

GIFTS OF GOLD
Sermon Series: "The Gifts of the Magi"
November 29, 2015 First Sunday of Advent –Matthew 2: 1-12
The Church of the Covenant

In a former church of mine we hosted the community in a Christmas extravaganza called "Christmas Hand-in-Hand" that sounds a lot like something we formerly hosted here at The Church of the Covenant called "The Joy of Sharing Christmas". A couple of years I served in the Wise Men's tent which began the whole spiritual quest of finding the Baby Jesus at Christmas. The tent was set up in the church parlor, the whole room was tented, oriental rugs strewn on the floor, the sounds of the wind blowing across the desert and the clanging of camel bells piped in through the magic of technology, all of it made it feel as if you had been transported back in time 2,000 years ago and were about to start a journey seeking the Christ Child at Christmas. There was a written script, quite dramatic in a way, requiring someone who was a bit of a ham to play the part, so naturally they selected me for the role of the Wise Man in the Wise Men's tent. It concluded quite dramatically by me asking, "Do YOU seek the Christ Child?" Then to another group: "Do YOU seek the Christ Child?" Then to another group: "Do YOU seek the Christ Child?" And then I would dramatically conclude: "Wise men and women always do."

So this Christmas, do YOU seek the Christ Child? Indeed, would it really be Christmas if somehow Christmas Day was over this year 2015 and you hadn't actually FOUND the Christ Child? Isn't Christmas, after all, finding Christ? And then the next question is, AND IF YOU FOUND HIM, then my beloved, WHAT GIFT WOULD YOU GIVE HIM??????

Well, the Wise Men of old came from the East in search of the Christ Child. The journey itself would have taken many, many months; would have traversed the old camel spice routes in the Middle East from East to West; would have brought them in danger of robbers and death at every turn; brought them to Jerusalem and to the court of the murderous King Herod, again imperiling their lives. If I may say, the journey and the time it took were as much a gift as the gifts these "Magi" offered the Christ Child. No spiritual journey is easy. No spiritual discovery comes quickly. Everything in today's world is immediate, texting requires an immediate answer; if our computers do not boot up immediately we become immediately frustrated; if the sales clerk doesn't tend to us and our needs immediately then we become angry at Christmas and led away into a far away country, far away from the Christ Child we seek. No anger at the manger. I am too busy preparing for Christmas, we may shout, to take the time to prepare my heart to find the Christ Child this year! There is nothing immediate in the spiritual journey of the three Wise Men. Perhaps the first and greatest gift they give to the Christ Child is the gift of their TIME.

And when they found HIM, as it says, "*opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.*" (Matthew 2: 11) The gift of GOLD is what they offered first. Gold is the metal of kings and so they sought the One who is Lord of Lords and King of Kings and when they found Him they presented Him with a GIFT OF GOLD. Search every archeological excavation, every tomb of the great kings of this earth, and you discover GOLD aplenty. It is the precious gift of Gold which seems the best gift for every newborn King. Gold is to be placed in a crown. The last book of the Bible, Revelation, puts it this way: "*Then I looked and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown...*" (Revelation 14: 14) This is Christus Victor, this is the conquering victorious Kingly Jesus. This is the one before whom all the elders "*cast their golden crowns before Him*". This is the One at whose name, one day, "*every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father.*" The GIFT of GOLD foreshadows prophetically the rule and

reign of Jesus Christ; *“King of Kings and Lord of Lords and HE shall reign forever and ever. Amen.”* At Bethlehem Jesus’ throne may be a humble manger, but the GIFT of GOLD He receives from the Wise Men is the ever present reminder that the King of Kings rules over all of His Father’s creation.

So assuming you find Him this year, how then do you present a GIFT OF GOLD to the Christ Child this year? Betty Donaldson is a dear and precious member of this congregation. She always sat right over there in church every Sunday, while she was able to attend. She served as a Sunday School Teacher for many, many years. If I may say, she is a sweet soul with a heart of GOLD. She always asks me about the children of the church whenever I visit her. But she isn’t able to get out much anymore. One of her greatest frustrations is that she cannot come to church anymore. So today, the Good Lord willing, we are bringing church to her. Her good friend, fellow Christian Educator, and elder, Sue Denmead is with her today and through the magic of the cell phone we will connect with her...

Betty, your church family is reaching out to you today in love. We know you cannot get out to church much anymore. So today we are bringing church to you. Do you have anything to say to your church family who loves you? Let’s have a word of prayer; your whole church family is praying for you today; we want you to know how much we love you, Betty...(Prayer).

Maybe we need to cast a few golden crowns before the Lord today. Get over our busyness and our plan for Christmas and reach out to someone like Betty. Someone who is a church member...a family member...a neighbor...a friend. Go give a gift of yourself to someone who might not have a lot of people in their lives right now. Don’t be too busy to find Jesus this year. Betty always gave us a GIFT of GOLD from her HEART of GOLD. Do you seek the Christ Child? Do you seek the Christ Child? Do YOU seek the Christ Child? *“Opening the treasures of their heart, they gave HIM gifts of GOLD”*. Wise men and Wise women always do. It is The Gifts of the Magi. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*