

# The Gift of Gold

The Three Gifts #1 - Pastor Gary Combs - December 8, 2024 - Matthew 2:1-12

**INTRO:** Good morning church! The Christmas season is here, isn't it? Have you finished your Christmas shopping? Do you have someone especially difficult to buy for? What gifts do you give to the one who has everything? Speaking of gifts and gift giving, we're beginning a new sermon series today entitled, "**The Three Gifts.**" The title of this series is taken from our series theme:

Matthew 2:11 (ESV) 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.

The Bible says that the Magi gave Jesus three gifts. These were not ordinary gifts. They seem unusual gifts to bring to a baby shower—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Today, we're going to consider the first gift in a sermon entitled "The Gift of Gold." For the Magi didn't travel all those miles from the East just to bring gifts to just any baby. They came seeking to worship the "one born king of the Jews." For gold is a gift fit for a king!

**Trans:** How can we give the gift of worshiping the one born king this Christmas? I guess the first question we must ask ourselves is "What is worship?" It's whatever you value or love the most. It's what you spend your time, talent and treasure for as your greatest source of significance and security. That's worship.

**ILL:** Ironically, Christmas might be the most difficult time of the year to truly worship God because we are tempted to put our affections on material things. Because Christmas is big business. As well as being one of the important days on the Christian calendar, Christmas has become the most important day on the financial calendar.

"According to Forbes, retailers in America can expect to make \$989 billion from Christmas sales, accounting for one quarter of their yearly profits." (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/cmo/2024/12/04/a-guide-to-marketing-in-2024s-holiday-shopping-season/#>)

**Need:** Have you finished your Christmas shopping? Don't you feel the tension? Don't you feel the pressure to spend more money than you have in order to give your kids (spouse, grandkids...) everything on their list? You want everyone to be happy and you want to be happy, so you spend, spend, spend... And the more you spend, the less it feels like Christmas. Or what it's supposed to mean.

**Trans:** How can we pull our affection off of the crazy, chaotic spending spree that comes every December and instead focus on worshiping Christ as King? How can we spend less and worship more?

**BODY:** In the gospel of Matthew, the story of the birth of Jesus is told within the political backdrop of the times. From the beginning there was a battle between worshiping the true King and the false king Herod. The challenge for us is to remove our worship from the false king and to put our worship on the true King, Jesus Christ. The text gives us **three steps** on how to spend your worship on the True King this Christmas!

**TEXT:** Matthew 2:1-12 (ESV) <sup>1</sup>Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." <sup>3</sup>When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup>"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."<sup>7</sup> Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." <sup>9</sup>After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

## WE CAN WORSHIP JESUS AS THE TRUE KING BY...

### 1. Understanding the battle for our worship.

**EXP:** (1-3) Notice the word, "worship," in v.2. The wise men had come to worship the one "born king of the Jews." They came to the capital city Jerusalem and to the king's palace, but the one "born king" wasn't there. Instead, they found an imposter, namely King Herod.

"**Worship**" (2, 8, 11) (προσκυνέω, *proskuneō*) (*prós*, "towards" and *kyneo*, "to kiss") - At great expense of time and treasure, the wisemen had traveled far to spend their worship on the true king.

"**Herod**" (the Great) (1,3,7,12) - was half-Jew, half-Idumean, who, through accommodation to the Romans, ascended to power as a client-ruler of Israel in 37 BC. He was known as a great builder and a shrewd diplomat. He enlarged the Jewish Temple. He became increasingly paranoid about threats, having

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numerous sons, wives, and others put to death because he feared plots to overthrow him. This was why Caesar Augustus uttered the famous pun that he would rather be Herod's pig (*hus*) than his son (*huios*).

Category	Genesis 2:1-7	Matthew 4:1-11	1 John 2:15-17
Desires of the Flesh	"Good for food"	Turn stones into bread	Desires of the flesh
Desires of the Eyes	"Delight to the eye"	Showed kingdoms of the world	Desires of the eyes
Pride of Life	"Desired to make me wise"	Throw Yourself down (prove identity)	Pride of life

**"Troubled" (3)** - agitated, stirred up. Herod and all Jerusalem was troubled by this news from the wise men.

**"King" (1,2,3,9)** - 4x. The main theme in Matthew's gospel. Matthew portrayed Jesus as the true Sovereign King and Herod and later his son, Herod Antipas and Pilate as representing worldly kings and kingdoms.

**"Wise men" (1)** (μάγοι *magoi*) - The Magi. Probably from Persia. They had access to the Scriptures concerning Messiah from when the Jews were taken to Babylon and later to Persia..

**"Star" (2)** (ἀστήρ, *astēr*) - "Asteroid" comes from the Greek for "star." Many scholars suggest a natural explanation for the star of Bethlehem, theories ranging from a supernova to a comet to an alignment of planets. But this was no "natural" phenomenon. This was a "supernatural" star, a miraculous sign! And it was a fulfillment of Messianic prophecy (Ironically from the mouth of Balaam):

Numbers 24:17 (NIV) ... A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel...

