

## The Epiphany, January 7, 2018, Page 1

7 January 2018  
ILC, Wichita, KS  
The Festival of the Epiphany  
Matthew 2:11; "They presented their gifts"

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text which forms the basis for my message today is taken from the Gospel. I would like to specifically refer to one verse from the Gospel... and that Matthew 2, verse 11:

**And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.**

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ. Last Sunday Pastor Hoger preached an excellent sermon. His sermon was about the angel Gabriel and Zechariah & Elizabeth, Joseph & Mary, Simeon & Anna... and about the Christ child. An excellent sermon filled with information and facts, historical narratives and spiritual guidance for our lives. I would encourage you... if you weren't in church last Sunday... I had extra copies of his sermon made and they are with the Ushers.

Well .....today we come to celebrate the Festival of the Epiphany. And you get to hear this marvelous festival brought to life... through my preaching style... which is not academic. I like to say that my preaching style is folksy...

So here goes a folksy account of the Epiphany of our Lord.

Amongst my family members we take great ownership of the festival of the Epiphany... and we do this because of our ethnic heritage.

The way ... my people... tell the story of the Epiphany of our Lord... is slightly different than the one from the Gospel According to St. Matthew.

The version my family tells... is according to Garrison Keilor, the radio humorist, whose radio program is entitled, "*Lake Wobegon Days*".

In case you have never heard Mr. Keilor's version, I would like to tell it. And if you have heard it before, it's humor is worth repeating.

Garrison Keilor says that there is evidence that the Wise Men who came to worship the baby Jesus were Lutheran.



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Not only were they Lutheran, but Garrison Keilor says that in all probability they were from Sweden.

He has documentation for feeling that the Magi or the Wise Men were Swedish Lutherans. He says that it is because of the gifts that they brought to the baby Jesus.

He says that they brought gifts of **gold**, and of **frankincense**, and of **myrrh**.

Myrrh, Garrison Keilor says, is a derivative from the well known mur-mur.

Mur-mur Keilor goes on to say is an abbreviated name for the Ham-mur-mur casserole that you find at every Lutheran Potluck dinner in Lake Wobegon. Hence my people say that the Magi... were Swedish Lutherans!

Well.... as we listen to the version of the Epiphany from St. Matthew's Gospel we do not hear anything about a Ham-mur-mur casserole, but in Keilor's version... makes for a good story.

The Epiphany of our Lord is very important for us as Christians because it is the time..... when the Christ Child of Bethlehem was revealed to non-Jews.

The Word Epiphany translated into the English means, "revealing" or "manifestation". And it is at the Epiphany that Christ was first revealed to Gentiles as the Savior of the World.

Let us go to Matthew's Gospel. In Matthew's Gospel we learn that...

A. **The star led the three wise men to Bethlehem.** When they came to the house where Jesus was... they first recognized Jesus as the one they had been searching for and they bowed down and worshipped him.

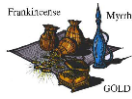
After worshipping the Christ Child, they presented their gifts to Him.

With this in mind I would like to center my message this morning around this question:

**"What are the gifts we bring to the Christ Child of Bethlehem?"**

Do we bring the Christ Child our gifts of gold, and of incense, and of myrrh?

- 1. The Magi presented Christ their most valued material possession -- the gift of gold.**



As we take a look at our lives, how are each one of us doing when it comes to bringing our gifts of gold... our material possessions to God? Is the newborn Christ Child pleased with the material gifts we bring to Him?

It is easy for us to fall into the routine of thinking that Christ does not need our gifts of gold:

- as young people and teenagers we might think that when we grow up, then we will offer our material possessions to God... in reality, Christian stewardship is learned at a very young age;
- or we might think that our offerings are not very much, so we don't need to give them to God.

If any of these thoughts, or others that are similar, are yours then I would encourage you to model your lives after the Magi.

They brought their material gifts to honor Christ... and so should we.

2. **The second gift we read that the Magi brought was the gift of incense.**

This gift was of a spiritual nature. In the Old Testament incense is used to symbolize prayer. As the sweet fragrance of incense rose to the skies, so too our prayers are considered sweet by God as they rise to Him in heaven.

The Magi made a great journey to offer their spiritual gift to Christ.

This might be a good time for us to examine the spiritual gifts we offer to Christ. As we begin a new calendar year each of us are encouraged to grow in our spiritual lives.

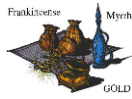
-- Being faithful each week in our worship attendance is very important but our spiritual growth does not end there.

-- It is important for us to be involved in a Bible study, whether it is a Sunday morning Bible Study or a Midweek Bible Study.

-- It is important for us to do spend some time each day in meditation and prayer... using a guide such as the "*Portals of Prayer*" is a good place to start.

With the Epiphany or..... revealing of Christ to the Gentiles..... it is important for us to give thanks to God for sending His Son to save us from our sins.

How do we thank Him through our lives?



One way is through the gift of our spiritual offering. We can use the example of the Magi and offer our gifts each day in meditation to Christ.

3. **And the final gift we read that the Magi offered the Christ Child was the gift of myrrh.**

Myrrh is a healing substance. When we read about the Crucifixion of Christ we hear about myrrh. When Christ was hanging from the cross and in extreme agony, we read that he was offered myrrh mixed with wine, but Christ did not take any.

Myrrh was a healing agent for the physical body that the Magi offered to Christ. Thinking of their physical gift, we can ask ourselves the question: **“What is the physical gift we bring to Christ?”** Can we serve Him physically?

Many at Immanuel do a great job in serving our Lord. You serve on boards, on committees, you serve as Lay Readers... on the Altar Guild..... in one of Becky’s music groups/choirs/ensembles... you serve as acolytes, Crucifer, greeters, ushers, etc. Each one of us can offer a physical gift to Christ. We need to search for that gift and then offer it to our Lord in service to Him.

As we examine our lives based upon the lives of the Magi, how are we doing?  
The Magi brought:

- gifts of gold (their material possessions)
- gifts of incense (or their spiritual gift)
- gifts of myrrh (or their physical offering)

to the Christ Child.

As we look at our lives may God guide us into improving those areas that can use growth and may He bless these gifts we bring and lay down at His feet.  
Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Offering