

# What do you give a King who has ~~everything~~. . . nothing!!

Readings: Matthew 2:1-16 & Isaiah 53:0-12

## Special Gifts

Have you bought that perfect gift for someone special? Only 18 sleeps until Christmas .Last year I spoke about gifts we receive that we love and some we detest. I spoke about how my dad never quite gave us what we wanted. He always gave us at Christmas and any special occasion a gift that **he** thought we wanted. It was a weird control thing. I wanted a bike, I got a scooter. I wanted a pink bedspread, I got a blue-checked florally thing and who gives a kid a bedspread at Christmas anyway!! I spoke about how I really wanted a Crissy or Velvet doll, and I ended up with . . .Giggles and she has been laughing at me ever since (Heehheehaahaa you didn't get Crissy!!)



Well, I am talking about this again because one night when I went out for tea with some very dear friends I was actually presented with a wrapped gift, for no reason at all and inside was . . . Crissy, the doll I had always longed for!! . . . Crissy some 36 years later. It was bit embarrassing opening her up in the middle of The Pinent Hotel and not knowing whether to laugh or cry. And look here she is!!! (Demonstration of how she works)

The motto of this story is you may have to wait 40 years. So all you 40 year old guys wanting a classic MG or a lamborghini . . . maybe in 40 years!!! BUT I doubt **your** friends will buy it!! You might have to make do with a scooter, but is OK Bruce it still goes fast cos it's red!!

Of course I don't need a Crissy doll now, but this was a significant, lovely reminder of God's faithfulness and how our God wants to give us good things, how He wants the very best for us. He will give us the desires of our hearts sometime.



NOW, just because I can Shantelle is going to show you an early Christmas present I picked up yesterday. My new puppy Mr Darcy.

Then I got to thinking about the presents that Baby Jesus born in a manger would have got and had to unwrap, or at least his mummy would have had to. This baby born out of wedlock, to a mother who is lucky not to have been stoned to death, born in a rough stable or cave perhaps. This baby Jesus who left the glorious realms of heaven to enter this world and become a human with us, to eat and drink, to work and play, to be happy and sad among us. What do you give a God who has become human? What do you give a King who has nothing, a King who has been stripped of all His glory and been born a baby in a manger? What were the presents they unwrapped? Possibly not very many and I am sure they never had a Baby Shower!!

## 1/ The Wise Men



We all know Mary and Joseph were visited by some wise men who were bearing gifts but who were these guys? In Greek, they are *Magi* probably astronomers and astrologers (the same thing back then) from the East, . . . from Persia, Babylonia and possibly Arabia. They certainly were not Jewish, they were of another religion.

Are you serious  
3 wise men?



How did they meet up? Obviously through their interest in the stars. Did they get along with each other? Some people would question were there really wise men to be found!!!

How did they decide what gifts to buy? Did they always get it right? Frankincense . . . lucky they didn't turn up with Frankenstein!!!! How many stables did they visit before they

found the right one? How did they know which way to go?

They may have been travelling for months or over a year. Quite possibly Jesus was not still in the manger when they met Him. It would have been a huge undertaking and they would have had their entourages with them. It would have been hard for 3 kings to keep a low profile, no wonder Herod summoned them to His palace. Herod must have been miffed they hadn't planned on calling in on him and that they knew about a new King being born in his kingdom and he didn't, how embarrassing!! Fortunately, they **were** wise, so they didn't heed Herod's request to report back to him with Jesus' whereabouts. But we know Herod took matters into his own hands, furious the Magi had tricked him, when he ordered the slaughter of the innocent. Even here we see the shadow of the cross, as Jesus was born with a price on his head.



## 2/ Their Gifts

We don't really know how many wise men there were but it is recorded they brought 3 gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh.

As his parents were given the gold WOW, they would have thought all their Christmases had come at once, Gold how amazing, how generous, this was the best. The wise men did not hold back. They gave God their best, their most precious and their most valuable. Many of you I am sure love getting gold or diamonds on the odd occasion, after giving birth I think it should be an absolute MUST. It doesn't say how much gold there was. Later on, perhaps this gold helped fund their escape to Egypt when all the innocent children were ordered to be killed by Herod.

