
NORTH STAR PEOPLE

BY MICHAEL CARD

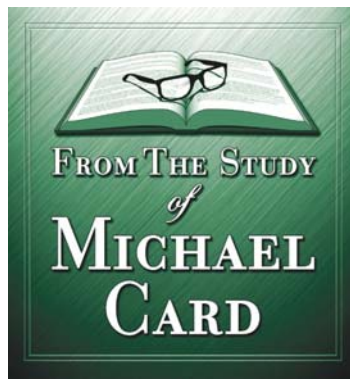
There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

Isaiah 53:2b NLT

Where I live, because of the orientation of the celestial sphere, when you look at the stars at night, you spend most of your time looking south. It is in the southern sky that you see the procession of the planets and the moon (and the sun for that matter) along an imaginary line astronomers call the ecliptic. All of the signs of the zodiac are there as well. So too are most of the interesting “deep sky” objects like nebulae and star clusters.

My favorite stars are mostly in the southern part of the sky; Alberio, a beautiful double star, one blue as the sky and the other as golden as a wedding ring. Antares, the reddest star I know of, the heart of Scorpio is there, far down in the southern sky. The Andromeda galaxy is in that same direction; the most distant thing you can see with the naked eye. And in the southern sky is an empty spot, which I nonetheless like to look toward and think about. Just in front of the constellation Sagittarius, at the tip of what is supposed to be his arrow, is the spot that marks the center of our own galaxy, the Milky Way. The view towards the south is the most dazzling, interesting and inspiring view.

If you turn around and face the north you will see a relatively dark sky. No really bright stars shine there, few interesting nebulae or galaxies. Because of its position on the celestial sphere the same set of constellations (the “circum-polar” constellations) rotate around an exceedingly dim, slightly green star. Polaris is its name. It is also called the North Star.



When sailors, sometimes even astronauts, are lost, they look for this dim little star to regain their direction. It is always in the same spot, the tip of the northern axis that goes through the celestial sphere. It takes a bit of time to learn to find it. People who don't know anything about the stars usually say, “Oh, is that the Northern Star, I thought it would be brighter,” when it is pointed out to them for the first time.

People are sometimes described as stars. We look up to them, at their apparent brilliance, and feel ourselves small and insignificant by comparison. They process through life, luminaries, attracting most of the attention and admiration. Like the moon they constantly change their faces to suit the season. Like the sun they often burn hot. Like meteors, they usually burn up quickly.

If you or I have any choice in the matter (and I am convinced that we do) I would like to campaign for the idea of our becoming North Star people. Sure we might not seem as bright or as interesting. Seldom will people point their telescopes at us. And when they do they will no doubt respond, “Oh, I thought she was brighter than that.”

But as North Star people we can serve a deeper purpose. When people need us, we can be there for them perhaps pointing the Way. While the world is spinning in a dizzying pace, we can remain grounded to the same spot, less dazzling but unmovable.

Jesus was a North Star person. There was nothing in His appearance that seemed especially brilliant, according to Isaiah. In His time there were far more dazzling messianic stars that came and went with a flash. But Jesus has always remained there, rooted to the same place in the universe, unmovable. He constantly calls out to us to turn around and behold the dazzling dimness of His Light as it shines in this present world to find our way to it and to find our way by it. ✍