

Christmas Day 2017

Welcome to Christmas Day! The day the world remembers and celebrates the coming of Christ. In **Matthew's account** of that momentous occasion he tells of a group of men who had travelled a great distance to come and worship the newly born **King of the Jews**. The local people had **no idea** what they were talking about. The **greatest gift** the world had ever been given was **within their midst** and they didn't even know it. It took **strangers** who had travelled from a far off land to alert them to of the arrival of the Messiah.

Matthew says:

"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." (Matthew 2:1-2 NIV)

Our society continues to seek answers to the ills of our times. We are searching and implementing vague solutions whilst the **greatest gift** ever given lies within our very midst. The **MAGI**, or the Wise Men, strangers in this part of the world came seeking the One they recognised as someone incredibly significant.

Their appearance in Matthew's Gospel reminds me of a very well-known scripture that contains **four of the greatest gifts** lying within our very midst. The **Gospel of John** says:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NIV)

The **MAGI** brought gifts for the One they recognised as the newborn King, but in their act of giving they helped reveal the Greatest Gift to those who hadn't recognised His coming.

In this one verse of **John's gospel** he captures these **four great treasures** that we need to remind ourselves of during this **Christmas Season**.

The first is: **"For God so loved the world"** which revealed:

1. The greatest motive

There is no **higher motive** for God toward you than love. His love sent Jesus. His love allowed Jesus to ultimately die on the Cross. His love surrounds you.

We see love expressed through the relationships we have. Love is the glue that keeps us united. We've all seen and experienced what life looks like without love. Love keeps us committed. You don't need to convince someone to care if they are connected through love.

One of the greatest gifts on offer to you (everyday) is that **"God so loved you"**; that was outworked through:

2. The greatest act *"For God so loved the world that he gave"*

Love without action cannot produce much. **Unexpressed love** is like an unplanted seed, unable to produce what it was made for. God loved the world so much it **motivated him to give**, to act upon the love he had for you. His love was to overcome the depravity of the world but in order to do so he was required to put that into action.

Love can be a great motivator but in order for it to produce something it must be given away. The **Apostle Paul** didn't mince his words about it when he says that if we don't act on the love we have been given we:

"...would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." (1 Corinthians 13:1b NLT)

Jesus himself said:

"...I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."
(John 13:34-35 NLT)

The **greatest act** God did for us was motivated by His love, and in order for it to produce what it was intended to achieve, he gave something incredibly valuable:

3. The greatest gift *"For God so loved the world he gave his one and only Son"*

There is **no greater gift** than that. Some of the Christmas gifts you'll receive today won't last very long. The greatest gift will never expire and will **change the lives** of billions of people.

The **MAGI** came to find Him. The **local people** were totally unaware of Him and ultimately killed Him. **You** can choose to not accept this greatest gift. You can run away from it, reject it or refuse it. But you will never be able to ignore it. It came to you through the motivation of love and is given to you with:

4. The greatest invitation *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

The greatest motive: God so loved the world, ultimately He loved you.

The greatest act: that he gave – he didn't keep it; He gave the best He had to give.

The greatest gift: His one and only Son, Jesus.

Leading us to the **greatest invitation** you will ever receive: *"...that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

I love the word **"whoever"** in this invitation. That means that I can write my name there. You can write your name there. This isn't an invitation made to an exclusive few. This is made to **every "whoever" on the planet**. The invitation comes like a **blank cheque** waiting for **you** to write your name on it. Jesus has pre-signed the cheque already with His blood.

When all of the trimmings of this Season are stripped away, this is the real meaning and worth of Christmas. The **four greatest gifts** given at Christmas time were found in God's:

Motive

Act

Gift

Invitation

Wise men and women still seek Him. And the truth is that He is right under our noses.