

Christmas Eve ... Eve

Giving *The Gift* to a weary world

Matthew 2:1-11

Intro

Humor - When my niece was a student, her class of six-year-olds sang “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing” at a Christmas concert. The line “God and sinners reconciled” was a tricky one for this age group. One little boy, with a voice that completely drowned out the rest of the choir, happily belted out, “God and sinners dressed in style!” — Lady from Williams Lake, B.C.

We live in world where we could easily do the same ... jumble a true message which is that God reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ (2. Cor. 5:18). God took human form in the womb of a virgin; died on a cross; and was raised from the dead, and we are given the opportunity of accepting **His free gift of salvation**; eternal life with Jesus! – How? **Romans 3:22-25a; Romans 6:23**. By placing your trust and faith in Jesus Christ, you will have eternal life.

You see, Christmas is not about cool gifts, the shopping craze, or good eggnog.

Christmas is about sharing The Gift of Jesus Christ with others.

For those of the family of God who have accepted that beautiful and wonderful Gift, the best Gift of all, we are now to share that Gift with those around us. **Matthew 28:18-20**. “A disciple is a person who is committed to following Christ by learning and practicing the teaching and life of Christ; eventually to such a degree that anyone or anything else in this present life is secondary.” – Sam Sacco

In the Matthew 28 passage we see a 2-part process: 1) Baptism represents the conversion process; 2) Teaching to observe means not only teaching others about Jesus and His word, but teaching with the ultimate goal of practicing what His word says.

Making disciples requires us to share The Gift that is Jesus Christ; accepting Him means spending eternity with Him. This is the greatest gift of all. Why? Because in Jesus Christ we have permanent hope, joy, strength, relief, love, grace, forgiveness, justice, and eternal life!.

Body

Let’s go back to the main passage. Observe with me that Matthew 2:11 that these wise men opened their treasures (small or large chest holding valuables) and presented gifts to Jesus – gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

- These gifts had significance especially in the ancient East (**Gen. 43:11; 1 Kings 10:1-2**). We can say gold was symbolic of Jesus’ Kingship;
- Frankincense is the gum or resin of the Boswellia tree, used for making perfume and incense. It was one of the ingredients God instructed the Israelites to use in making the

pure and sacred incense blend for the most holy place in the tabernacle. Frankincense was a very expensive substance because it was collected in remote parts of Arabia, North Africa, and India and had to be transported long distances by caravan. Today, frankincense is a popular essential oil (sometimes called olibanum). It is believed to have medical benefits such as easing stress, improve heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure to name a few. We can surmise that frankincense was symbolic of Jesus' divinity.

- Myrrh, is an expensive spice, used for making perfume, incense, medicine, and for anointing the dead. In biblical times, myrrh was an important trade item obtained from Arabia, Abyssinia, and India. Myrrh was used raw or crushed and mixed with oil to make a perfume. It was also used medicinally to reduce swelling and stop pain. John 19:39 says Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus brought a mixture of approx. 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus' body, then wrapped it in linen cloths and laid in the tomb. We can note that myrrh suggests the Passion and burial of Jesus.

So what? Application

Each person of the family of Christ here this evening has a treasure chest filled with symbolic gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Tonight, I want to challenge you with sharing the Gift of Jesus Christ in practical ways.

Give = Time. Treasure. Talents.

- Because we are all commanded to share the Gospel/make disciples ... *Give* a pleasing aroma when witnessing. Make time to tell others about Jesus.
 - **2 Cor. 2:14-16.** When interacting with people outside the faith, share *your* story. Guard your testimony/behavior. It may be the difference between a sweet aroma and stink weed (**1 Peter 2:12**)
 - Learn to first listen. Job had 3 dummies masquerading as friends. The best thing they ever did was to sit quietly with him for 7 days. No need to hand out Bible quotes when someone is breaking down before you. Sharing truth with grace comes later. First, shut your mouth and listen.
- Because there are those who are financially blessed ... *give!*
 - **James 1:27.** We live in SW VA. LOOK for ways to help a foster child(ren) or widow(s) in distress/need. Bags of Joy; Foster programs; adoption, Warm Hearth Village (assisted living), single moms. Donations are good, but make it personal if possible. Have you thought about adoption? Don't fall into the trap of favoritism (James 2) – go to where the need is.
 - Find someone who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ; invest in a meaningful relationship (coffee, lunch, etc.). Follow the Holy Spirit's prompting and present the gospel message – The Gift – to that person.
 - Notice I didn't say give more to your church.
- Because death's stench has invaded our lives the past 3 years (disease, virus, mental health, etc.) *give* people in your life (home, neighborhood, work, gym, etc.) a place to find hope and healing.
 - Open your home for discipleship (small group)

- Host a neighborhood block gathering. If possible, and within your means, bless neighbors with food and water. Let them know Jesus paid for the meal! Listen to their stories. Watch the Lord at work!

Closing

If you are not of the family of Christ, tonight is a good night to accept that marvelous Gift. **John 3:16**. He was born that He may die for you and me (**1 Tim. 1:15**). He is the best gift you will ever receive, and the best gift you can ever give to another.