Then there was frankincense. This is made from the sap of a tree of unusual hardness, that has a reputation from growing out of solid rock. This would be a welcome gift, it symbolised resilience and we would love all of our kids to build resilience. This showed their baby was going to stand firm and flourish even in tough times. This incense was also thought to signify his priestly role on earth. This was his vocation, this was going to be his life. The gift of Frankincense represented Resilience & Vocation things we long for our kids to acquire.

Then the last gift of all. The first 2 gifts were welcomed and symbolic, so perhaps they thought, the next one will be something useful, like a jumpsuit or a toy Jesus could actually play with.

But no as they expectantly unwrap the next gift they find Myrrh. Myrrh? Gee thanks guys. How wonderful? Myrrhh.? This gift they so excitedly unwrapped was embalming oil used for burial, (this oil was still used in funerals and cremations right up until the 5<sup>th</sup> century.) WOW NOT!!!! Their baby was given a symbol of suffering, pain and death. Now it's a bit hard to get excited over this, don't you think? Do you think they convinced the wise men they appreciated this? You know sometimes you get some bigger size clothes for your baby that



you think they will never fit into and you put them away for later, when they grow a little. Thanks for this burial oil, we'll put it away for later . . . hopefully a lot, lot, lot later!!!

Imagine Mary pondering later, pain, suffering, death!! Joseph, honey, do you think we could regift this?? I wonder, later, when he hung on a tree, bruised, broken and in agony and yet so lovingly looked down at her and asked his brother, even as he was dying to take care of her, did she think back to the gift she unwrapped for him so long ago, the oil for his suffering and death?

God in human form was given gold, yep totally expected, frankincense to depict his life on earth, his vocation, not a bonds growth suit but nonetheless a symbol to show he will at least grow up and perhaps become a priest and then this GOD was given pain and suffering. If he is to be Emmanuel, God with us, he must be where pain and suffering is, right in the midst of it, that's what the gift of Myhrr was about. When the world is in misery God the King could not have a comfortable, easy life. These are all things that are in OUR lives. Gold representing good, valuable times, the very best, Frankincense, representing our life and vocation and Myrrh depicting our pain and suffering. How we would love to skip the 3<sup>rd</sup> but the God of the Universe didn't even skip this for Himself.

### 3/ Our Gifts

What are the gifts we can take to Jesus? What could he possibly want from us this Christmas? What does He want us to give Him? He wants . . . **DITTO**. You know the wise men have set a good precedent. The gifts we can take to Him are the ones that they took. They **were** really wise.

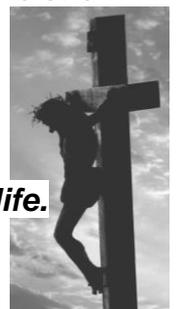


Jesus wants us to give Him our best, our most valuable, our most precious. You may not have heaps of gold lying around but do you give Him your best or do you give Him what is left over? There are so many verses that talk about God honouring our giving, our generosity and returning the blessing to us. Do we really take Him at His word? Do we only

give when it suits us? Do we only give when we're on board? Does it cost us? How? Our time, our pride, our luxuries. It cost the wise men time, possibly their reputation and their safety as they moved into different lands to take gifts to a baby in a manger. Give Him your best.

Like the wise men's gift of Frankincense, representing resilience and vocation, he too wants us to give Him our very lives, our vocation. He has called us all into what we do and at times He calls us to take another direction. The church is way beyond these walls, we take our mission, our God into the workplace, our homes, our neighbourhoods, the playground and into our sporting, recreation and community groups. How conscious are you of "Being His" outside these walls? Do you daily give Him your life, your plans, your dreams and your hopes? It is a big ask, to ask you to give your life as a gift, who would do that? John 3:16 - **For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.**

I guarantee you when you give Jesus your life, He will honour it and I promise you life will never be the same again, you are in for an adventure, of ups and downs



but with a constant companion who will never leave you and who will always be barracking for you on your team all the way.

