

**DECEMBER 11, 2022, LUM SUNDAY DEVOTIONAL  
MY SECOND 2022 CHRISTMAS GIFT: "STARLIGHT"**

**SCRIPTURE FOCUS: MATTHEW 2:1–11**

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 2 "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet:

6 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will govern my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; 8 and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." 9 When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; 11 and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

**BLESSED THOUGHTS: "BE THAT STAR!"**

Three things I remember about our tree growing up. It was always a real evergreen tree, held in place by being stuck in a bucket of coal, with two metal wires fastened to nails in the corner walls. There were electric lights, and, on top, there was a cardboard star, covered in aluminum foil. To me it was very beautiful (and in those just above poverty days, there wasn't a lot of beauty in my life), and from those early days a great article of Christmas practice was decreed. There should be a star on the top of the tree (nobody even thought of an angel in our wider family)!

So maybe you've already put up your tree and decorated it by now. Or at least, somebody you know has. It's still early days for any presents to be placed under that tree, and today's Scripture focus is really more a part of the January 6th Epiphany worship than a mid-Advent reading, but—remember—I am all about telling you the Christmas Gifts I'm praying God will give us all, this Christmas of 2022. And today's Gift is... "Starlight!" Specifically, I'm praying that each of us will be a sort of Star of Bethlehem. I know God wants us to radiate and shine with holiness and faith that our very lives will lead others through their darkness to our True Light, our Lord Jesus Christ. You got it, disciples, Heaven wants each of us to be that star who attracts the spiritually hungry to their Lord.

In my previous Sunday devotional, I cited a line spoken by one of America's great actors, Joel McCrae, and I'm doing so again today. In 1950 McCrae played a western preacher who marries the local schoolteacher and also takes in her orphaned nephew. When the boy is sick, his Uncle asks the congregation to sing the boy's favorite hymn, "Will There be Any Stars in my

Crown?” The boy hears this hymn, and it helps him fight off his illness and get better. The movie is called, “Stars in my Crown.” Now I had never heard that old-time hymn until I saw this film on cable television. Later, I mentioned it in a sermon I gave to a congregation that needed pulpit supply, and the next time I came back to that church, their choir sang it as an anthem, as a way of thanking me for my leading worship there (I know they also appreciated my never charging them the full travel expenses!) Now, of course, modern-day Lutherans hardly ever hear these old-time gems, but here is how it goes.

*I am thinking today of that beautiful land I shall reach when the sun goeth down  
When through wonderful grace by my Saviour I stand Will there be any stars in my crown?*

*Refrain: Will there be any stars, any stars in my crown When at evening the sun goeth down  
When I wake with the blest in those mansions of rest Will there be any stars in my crown?*

*In the strength of the Lord let me labor and pray Let me watch as a winner of souls  
That bright stars may be mine in the glorious day When his praise like the sea billow rolls.  
Refrain*

*Oh, what joy it will be when his face I behold Living gems at his feet to lay down  
It would sweeten my bliss in the city of gold Should there be any stars in my crown.*

Now, this song was written in 1905. Back then, preachers—and congregations—still took seriously what was called “soul winning,” which means they worked very hard to invite folks into their church where Jesus Christ awaited them with power and blessing. If you wanted to be a minister, you had to have a passion for souls (as it was called). Well, even though a lot of Christmases have rolled by since my first Christmas Tree, I still have that “passion.” This old hymn says that every person we helped lead to Christ will be a “star” in our heavenly crown. Heaven will be great, but even greater will be the joy of having inspired others to be there as well. The people that I encouraged to put their trust in Christ will be my “living gems” which I will rejoice to show my God.

But it takes God’s Starlight, God’s Holy Spirit within each of us, to be That Star which draws others to our Savior. And so my prayer for us all is that each of us will be such a Star of Bethlehem! Can I get an “Amen” to that?

**MUSICAL BLESSING: YOU GUESSED IT—“WILL THERE BE ANY STARS IN MY CROWN?” AS SUNG BY THE COX FAMILY. CLICK ON THIS LINK AND ENJOY!**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIObn2c7bVU>

*—written by Pastor Barry Bence*