life so that my feelings move in a higher direction?

I once knew a young woman who struggled terribly with self-esteem issues. She could never find a compatible boyfriend. She went from job to job. All in all, she was unhappy with her life.

Then she began to take her religion more seriously. She trusted God to guide her to a healthy and productive path. And, as her trust in God increased, so did her trust in herself.

The woman's faith helped her to become the vibrant, attractive person God wanted her to be.

St. Paul often talked about "pressing on" in the Christian faith. And that's good advice. Instead of caving in to the pressures of life, we press on toward the goals God wants us to follow.

In other words, we find for ourselves *spiritual star power!*

"O come let us adore him."

And now unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be ascribed as is most justly due all might, majesty, power, dominion, and praise, now and forever. Amen.