

No going back

Matthew 2.1-12

Magi – wise men – from the east travel to Bethlehem looking for a king. Having first looked in Herod’s palace, they are eventually led by a star to the child Jesus where they offer him treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Now read **Matthew 2.1-12** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

As we explore the journey of the magi, we might consider where our journey with God will take us this year. We know that we can travel forward with hope as we worship the King of kings.



How do the short, dark winter days make you feel? How easy is it to see and feel hope in dark situations?

WALK

Wrap up warm and go for a ‘hope walk’ in your neighbourhood. Walk slowly, looking for anything that is a sign of hope: maybe some new growth, or lights in a window, or a smiling neighbour. Find and record (e.g. photo, write down or sketch) the signs you see and make a ‘hope map’ of the area. You can add more to this during the next few weeks, and you could use it as a prompt for prayers of praise.



Read again what the magi brought to Jesus (Matthew 2.1-12). What can you bring to him – e.g. skills, gifts, talents, or other aspects of who you are or what you do? Why not set up a manger scene in a prominent place in your house, and put in it a representation of something you want to give Jesus this year. Tell him why you are giving it. If you do this as a family/household group, you can encourage one another to keep giving throughout the year.

Daily Prayer

Begin this prayer in the dark each morning; as you say each line, make the room brighter with Christmas lights, torches, room lights, etc.

O Lord, the hope in our darkness, *(light 1)*
help us to see your brightness today. *(light 2)*
Lead us forward in hope, *(light 3)* closer to you. *(all lights)*

Write a similar evening prayer, using your own words and ideas, this time turning the lights off one by one.



BAKE

Make some spicy honey star biscuits. As you eat each point of the star, pray for a friend to know more of God this year. Who can you share them with?

You will need: 150g plain flour, 1 tsp cinnamon, ¼ tsp mixed spice, ¼ tsp ginger; 85g butter/margarine; 3 tbs clear honey; mixing bowl, spoon, rolling pin, star-shaped cookie cutter, greased baking tray, cooling rack, oven gloves.

Put the dry ingredients in a bowl. Rub in the butter until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs. Add the honey and mix into a dough. Wrap in cling film and chill for 30 minutes. Then, on a floured surface, roll out the dough to about 5mm thick. Cut out star shapes and place on baking tray. Using oven gloves, place in a pre-heated oven at 180C/350F/Gas 4 for about 10 minutes until golden. Use the oven gloves to remove the tray with care. Leave the biscuits to cool on the tray for about 5 minutes then transfer them to a cooling rack.

Scratch ART

You will need: colourful wax crayons, a thick black wax crayon, stiff paper, a scraper of some sort (e.g. a lolly or cocktail stick).

Colour your paper all over with bright colours in random patterns. Then go over the whole page with the black crayon so all you have is a black page. Then use your scraper to make a colourful picture (or the word ‘hope’) by gently scraping away the black crayon to reveal the colours beneath. As you do this, ask God to reveal something new for you this year. If you don’t have wax crayons, try using black paper and drawing a picture on it with glitter pens.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem when Herod was king in Jerusalem. One day, wise men from eastern lands came to speak to Herod, asking 'Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We have followed the Birth Star all the way here. We have come to worship him.'

Herod was frightened when he heard this and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. He called a meeting of all the wise and religious scholars to find out where this Messiah was to be born. 'The prophet Micah wrote that it was to be Bethlehem,' they told him. Herod met again with the wise men, in secret. He found out more about their learning and in turn told them to go and search for the newborn king in Bethlehem.

Herod also asked the wise men to come back to him and tell him exactly where the baby was to be found, 'So that I too may worship him.'

So, the wise men set off again, following the same star, and it led them to Bethlehem, right to the Christchild. When they entered the place where



the child and his mother Mary were, their hearts were overwhelmed with joy. The wise men knelt down before him and worshipped indeed. Then they offered their precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

But when it was time for them to leave, the wise men went home by a different route, because God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

Matthew 2.1-12

Did you know?

- Messiah means the 'anointed one', someone chosen by God to save the Jewish people. It's a title for Jesus.
- Micah was a prophet who wrote down messages from God, a long time ago about the promised Messiah.

Matthew 2.1-12 (NRSV)

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."'

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent

them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.