And the last thing he wants us to give Him, as the wise men gave Him, is the gift of suffering. He wants us to give Him our suffering. He wants my suffering? Why does the God Almighty want me to give Him my pain, my anguish, my grief and my despair? Why? Because He understands it, because He knows what you are going through, because He can uphold you in it, He has been there and that is why He came to be with us and He cannot be with us without being involved in our suffering.

Wow, well here you are God if you want my suffering then here it is, take it? You can have it!! But so often we find it so hard to hand over. Why is that? Because we are used to it? Because it protects us? Because we don't trust Him with it? You and I know it isn't that easy to just hand it over. God does too, and that is why when we give it to Him it allows Him to enter it with us, to share the load, to hold you, to give you comfort and courage and peace in the midst of it. When we give Him our pain and suffering He enters our darkest places with the gift of Himself, with the gift of His presence. Have you known His presence in your darkest times? How has He held you? What have been the words of comfort He has given you? If you are in a tough place now and you are struggling to trust Him, and I know a number of our people are struggling with ill health, with kids who are making destructive choices, with aging bodies, with grief, with loneliness and with feelings of powerlessness as they watch loved ones suffering, let Him know your pain. Give it to Him again and again if need be, let Him have it with your questions, your doubts and your anger (in the Psalms we see this done) revealing an intimacy He longs for with you, specially in the hard places and listen, listen for His words of comfort for you. I love you. . . . I am here. . . . I will never leave or abandon you. . . . Lean hard on me and snuggle into my arms of love . . . be safe and rest.



Christmas for some is a really tough time, a double edged time. You want to celebrate but pain and grief and the loss of loved ones make that difficult. For those of you who understand what I mean I hope and pray you will find meaningful ways to both celebrate and remember and acknowledging the hard stuff.

For me I remember (what I thought at the time was) my toughest Christmas of all 2000, it was the last Christmas we were going to celebrate as a family with my husband David there, as he was dying from an advanced, aggressive cancer. I remember going in to St Vincents a bit before the kids so as to setup every thing, praying he would be having a better day. Finally when I got to his room on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, discovered it was anything but. We had all planned to move out into the big lounge room and wheel out his bed so as he could be with us but he was way too sick, and didn't want to make the effort which showed me how sick he was. We celebrated lunch with out him there, for the first time but he was still down the hall. He died 10 days later on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January. BUT 2001 without him there was much, much harder. I barely remember it despite still celebrating it.

Where was this God? His humanness and his suffering the gift he had been given by the wise men, now connected with mine. Where was my God he was right there well qualified to sit with me in my suffering and in my pain, he knew all about it, he had been given it as a gift and all He asked was for me to give Him mine in return. Our suffering will come to an end

BUT I do believe it will ALWAYS be honoured by God. I actually believe it is now but I don't think **we** give it the place of honour it deserves. I think we try to rush through it, or deny it, bury it or minimise it rather than allowing it to be the teacher it can be. ***"I will give you treasures from dark secret places; then you will know that I am the Lord and that the God of Israel has called you by name."* Isaiah 45:3**  
In time we learn from these times in our lives, despite the fact we would never choose them.

I have had this dream, picture or vision of the end as we go up to the throne of God.  
WHAT A CELEBRATION that will be. Picture this!!

You have been invited as the guest of honour. . . . The red carpet has been rolled out, the champagne or grape juice is flowing, your gifts are here and waiting, everyone's got their party poppers ready, the decorations in your favorite colours are up, everyone's dressed to the nine, the food's prepared, the table is set, the band is playing your favorite music and your crown is waiting and everyone is so excited as they wait for YOU the guest of honour to show. Now some of you may not be a party person so perhaps you need to see it as a quieter more intimate event.



