

The Hymn of the Day for the Epiphany of Our Lord is “O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright” (LSB # 395)

Philipp Nicolai looked out his window at the parsonage in Unna, where he served as a pastor in Germany. The year was 1597. It was August, a hot month, and a terrible time for the plague to hit their little village. Just the week before, he had buried 170 members of his flock. The number seems staggering to think about even now. He looked out of the window, longing to give his people hope in the midst of their suffering. Perhaps this was the time he began to pen the words, “O Morning Star, how fair and bright.” (LCMS Worship Resources)

Stanzas 1–3 of this hymn are addressed to Jesus as Morning Star (Rev. 22:16), heavenly Bridegroom (Matt. 25:1–13), and Lord (Matt. 17:4). Then God the Father is addressed in stanza 4 as “Almighty Father.” Stanza 5 is addressed to the Church, His holy bride. The final stanza extols how our Lord is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev. 22:13). It concludes by praying to Jesus that He would return quickly as we yearn for His returning (Rev. 22:20). (LCMS Worship Resources)

The end of the second stanza also references the paradox of life in Christ under the cross: “Now, though daily Earth’s deep sadness May perplex us And distress us, Yet with heav’nly joy You bless us.” Then stanza 6 points us beyond this paradox to the joys of heaven: “He will one day, oh, glorious grace, Transport us to that happy place Beyond all tears and sinning!” (LCMS Worship Resources)

This final stanza is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful hymn stanzas ever written. It points us to the source of our joy (Jesus), and the fact that He encompasses all things. It ends with our yearning for His coming back to take us home. (LCMS Worship Resources)

Prayer: O God, by the leading of a star You made known Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles. Lead us, who know You by faith, to enjoy in heaven the fullness of Your divine presence; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for the Epiphany of Our Lord). (LCMS Worship Resources)