



The Star

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For the first time in 400 years, the Bethlehem Star shone. A conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the night sky resulted in a bright light unlike any we've seen. We can imagine something similarly celestial guiding Wise Ones from the East to where the Christ child laid.

'Round my place, it had to be imagined. The Bethlehem Star might have shone in dazzling fashion somewhere, but at my house, I saw only clouds. For several nights in a row, I scanned the night sky, hoping to see this once-in-a-lifetime event. I even had a telescope at the ready. Heavy cloud cover obscured it all, including the moon.

Today we mark Epiphany on the church calendar. The Magi's travel to worship the child allowed us to recognize Jesus' divinity. Immanuel at last. God is with us, self-revealed in the form we recognize. We admire the determination of those Wise Ones who observed and followed the star and who avoided the trap set by Herod.

This year, I'm asking myself why they were unique. Why wasn't there a steady stream of visitors curious about what this star portended? After my fruitless star gazing just before Christmas, I've come to question how many others would have made the holy journey to Bethlehem had the sky been clear. Weather patterns being what they are, there must have been others living under cloudy skies on that Silent Night millennia ago. How many were open to the journey, wanted to encounter the Holy, and spent nights searching for a sign among overcast skies? Like me, did they sigh and tromp back inside disappointed?

This year – a brand spanking new year – what obscures our vision of the Star? Not just the Bethlehem Star that science has explained and predicted, but the Star that symbolizes the Epiphany. What obscures our vision of God's self-revelation in the divinity of Jesus Christ? Over the last year, we've had a lot to disappoint us, and our sight might be clouded by circumstances. If we haven't been able to see the Star through the gloom, did we choose to sigh and tromp back into our homes disappointed?

Having the Star obscured gives us the chance for earnest reflection. If the skies above us cleared, would we strike out on a discipleship journey to places unknown in order to worship the Divine One more faithfully? If the clouds broke, would we amass our resources to offer precious gifts for the ministry of Jesus? I can appreciate your sense of disappointment about the disruptions from 2020, but I want to encourage you: the Star is still shining, even if we can't see it at the moment. Sometimes we are called to begin the journey without seeing our way. So, let's round up the camels and find the myrrh. We have a long, but rewarding trek ahead of us.



Photo credit: Katie Willis Rhodes