



Preaching Resources: From Darkness to Light: A Journey of Hope

Scripture Passage

Isaiah 60:1-6, Matthew 2:1-12

Focus Statement

Just as God led the wise men to Jesus by the light of a star, God shines the light of hope for us, so we can follow where God leads us.

ME Sometimes we find hope in unexpected places. Have you ever gone through a difficult time, for example, losing a job, having a broken relationship, a health struggle, and found hope in a stranger's kind gesture, a steadfast friend or maybe even through a book or music? Share a time in your life when you found yourself in a dark place and you found hope.

WE We all experience darkness in our lives and we may also be facing darkness or uncertainty at church. This is a place to be honest about how you are doing as a church. If your church is in a time of transition, facing reality and deciding whether to change or fade away, remind the congregation that we still need Christ and find our hope in him. Include where you see hope in the community, whether it is in how the community has adapted to change in the past, a ministry the church is committed to providing no matter what, or how someone in the church has stepped up to help another. (If you want to share individuals' stories, be sure to receive their permission first.) We need Christ in both times of darkness and times of light. The magi had everything but still needed Jesus.

GOD Epiphany is a text of hope, a text of movement to something new. God drew the magi out of their country to the birthplace of Jesus with the brightness of the Bethlehem star. God fulfilled the promise in Isaiah: "The Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn." When we look for God's light in our lives, and follow it, we may be surprised at what we find.

Imagine what the magi expected to find as they journeyed to meet the infant king and what they found – the child of a poor unwed mother in a stable. Yet, it was through such a child that God entered into human life, for the Magi and for us.

The magi journeyed to Bethlehem bearing gifts and praising God. Just as gifts of gold and frankincense would have typically adorned the temple, in Matthew's gospel we see them adorning the humble home of Jesus, God-made-flesh. We all have gifts to offer up to God – whether of time, talent or resources. Even though we might have ideas about how to use our gifts, we, like the magi may find ourselves being called to be generous in unexpected ways.

When the magi finally met the baby Jesus, they couldn't help but be changed. They went home a different way, both literally and figuratively. In encountering God, they were changed and attentive to God's leading. They listened to the message they received to head home by a different path, and in doing so, remained safe and protected Jesus from Herod's jealousy. Consider how God might be calling you to new or changed action, for the sake of Christ.



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YOU

Yes, we all may have some darkness in one or more areas of our lives, but the message of Christ is a message of hope and of light. The situation you're in now is not one you will be in forever. God will lead you to a new place, a place where you can use your gifts to glorify God. We are each called to journey in hope for the future, trusting that God is leading us.

WE

God calls us to be a church for all people – people of different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are a church that is living in both light and darkness. But hear the good news! It is not up to just us. We are not alone in the journey, left to find our own way. As the people of God, the body of Christ, we trust together that God leads us into something new.



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