

WHAT WILL WE GIVE HIM? Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 2:1-11

Luke 2:1-7 (KJV)

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Matthew 2:1-11 (KJV)

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, ² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. ³ When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. ⁵ And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, ⁶ And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

⁷ Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. ⁹ When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. ¹¹ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

Carol #113: We Three Kings of Orient Are (v.1)

We three kings of Orient are / Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain / Following yonder star
O Star of wonder, star of night / Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding / Guide us to Thy perfect light

This being Christmas Day, I think it's safe to assume most of us got some gifts today. Maybe some packages that Santa delivered after the children were all snug in their beds. Or presents from family and friends that we unwrapped this morning or last night or perhaps earlier. Even better, some gifts that we've yet to unwrap.

Did anybody get something made of gold? A gold necklace or bracelet or a gold ring for your finger... or your lip, nose, brow, or whatever!?! Some wear rings in rather strange places today.

I doubt that any of us received frankincense or myrrh, but perhaps some perfume. The gifts the wise men brought to baby Jesus were not that unusual—except, you wouldn't normally think of them as gifts for a baby.

They brought to the infant Jesus gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And throughout two thousand years of Christian history, people of faith have seen these unusual baby gifts as indicators of the uniqueness of this child born in a stable and placed in a manger.

The angels announced his birth to shepherds and a star guided the wise men to where the young child was. Clearly there was something very special about this boy; but these gifts the wise men brought may well tell us the most about Him.

Like what? Can we learn anything about Jesus from these gifts? I think so. The first gift is gold. The second verse of John Henry Hopkin's familiar carol, *We Three Kings of Orient Are*, points to the meaning of this gift. Let's sing it together:

"Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, Gold I bring to crown Him again, King forever, ceasing never, Over us all to reign. O—star of wonder, star of night, Star with royal beauty bright, Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to thy perfect light."

1. They gave to Jesus **the gift of gold**—as the hymn reminds us—a gift for a king! No one has to tell us what a fine gift gold is. We know. Gold has been considered a precious gift for thousands of years. It's a symbol of wealth and power. It's a gift for royalty.

This is why it was such a fitting gift for Jesus. We understand how appropriate this gift was once we recognize who Jesus is.

The wise men asked Herod, "Where is the one born King of the Jews?" Of course, they were expecting a Herod kind of king, not a Jesus kind of King. But the question was right on target. Listen to what we find in Scripture about Jesus:

Philippians 2:9-11...Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Then in The Revelation, chapters 17 and 19, Jesus Christ is called KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. He came to be our King, which is the same as saying that He is Lord of our lives.

So what gifts does He deserve? Our silver and gold, to be sure, because, as He told us (Luke 16:13): "No servant can serve two masters..."

We cannot serve God and gold. So we present to Him our gold—our tithes and offerings—recognizing that Jesus Christ deserves our full allegiance and loyalty, our complete surrender and obedience to His will.

On this Christmas Sunday, let us worship Christ the newborn King. And on this day and every day, let us give to Him the only gift fitting for our King—all that we are and all we have—our full allegiance and devotion—to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

2. Now, there are two other gifts in addition to gold. The next gift is **Frankincense**. Pay close attention as we sing verse three:

**Frankincense to offer have I, Incense owns a Deity nigh;
Prayer and praising, all men raising, worship Him God most**

**High. O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light**

That's not the easiest verse to sing—and the words may sound a bit ancient to our ears—but I hope you caught the message that frankincense is a gift for a Deity—a gift for God.

There are at least seventeen references to frankincense in the Bible. Frankincense was used by the Hebrew people as holy incense in the worship of God. Some churches still use incense as part of their services today. Baptists, of course, prefer the aroma of pot-luck dinners.

Listen to this passage from Leviticus 2: ¹⁶And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the LORD.

So frankincense is a gift for God. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

(Isaiah 9:6) "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, THE MIGHTY GOD, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

And in Matthew's rendering of the Christmas story, we read: (Matthew 1:23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH US.

The wise men brought their gift of frankincense and they "bowed down and worshiped" the baby Jesus. So what should our gifts be? Certainly our worship, our praise, our adoration.

The Psalmist proclaimed (Psalm 95:6): "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our Maker." And, so, on this Christmas Sunday, "O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord."

3. Now we come to the third and final gift: **myrrh**. Verse four is rather ominous and begins with the word "Myrrh." Sing it with me,

please: **Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume/breathes a life of gathering doom; // Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone cold tomb. // O Star of wonder, star of night / Star with royal beauty bright / Westward leading, still proceeding / Guide us to Thy perfect light**

Does that sound like death? It's supposed to. Myrrh is the gift for one who is to die. Which, of course, is true of us all. But the point is that this baby came with the purpose of teaching and showing us how to live. Then He followed that up by dying for us all. This is why the gift of myrrh is so significant.

Myrrh is an aromatic resin, a substance taken from certain trees and shrubs in India, Arabia, and Africa. It's used in some perfumes. It was considered precious and was much sought after in the ancient world.

It is mentioned in the Bible over 20 times, first (in Exodus 30:23) as an ingredient in the holy oil that was used to anoint every part of the tabernacle while God's people wandered in the wilderness. It was also used to anoint bodies that were being embalmed.

Maybe it's not the kind of thing we want to think about at Christmas, but the infant child Jesus was born to die. He was born to be the bearer of our sin – the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take all of our sins upon Himself. Through His death on the cross, forgiveness and eternal life was made available to us.

This, too, is part of the Christmas story. Matthew 1:21 reads, "And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name JESUS: for He shall save his people from their sins." And Luke 2:11 says "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

Even before the angels shared this good news, the prophet Isaiah had already said so poignantly (53:6-7): "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

Again, what is the appropriate gift for us to bring to Jesus? As our Savior, we owe to Him our lives, our all. Paul was getting at this when he wrote: 1 Corinthians 6 (19-20): You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.

Jesus, our Savior, is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. He is worthy to be trusted with all that we are and to be loved more than any other, to be followed wherever He leads us and to be valued over everything else in life. Either He is our Savior and our Lord, or He is of no real consequence in our lives at all.

***In the Bleak Midwinter* by Christina Rossetti**

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim, worship night and day,
Breastful of milk, and a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom angels fall before,
The ox and ass and camel which adore.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

So, we come full circle to this: what will we give the Lord Jesus Christ on this Christmas Day?... and on every other day as well?

- a) Will we give Him our full allegiance as our King?
- b) Will we give Him our praise and adoration as our God?
- c) Will we give Him our love and gratitude as the One who gave His all for us? What are we ready to give Him now?

Children: One child reads the whole passage or two children, dressed as Mary and Joseph, share the reading

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⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Children: One child reads the whole passage or three children, dressed as wise men, share the reading. Also, a wise man comes forward during the singing of verses 2, 3, and 4, placing gold, frankincense and myrrh on the Lord's Supper Table or before the Christ child as the corresponding verse is sung.

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 King forever, ceasing never
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Frankincense to offer have I
 Incense owns a Deity nigh
 Prayer and praising, all men raising
 Worship Him, God most high

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 Star with royal beauty bright
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Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
 Breathes of life of gathering gloom
 Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying
 Sealed in the stone-cold tomb

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Glorious now behold Him arise
 King and God and Sacrifice
 Alleluia, Alleluia
 Earth to heav'n replies

O Star of wonder, star of night
 Star with royal beauty bright
 Westward leading, still proceeding
 Guide us to Thy perfect light