

"TAKE 10 - Worship While Away" (Sunday, January 4, 2026)

**Share:**

In the dark of morning,  
**the stars still shine.**  
In the depth of winter,  
**the birds still climb.**  
At the start of the year, tender and new,  
**God is here. God is near.**  
Do not rest in your fear.  
**God is here.**  
So like the stars and the birds,  
**Let us worship holy God.**

**Read these words from a hymn:**

**What star is this, with beams so bright, more lovely than the noonday light?  
'Tis sent to announce a new-born king, glad tidings of our God to bring.**

**'Tis now fulfilled what God decreed, "From Jacob shall a star proceed":  
and lo! the eastern sages stand to read in heaven the Lord's command.**

**While outward signs the star displays, an inward light the Lord conveys  
and urges them, with tender might, to seek the giver of the light.**

**O Jesus, while the star of grace impels us on to seek your face,  
let not our slothful hearts refuse the guidance of your light to use.**

**Read this scripture from worship:**

Isaiah 60:1-6, *The Message*

1-6 "Get out of bed, Jerusalem! Wake up. Put your face in the sunlight. God's bright glory has risen for you. The whole earth is wrapped in darkness, all people sunk in deep darkness, but God rises on you, his sunrise glory breaks over you. Nations will come to your light, kings to your sunburst brightness. Look up! Look around! Watch as they gather, watch as they approach you: Your sons coming from great distances, your daughters carried by their nannies. When you see them coming you'll smile—big smiles! Your heart will swell and, yes, burst! All those people returning by sea for the reunion, a rich harvest of exiles gathered in from the nations! And then streams of camel caravans as far as the eye can see, young camels of nomads in Midian and Ephah, pouring in from the south from Sheba, loaded with gold and frankincense, preaching the praises of God.

Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18, *The Message*

1-2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod's kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, "Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We're on pilgrimage to worship him."

3-4 When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and

religion scholars in the city together and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

5-6 They told him, “Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly: It’s you, Bethlehem, in Judah’s land, no longer bringing up the rear. From you will come the leader who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel.”

7-8 Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, “Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I’ll join you at once in your worship.”

9-10 Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

11 They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh. 12 In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country.

16-18 Herod, when he realized that the scholars had tricked him, flew into a rage. He commanded the murder of every little boy two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem and its surrounding hills. (He determined that age from information he’d gotten from the scholars.) That’s when Jeremiah’s revelation was fulfilled: A sound was heard in Ramah, weeping and much lament. Rachel weeping for her children, Rachel refusing all solace, Her children gone, dead and buried.

### **Talk Together:**

- ☞ Why do you think Matthew’s version of the birth story includes the magi and also emphasizes Herod as a prominent (and violent) character?
- ☞ What do the magi have to fear in this story? How do they respond to this fear?
- ☞ What do you think motivates the magi to persevere?
- ☞ How do the magi represent the promise the angels proclaimed to the shepherds, “good news of great joy for all people?”
- ☞ How do the magi model for us what it can look like to transform fear into steadfast courage?
- ☞ How will you be led by hope and insist on hope in this new year so that fear won’t have the last word?

### **Pray together:**

God of the Stars, like the magi, we come searching for you. So today, just like every day, we ask that you would remove any barricades that keep us from your Spirit. Clear out the distractions. Wipe away the doubt. Open up our hearts and speak to us through your ancient words. And as you do, we will keep walking. As you do, we will move toward you. With hope we pray, in the name of Christ. Amen.