

Going for Gold

In our story today, the Magi didn't come to win a prize, they came to bring gifts. Today the gift that we are thinking about is Gold. As we are remembering the Magi this Advent, we'll stop to think about them a little further today. They are a bit mysterious, as is the star that they followed. Sometimes referred to as the Three Kings, sometime Wise Men, the early church described them as Three Kings for a couple of reasons.

1. Who else had gold and precious perfume to give away.
2. They fitted Old Testament prophesy.

Like Psalm 72:10-11

¹⁰ **May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him.**

May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him with gifts.

¹¹ **May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.**

But most likely it's Wise Men, translated from the term Magi. Centuries before the term Magi had been used to describe Priests and those who had special powers to interpret dreams. Nearer the time of Jesus's birth, Magi described those with a variety of interest, in dreams, astrology, magic, mysterious books about the future and so on. D. A. Carson, bursts the bubble, saying '**Some Magi honestly inquired after truth; many were rogues and Charlatans.**' But I think that the behaviour of those mentioned by Matthew's Gospel, place them in the category of seekers after truth. Nevertheless, they are meant to stick out, they are not the most likely bunch to visit the Messiah, King of the Jews, they were probably Babylonians and there was old beef between the Jewish people and the Babylonians.

For Mary to find them knocking on the door would have caused a double take, what on earth were they doing there? They had already stated the reason (though not to Mary). '**Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.**' That was the reason for their visit, but what about the mysterious satnav, the star, that had led the way from east to west? There are many hypotheses, a comet, planetary conjunctions. I like a good old-fashioned miracle, maybe the star was not a material item in space, rather a divine light, a supernatural star, that appeared at God's command and for God's purpose and then disappeared. From mysterious Magi to supernatural stars, what can we learn from the story today?

Matthew, the Gospel that most often quotes the Hebrew scriptures, places Gentile wise men as the humble seekers and the Jewish King and leaders as the ones seeking to destroy the child King of the Jews.

1. The Magi came to worship, celebrate and give.
2. The Jewish King, Herod, was intent on destruction.

The Magi came to give, Herod wanted to cling and destroy. Today, what can we give to the Lord? The Magi gave away gold as a gift to Jesus. Gold has always had great value, having wealth like gold provides security, you might have thought they'd want to keep the gold to pay their way on the return journey, they don't they give it to Jesus. Much later in life, maybe recalling this story told to him by his mother. Jesus said

¹⁹ **'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** (Matthew 6:19-21)

We live in a world very different from Jesus' and we all need money to live on, but the most important thing after, a roof over your head, food and drink on the table, and cloths on your back is that we offer the material blessing that we have as a gift to Jesus as the Magi did, they invested in the Jesus. Charis, at our recent Church members, meeting, reminded us that as a church we can do what we can afford to do by the

giving that we receive. The Magi didn't give everything they owned to Jesus, they kept the camels, and the items they needed to carry on in life. We all need the necessary items for life but Jesus invites us to invest in the Kingdom of God.

I doubt there will be an obvious financial reward for giving to the work of the Kingdom through the local church. Though God is no one's debtor, and though your giving may not return to you in like it will return in some other form. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus says **'Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'** (Luke 6:38) Or, as it says in the amplified **'Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over [with no space left for more]. For with the standard of measurement you use [when you do good to others], it will be measured to you in return.'**

The Magi, set a great example, their gift to Jesus, the King of the Jews, shows faith and belief. The way that we give to God, from the possessions God has given us is a demonstration of trust and faith. Do we believe in Jesus enough to bring him gifts from the treasure that he has given us?

Connect group questions

1. Is the Kingdom of God a worthy investment for your Gold, if yes, why?
2. Jesus make a big deal about giving and being generous, why?
3. What's the lesson that giving from our material wealth teaches us?