

GIVE HIM GIFTS

By Rev. Will Nelken

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The story of the magi is compelling. It breathes mystery, danger, courage, and faith. Let's read it again.

Matthew 2

¹ *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem* ² *and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."*

³ *When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.* ⁴ *When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.* ⁵ *"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:*

⁶ *"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."*

⁷ *Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.*

⁸ *He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."*

⁹ *After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.* ¹⁰ *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.* ¹¹ *On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.* ¹² *And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

The magi — wise men, sages, the ancient equivalents of our scientists and professors — traversed a continent fraught with danger to find this Child who was "born king of the Jews."

Their signal was a star of some significance, a star that traveled through the sky... But then, some will say, all stars travel through the sky, from east to west. Perhaps that part of the journey was not so unusual. However, when it reappeared above Jerusalem and headed south until it stopped over Bethlehem... that was something to write home about!

Not only were they led by the star, but they were guided and protected by God!

They journeyed for four months (at a minimum) to a year, working their way across nation after nation, through tribe after tribe of people, enduring great risks — bad weather, heat and cold, scarcity of food and water, dangers to their health, dangers from bandits.

Why make such a journey to find this Child, the king of a foreign race?

These were men of God on a mission for God.

They came not merely to observe, but they came to worship.

They came to worship humbly, secretly — not for personal gain or notoriety.

They came to worship personally — not via messenger or representative. This was something each had to do for himself.

They came to worship with treasures, not just with talk.

Did you know that God requires an offering with our worship? *Bring an offering every time you come to worship* (Exodus 34:20; CEV). The psalmist urges (Psalm 96:8), *Give to the LORD the glory He deserves! Bring your offering and come into His courts.*

These men were seriously devout; they weren't just going through the motions. Had they been guarding their treasures the whole way, or gathering them along the way? Whatever the case, they brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Gold for outward beauty (adorning the body).

Frankincense for upward devotion (engaging the mind).

Myrrh for inward sacrifice (enveloping the spirit).

They offered the riches of life (gold) to Him who was the Giver of Life.

They presented the riches of godliness (frankincense) to Him who was the Great High Priest.

They brought the riches of death (myrrh) to Him who was the Sacrificial Lamb of God.

How far would you travel to serve Jesus? Around the world? Across the street? How about to your knees in prayer?

2010 is nearly over. What have you given to Jesus this year? What have you laid down before Him? What treasure have you opened up to Him?

Have you given Him mere mental assent? Offered your lipservice? Occasional observances? A simple tenth of the material gain He's provided? Or, have you given Him your everything — all of you — day after day?

How do *you* worship Him?

In humility and mercy?

"So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God." (Matthew 5:23-24; NLT)

In fervent acts of love?

"This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other." (John 13:35; MSG)

In faithfulness and hard work?

"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8; NIV)

In acts of kindness and service?

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

“Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

“And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’ (Matthew 25:34-40)

The magi offered Him their gifts. What have you offered Him? What will you offer Him today? Think about it. Then tell Him what you're willing to give in worship to the King.