The limousine has picked you up and as you begin to turn the corner the cheers are deafening, your name is being chanted and people are waving and cheering as you pass by, (like that insurance ad for Rhonda as she drives down the street)

Yeah Rhonda, we love you Judy, thanks Phil, Ken & Jenny for all you do, you're the best Sheryl, Alan, Ian and Charlie, Margriet and Jacqui you're unique, a standing ovation for Anne, Lisa and Shantelle, Norma, Chris and Karen thank you for your faithfulness, Win and Honour I honour you, hundreds of cheers for Phyllis, Nicole and John, you go Mark, Gareth, Bruce and Brian (sometimes too fast!!), I hold a special place for you Graeme, Bill, Miriam and Meagan, Janene I love your singing, David, David, David, David, David and David you are all saints, I adore you Gillian, Coral and Jean, thumbs up to Sue, Andy & Deb, Rose, Ivy, Holly and Daphne you are blooming, well done Kerry, Anita and Andrew, Sheana, Colin and Ash you are awesome, you're so special Carol, Paul and Bron, Julie, Lucy and Grace you're the apples of my eye, Stracky, Stracky, Stracky . . . Oi!! Oi!! Oi!! . . . I'm so proud of you Annette, Bev, Di and Jacinta, Bob, Matt, Joel & Josh you rock, Tanya & Mary I appreciate all you are doing, and I could never forget you Amy, Steve and Roger . . . and . . . as you come into the party and gracefully get out of the car (and even if you don't do it gracefully that's how



everyone will see it), you begin to walk toward the red carpet laid out for you, you take your first step on to it, with your head lifted high you and slowly begin to walk toward the throne, you see God beaming, holding out his arms for you His precious child. You go toward Him and as you climb up on His knee and are about to snuggle into His huge arms of overflowing love and hear His words

of welcome, you notice just sitting to the right of Him a large, large bottle of water . . . at first you are puzzled and then slowly it dawns on you what this is. It is . . . it is all the tears you have cried and then you wonder how come there is so much in there, surely I couldn't have cried that many tears? And then you realise they are mixed with all the tears He has cried over you, for you and with you in your times of confusion, disappointment, hardship, repentance, suffering, pain and joy. You see my friends, as He appreciates and celebrates our gifts of gold, our lives and the plans and the purposes He has for us, He also receives the

gift of our suffering and honours it. There are verses which talk about how not one of our tears will go unnoticed, he holds them and he treasures them.



**I, the Lord. . . have heard your prayer and seen your tears. - Isaiah 38:5  
and You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in  
your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book. – Psalm 56:8**

There will be no weeping in Heaven but our tears will be there in storage.

How else do we know that he honours our pain? Because of Jesus. We get a glimpse of this in the Isaiah reading when it says in 53:11 **“After a life of suffering, he will again have joy; he will know that he did not suffer in vain. My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased, will bear the punishment of many and for his sake I will forgive them.**

**<sup>12</sup> And so I will give him a place of honor, a place among the great and powerful. He willingly gave his life and shared the fate of evil men. He took the place of many sinners and prayed that they might be forgiven.”**

We also see Jesus’ pain and suffering honoured in the Resurrection. When Jesus rose from the grave, resurrected, full of glory, transformed, perfect what did he reveal to those he loved the scars on his hand and his side. Our God, our all powerful, mighty God could have completely healed Jesus totally without a mark on Him but He did not. Was this a careless



mistake or something he just overlooked. No, He chose to leave the scars, He left the scars there and chose instead to honour the pain that Christ experienced and by so doing, He also chose to honour our pain, for Christ died for our wrong, for our failures, for our pain, for our suffering. He has paid the price and he also knows what it has cost you along life’s journey.

### **Come make the trek!!**

WOW a God who entered our humanity and at his birth was given a gift of pain, suffering and death to show He was the real deal and then, in return He asks us to give Him our pain and suffering too, no other God of any other religion asks that!! Will you like the wise men, make the trek and take up His invitation to come? What would stop you? I hope and I pray that this Christmas you will make the trek, be wise, take up his invitation to come, to come to Him and give Him your gifts. Give Him your best, give Him your life and your vocation and give Him your pain, your grief and your suffering and watch Him redeem them, honour them and turn them into beautiful gifts for your good and His glory.

