

## "The Gift from God"

*John 3:16; Is. 9:6*

Thank you for coming today and letting our children share with you the biblical account of the wise men's journey to see the infant Jesus. The Bible tells us that the wise men did not appear the night Jesus was born or even that He was still a baby but that He was a small child (maybe 2 at the most) when they came to Him in a house. That's actually what the Bible says even though many songs and stories and even Christmas programs put them all together. And that's fine; the wise men are definitely part of the coming of Jesus to the world. That's what Matthew wanted to tell us about Jesus' first coming and so if you want to leave your wise men in your nativity set at home no one's going to arrest you!

The interesting thing about the wise men was that they brought these gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Unlike a lot of us when it comes to buying gifts for Christmas, these weren't a last minute choice. 'Oh my goodness guys I forget to get a gift for the Messiah. Walmart's still open, I'll go see what I can find!' No, of course not. These gifts were thought of beforehand and were befitting a king. Because you just don't bring a box of chocolates or an amazon gift card for a king.

Some biblical commentators write about the symbolism of gold, being symbolic of royalty, frankincense symbolic of purity/deity and myrrh, a spice used in embalming representing Jesus' death. The text doesn't tell any of this nor would these magi have chosen these things for those reasons. The opulence of the gifts certainly identifies Jesus as king. Gold (Wealth), incense (perfume) and myrrh (an anointing oil). And Is. 60:6 says that in the days of Christ's reign nations will bring him all kinds of gifts including gold and incense.

At Christmas we enjoy getting gifts but I think most of us admit we enjoy giving gifts as we get older. God of course is the true gift-giver at the birth of Jesus. We read in Is. 9:6

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;*

*Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

Jesus left His throne with the Father in glory to become one of us and to die for our sins on the cross.

*John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

What do you do when you're given a gift? You receive it. How do you receive Jesus? By faith, believing He alone came to die in our place for our sins so we could have His life in us now and be with him forever when this life ends. He wants us to become His children, through belief.

*John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

The world has confused God and Santa. They think God has some kind of naughty or nice list and that He grants eternal life to those who have better behaviour than others. No, the Bible says

we're all on the naughty list called "Sin". We all disobey God's word and so are in need of being saved. Only a perfect human can pay the price for sin. Jesus did that for us.

The apostle Paul calls Jesus God's "inestimable gift" in 2 Cor. 9:15. God's gift of eternal life through Jesus cost Him the death of His Son, yet is freely offered by His grace to us. If you have never received the gift God offers you do that today and know you have His life in you always. Emmanuel, means God with us. He didn't come just for a visit, but to change our lives forever.