

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 4 January 2026
Epiphany**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. We are celebrating the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus. It is the feast of the Epiphany, and we will be reflecting on God's guiding of these seekers of meaning. God's guiding filled them with joy and delight as we shall explore.

May God fill you with joy too this Epiphany.

Every blessing,

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*As you prepare to travel with the three wise men,
open yourself up to God's guiding by saying or singing.*



Brightest and best
of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness
and lend us thine aid;
star of the east,
and horizon adorning,
guide where our infant
Redeemer is laid.

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on The Epiphany
Joy and Delight

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence and feel his love. If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here, in your room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready for the time of letting go. When you are ready, say this opening prayer.

Lord Jesus, like the wise men,
I have come to worship
and to offer you the gifts that I bring:
my gold of obedience,
my incense of lowliness,
and my myrrh of self-giving.
What I can I give,
my life and my love,
as I give thanks for your love. **Amen.**

LETTING GO

If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, when you are ready, reflect on who God was revealed to be by the wise men.

Cold on his cradle
the dew drops are shining;
low lies his head
with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore him
in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch
and Saviour of all.

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)



If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.

Our second Epiphany verse speaks of the joy and delight and awe which the wise men will experience at being in our Lord's presence. Its words speak to their three gifts – Maker (Frankincense), Monarch (Gold) and Saviour (Myrrh). The first of these speaks to the enormity of our Lord's coming to us. We see this enormity in the opening words of John's Spirit-filled Gospel. May you experience the wise men's awe as you pause and contemplate yourself being in our Lord's infant presence.



In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came into being through him,
and without him not one thing came into being.
What has come into being in him was life,
and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it. *John 1:1-5*

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER (The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across our villages and the worldwide Church. Add your voice to the earthly circle of prayer to our God on high.

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi by a star,
to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us,
that we may find our journey's end
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our prayer invites us to think of the star – God’s creative way of awakening curiosity in the wise men. Its brightness invited the wise men to turn to their books. Why is this star here in the sky? What can be its message to us? It is an invitation to set out in search of a new king – a new-born king. Imagine how they were feeling as the star’s meaning began to dawn on them. Feel their joy and delight!

A joy and delight that saw them packing their bags and setting out into the unknown with only God’s star to guide them. Their regal gifts speak of who they are – where they come from – why they are seeking him. Frankincense and myrrh – spices from their homeland – and gold were very fitting gifts for a king. Gifts into which God will breathe new life – divine meaning. God spoke to the wise men through their gifts, increasing their joy and delight.

Ponder this as you contemplate this next verse. What will you offer to Christ our King? How will God increase your joy and delight as you praise his Son and offer your presents?



Say, shall we yield him,
in costly devotion,
odours of Edom,
and offerings divine,
gems of the mountain,
and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest,
or gold from the mine?

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

LISTENING TO GOD’S WORD

The Magi visit the Messiah

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.’

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Matthew 2:1-12



While gentle silence enveloped all things,
and night its swift course was now half-gone,
your all-powerful word leapt from heaven.

Wisdom 18:14-15

Joy and delight...

*As you journeyed with the wise men on the familiar path to see Jesus, the infant King, what emotions did you notice? **Eagerness** as the men were brought into the presence of the wrong king. Where is the King who will take your place? is the embarrassing question that they ask of the villainous Herod. **Joy** as they hear where the new king has been born. Off they set for Bethlehem. A final stage of 5 to 6 miles. The new king has been born such a short distance from Herod but a world away from his self-serving ways. **Delight** as they enter the right house – a humble, ordinary house not a grand palace like Herod's. **Awe** as they bowed down, knelt before the infant king, and offered their heart's treasures. These were the gifts that delighted the little Jesus (and still do).*

*And **shame** and **humility** as they left for home. I wonder, if the wise men felt shame at having made such a dangerous mistake in assuming that the new king had been born in a palace. Let down by their own wisdom, I sense that they would have been humbled by their obvious limitations. God is wiser than them (and us)! I pray that God's grace and forgiveness were added to the joy and delight, and awe, that they had experienced during their visit to our Saviour King. For joy and delight were the lasting gifts God wanted to give these curious seekers of meaning.*

Ponder the power of God's love and grace to wipe away the shame of past mistakes and his wisdom to fill our gaps. May joy and delight fill you with praise.



Vainly we offer
each humble oblation,
vainly with gifts
would his favour secure:
richer by far
is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God
are the prayers of the poor.

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

OUR PRAYERS

Feel free to use one or more of these prayers and to add your own.

Lord Jesus, you are my Saving King. You fill me with awe and praise.
Your Spirit is my still small voice – my Wisdom. Help me to trust in
your words rather than my own wisdom. Fill me with humility, I pray...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, you came to be our Creating King. The wise men knelt to
offer their gifts and they gazed into the face of heaven on earth. Deep,
deep awe fuelled their worship. Fill with joy and delight, I pray...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, the wise men made a big mistake with huge consequences.
It was a hard way to learn about the limitations of their own wisdom,
and the infinite extent of your Father's. Fill with grace and hope, I pray...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

O God, you search me and you know me,
all my thoughts and feelings are open to your gaze,
you see the paths I will take before I take them. Guide my daily living.
Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**