



## From the Desk of Pastor Meyer

A Devotion for Epiphany – January 6  
Based on Matthew 2: 1-12

January 6 is the day of Epiphany, the day the Christian church celebrates the arrival of the wise men to the child, Jesus, and give homage to the newborn King. Epiphany means “revealing,” literally “to shine light upon,” and during the season of Epiphany, Jesus is revealed as the Savior of the world. But, the season begins with the arrival of the Wise Men.

I say “wise men” – depending on the translation or the song, you might know them as wise men, Magi, sages, or even kings. Usually, they are described as astrologers, but the term used in the Greek New Testament implies an interest in dreams, stars, and perhaps even magic. They were from the East, presumably the area of Babylon, the region where the Israelites had been taken into captivity 700 years earlier. As to how many wise men there were, we simply don’t know. Traditionally, the story says there were three men – one for each gift. There is another story about a fourth wise man who gave his gift away, so that by the time he arrived at Jesus’ side, he was without a present and, thus, overlooked. Regardless, what we know is what Matthew tells us in chapter 2 of his Gospel: they brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Gold, you know: a very expensive, precious metal, useful for the buying and selling of goods. You’re probably less familiar with the other two gifts. Frankincense is a tree resin that can be either dried into granules for burning or infused into an oil. If you know anyone who uses essential oil, there is often a scent called “Frankincense.” Myrrh is a spice, either dry or added to oils to be used for both perfume and for anointing. All three were expensive, special gifts that you didn’t just pick up at the corner market. These were gifts from kings; gifts fit for a king.

What gifts are you giving to Jesus this year? What kind of gifts have you brought that are worthy for the Newborn King? It’s tempting to tap our wallets and checkbooks, thinking we bring Jesus our gifts of finances. How about our prayers and our praises? That’s a good, sanctified answer. Perhaps we owe him good, Christian living.

He doesn’t want any of those things. Jesus doesn’t want you to bring to His crib your gold-plated, incense-infused, myrrh-scented self-righteous life. He doesn’t want your money. He doesn’t want your goodness. All Jesus wants from you is your sins, your guilt, and your shame. This is the only gift Jesus wants from you this Epiphany day: your sins, because that’s the entire reason He came – to save you from those damned – I use that word deliberately – and damning sins.

That sounds backwards, doesn't it? Why, the Wise Men brought gifts fit for a King – gold, frankincense and myrrh – shouldn't we at least try to do the same, give Him our best? If Jesus were an earthly King, an earthly ruler, then yes, this might be true. But Jesus is a different kind of King. The perfect, holy, sinless Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, announced by angels, witnessed by shepherds, whose name is Jesus, is a King who will save His people from their sins.

These gifts from the wise men also have a certain amount of foreshadowing to them. No one knew that day as Mary and Joseph oohed and aahed at the expensive treasures that one day the gold would be replaced by 30 pieces of silver that would be used to turn a disciple into a traitor. Mary certainly had no inkling that three decades later, she, along with some other women, would be carrying frankincense and myrrh and other spices to embalm her son after His crucifixion and His death for the sins of the world. Those events were far in the future, but in God's plan of salvation – His *heilsgeschichte*, for you German lovers – they were already in place for the redemption of the world.

On this first month of the new year of a new decade, take all of the sins of the past and leave them with Jesus. Don't carry them any further. Your sins of cursing and swearing, dishonoring your parents, speaking ill of our elected officials, hating the ex, yelling at the kids, gossiping, lying, stealing time from our employers, holding grudges; of having emotional affairs, alcohol and drug abuse, failing to love, honor and cherish your spouse; failing to fear, love and trust in God more than all other things; thinking that you can make yourself better all by yourself... There are many more...those sins you try to bury deep within, but the guilt keeps dragging them to the surface; those things you try to shove into the dark corner of your memory, but the shame – the devil's favorite lie that you should know better because you are a Christian! – keeps shining a light into those corners and illuminates them for you to remember. Of these, of all of these, give them to Jesus. Bring them to the Infant King in repentance, confess them, and believe that Jesus came to take them from you.

Those are the gifts that Jesus wants. You don't have to wrap them up pretty; they don't need bows and ribbons; they don't deserve pretty wrappings. Give them to Jesus with all their ugliness and nastiness.

Start the New Year fresh, free, and forgiven. Jesus gives you the gift of forgiveness, destroying sin's damning power. He gives you the gift of joy, that you are no longer burdened by the weight of your griefs and shame. He gives you the gift of peace, that the relationship with God is restored and whole. He gives you the gift of salvation, that eternity with God is yours. He gives the gift of love, that you are able to share with those around you. He gives the gift of faith that enables you to say, "This is most certainly true."

With Epiphany joy, peace and Hope in Him,

  
Pastor Meyer