

I have vivid memories from my childhood of growing up in Labrador, gazing into the night sky during the long winter months and being mesmerized by the brilliance and activity of the Northern Lights — the Aurora Borealis! What a breathtaking display of light against the black velvet sky where countless stars shimmered like diamonds. On the clearest, crispest nights of winter, the lights would dance across the heavens like ribbons in radiant waves, offering celestial rhythms of splendour.

As a child, I did not understand that these moments were sacred, but I did know that the God of the universe came down from Heaven to be my friend and redeemer. Emmanuel — God with us. As I reflect on this memory, I cannot help but think of the appearance of angels to the shepherds and the brilliant Bethlehem star to the wise men as those who were blessed to witness the glory of angels and heavenly light while receiving the proclamation of “good news of great joy” that announced the birth of the promised One.

Jesus, the light of the world, comes to erase the darkness and demonstrate love, hope, joy, and peace. The Saviour of the world! The hope of all nations. The King of Heaven, coming to earth to erase the sting of death caused by sin. The One who would break the chains of injustice, bring peace, and speak mercy and redemption.

The shepherds were seen as ordinary and simple people, often on the fringe of society. They were not rich, elite, popular, or powerful, but they were the first to hear the message: God is with us, do not be afraid! The shepherds heard the message of a solution for a broken world and became the first evangelists to spread the good news. They heard the message and made sure to share it. They were chosen by God who lovingly displayed that His gift of love and salvation are for everyone, no exceptions. The testimony of the shepherds amazed their listeners. They did not overthink the situation or get hung up on the details of this splendid event. They were exuberant with joy and told the story that God is now residing with humankind.

The wise men were astronomers, busily engaged in analyzing celestial signs for the purpose of determining significant events, or better yet, fulfillment of prophecy. They were drawn to the activity and influence of the star and followed it until they found Jesus. They displayed perseverance, determination, and hope as they followed the star to Bethlehem. They were changed as the Light of the world broke through the darkness in their lives.

And so, we are drawn into this song with urgency and excitement by the invitation to come and worship. That worship allows us to meet with a holy, gracious, and loving God who is just, shows mercy, and breaks the chains of oppression. In a world of ever-increasing noise, uncertainty, distraction, and fragmentation, the invitation to come and worship offers us a place of solitude, focus, wholeness, and hope. Our worship is about meeting with a holy, gracious, and loving God who empowers us by His Spirit to become light in a dark world.

*Father God, we are thankful for the light that reveals Your mercy, grace, and hope for a world that is broken. We want to be channels of Your love and peace, so fill us so that we may illuminate the darkness around us. We want to be used to tell the story of Your great love, so help us to be sensitive to the leading of Your Holy Spirit in our daily living. Grant us the courage to reflect Your light confidently, knowing that darkness cannot overcome it. In Jesus' name, we pray.*

*Amen.*