

“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, frankincense and myrrh.”

(Matthew 2: 11 NIV)

After Christmas and Easter one of my favorite church holidays is Epiphany. Traditionally Epiphany is observed on January 6 and celebrates the visit of the Magi to see the infant Jesus. Before December 25 was recognized as Christmas, January 6 filled that role. Some people still refer to the date as Old Christmas.

It is interesting how little we know about the Magi who visited Jesus and Mary and most likely Joseph. The Bible doesn't tell us how many there were. Tradition says there were three probably because three gifts were brought. The Bible doesn't say they were kings although most depictions show them as such. For that matter the Bible doesn't even say they were men although traditionally they are called Wise Men. The Bible doesn't say where they were from – only that they came from the East. The Christmas Star and the Scriptures according to the Bible guided them to Jerusalem and then to the location of the Christ child. While most nativity scenes depict three wise men the bible says they actually visited Jesus at a house implying that they were not at the stable where Jesus was born.

The Bible does describe three gifts that the Magi brought to worship the new born king: Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. All three of these gifts were ordinary offerings and gifts given to a king. Myrrh was commonly used as an anointing oil, frankincense as a perfume, and gold as a valuable.

The three gifts also had a spiritual meaning: gold was a symbol of kingship on earth, frankincense (as an incense) was a symbol of a god, and myrrh (as an embalming oil) was a symbol of death.

As the Magi, whoever they were and wherever they were from, came to visit the new born king they brought gifts worthy of his kingship and his divinity. Perhaps we can take some guidance from the Magi as we begin a new year. What will we bring as our worship for the King of kings and Lord of lords?

Certainly, we need to bring our financial gifts to Jesus this year. The Bible compels us to tithe or bring 10% (at a minimum) of our increase to the church which is the body of Christ. But more than that we need to bring gifts recognizing who Jesus is. What that will look like can differ among each of us.

But spend some thinking about what you have to give to Christ in 2018. Perhaps there are talents or abilities you have that have been neglected or ignored. This would be a good time to give those to God. The Bible makes it clear that we are expected to use what we have so hiding our talents, or our abilities, is not a faithful thing to do.

Perhaps you need to give God something that is extremely valuable in our society today. I'm not talking about money or talents but time. We are all very busy people and spending time

in prayer with God is something we struggle with. Along those same lines is commitment. It is becoming common in our country to see church as one of just several endeavors that we engage in regularly. Perhaps you have a top five and church is just one of those. Do we really want to put our devotion to God in the same list with sports, entertainment, and things like that?

Give some thought to the gifts you have for the new born king. Give him your best and you will make this coming year the best one ever.

Happy New Year!

Pastor Tim