**ARG:** **The battle for worship is about who you choose as master.** ("Mammon" - material wealth)

Luke 16:13 (NKJV) "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

**ILL:** There's a battle for our attention. Have you noticed the spooky way that social media suddenly starts putting ads in your feed for the exact thing that you searched for on another app? That's because of social media algorithms. They say they use user data to personalize content and improve user experience. However, they really seem designed to monetize their app by prolonging user engagement, enticing them to click and buy. Similarly, our hearts are constantly bombarded by worldly algorithms that compete for our attention and worship, trying to take our focus off Jesus.

**APP:** There is a war going on for our worship. Being humans, by nature we will worship something. The question is, will we worship the God who made us in His image or something we make in ours? The first step to worshipping Jesus as the true King is by recognizing the battle for our worship.

## 2. Overcoming the temptation to spend our worship wrongly.

**EXP:** (4-8) Look at v.8. Notice the 2nd occurrence of the word, "worship." Herod used the same word, but he didn't have the same motive. He wanted to murder the one "born king." He worshiped himself.

**"Christ" (4)** (Χριστός, *christos*) - the anointed one, the Messiah. Herod called in the chief priests and scribes to see whether they knew where the Messiah was to be born.

**"The prophet" (5)** A quote from Micah 5:2. One of over 300 Messianic prophecies fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

**"Bethlehem" (5, 6)** The City of David where the Messiah was born. Only a 6-mile, 2 hour walk, South of Jerusalem. The name means, "House of Bread." The Bread of Life was born in the House of Bread.

**"Secretly" (7)** - Herod tried to mislead the Magi into thinking that he wanted to worship the rightful king too. He tempted them with his slick diplomacy to reveal what they knew of the true king. He discovered the timing of the star which later led him to murder the baby boys aged two and under.

**ARG:** **The world tempts our "love" and "desire," which is our worship. But it belongs to God.**

1 John 2:15-17 (ESV) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and

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pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

**ILL:** Satan's bag of 3 temptations.

But Jesus said, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." (Matt. 4:10).

**APP:** How will you spend your worship of Jesus ? One way, might be to actively serve the least of these. Ideas: Serve in the church nursery (Attend 1/Serve 1), help a single mom with small kids this Christmas, consider sponsoring a child, foster care or adoption. Let's overcome the temptation to spend our worship wrongly by spending it on the Lord and the things that He cares about. Giving is the antidote to greed!

## 3. Recognizing that Jesus alone is worthy of our worship.

**EXP:** (9-12) Look at v.11 and notice the 3rd mention of the word, "worship." "They fell down and worshiped."

"Behold, the star" (9) - After losing sight of it in the bright lights of the city, the star reappeared on the way to the little town of Bethlehem. It made the Magi rejoice with "great joy" (10).

"House... child" (11) - Not a newborn in a manger, but a 2 year old toddler in a house.

Matthew 2:16 (ESV) Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

"Fell down" (11) (πίπτω, *piptō*) - to fall down, to fall prostrate, of those overcome by terror or astonishment.

"Worshiped" (11) – Lit., "to kiss the ground."; to worship.

"Offered" (11) (προσφέρω, *prosphero*) - to present, to offer. To make an offering. Three very expensive gifts: Gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold for a king; frankincense for a priest, and myrrh for a lamb.

"Warned in a dream" (12) – God warned the Magi in a dream. He also sent an angel to warn Joseph in a dream to "flee to Egypt" (13). Surely the 3 expensive gifts helped pay for the trip and stay in Egypt, where they may have stayed until Herod died.

**ILL:** Have you ever watched the show, "Pawn Stars?" People bring all kinds of things in to pawn or sell, then owner, Rick Harrison, has to appraise its value and make an offer. On a recent episode someone brought in a small coin with 2 daggers and "Ides of March" on one side and "Brutus" on the other. He brought in an expert who said it was worth \$150K.

The modern English from the Old Middle English word *weorthscipe*, meaning to ascribe worth, to value, to revere. There are two components to worshipping Christ fully as our true King: 1) Recognize what He is worth. And, 2) Give Him what He is worth. The Magi saw His worth, fell down and worshiped, and gave.

**APP:** A practical way that we can worship Jesus this Christmas is giving. Giving is the antidote to greed! Would you consider living more simply this Christmas, so that you could make a sacrificial offering for Jesus. Give to our Christmas Missions Offering. The gift will go towards international missions through partnerships that we have with the IMB and our other partners we have in Mexico, Turkey, and Uganda.

**ARG:** **Christ gave all for you. Choose to give your whole life to Him in true worship.**

Romans 12:1 (ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship

**CONCLUSION:** Remember our 1st question? What do you give the one who has everything? "You!" Does Christ have you? (1) Understanding the battle for our worship and (2) overcoming the temptation to worship wrongly, (3) we can recognize that Jesus alone is worthy of our worship. We can worship Jesus as our true King! Let's pray.