

What Happened to the Gifts?

The Epiphany of the Lord – January 8, 2018 Matthew 2: 1-12

“What happened to the gifts Jesus received from the Magi?” Did they get lost on one of the moves Mary and Joseph made? Did they get used, spent or “re-gifted”? Silly notions about the Holy Family but I spent some time reflecting on it this week. My reflection turned up a few thoughts.

The gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh are a bit removed from our modern understanding of gifting someone one of the latest in gadgets or fashion. The gifts Jesus receives reflect truth and insight into who he is and what his mission will be. So in a sense the gifts received by Jesus are really gifts for us to unwrap over time.

Gold is still a valued commodity today. In Jesus’ time, it was symbolic of kingship as well as divinity. How often do I think, reflect and grasp the immense truth of Jesus, born into the human condition, as King and Lord of the entire universe. He is not just the King of earth but of all creation. This includes the world we know and the world beyond the stars. Jesus is the King of all the created universe(s). What does that mean to be king in today’s very modern concepts? I think that Jesus’ kingdom is that of the human heart and conscience. It is not about the possession of land or wealth. It is about relationships which brings the divine and the human together in peace.

Jesus is also divine. The fullness of God has come into our existence to transform what we are to understand as having value. Only a divine nature would see value in the poor or the downtrodden. Only God would give mercy, peace and reconciliation a place of value in a world obsessed with money, power and conflict. So if the gift of gold is about his place as king then there must be room for a different type of relationship with this particular ruler. The overall arching rule is that of Love. This king rules from a position of equality and love, a position of goodness and truth.

Frankincense was used for medicinal purposes. It was a medicine used in the treatment of wounds. It was an application for whatever ailed you. Jesus is the Divine Physician. He has come to heal the broken, cure the ill, bring peace and restore relationships. So in a sense this symbolic gift of frankincense opens up the rule of Love once again into the divine desire to heal the world and all the relationships as one with God.

Myrrh has always perplexed me as it is symbolic of healing, but more so, it was used in embalming the dead. It points to the death of Jesus. It also points beyond his death to his resurrection. This is the true gift of Love, the sacrifice of his life that Christ has come to bring.

It is not so much the cute baby in the manger whom we all treasure and cherish that these gifts signify. Rather, it is the adult Christ who will teach us how to live, how to love and how to be Christ for this world. The gifts received by the infant Christ were used up in the totality of his life, mission, passion, death and resurrection so that we might have eternal life. What happened to the gifts? They were given completely to you and to me.

Merry Christmas!


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