

What can you give to someone who has everything?

Message for Sunday, December 17, 2017
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Children's Message:

The wise men came from far away to see the new king. They didn't know where he was, so they stopped at the capital of Israel to ask for directions. "Where is the king?" they asked.

We know where to find Jesus. He's right here. *Show a crown cut out of yellow paper.* See where it says "JESUS IS KING." And see here are pictures where we find Jesus. *Pasted on the crown are photos of the church building, a Bible, the communion table, the pews.*

But Jesus didn't come to be king just inside the church. If that's the only place where we follow Jesus, that's not much good.

He came to be king in everything we do. *Show a much larger crown, also cut out of yellow paper.* See these pictures. *Pasted on this crown are photos of toys, video games, iPhone, money, newspaper.*

Now that's more like it! That means that Jesus is our king in every part of our lives, not just here in church.

Thanks to Lavern Franzen for this idea, from her book *Smile! Jesus is Lord.*

Message "What can you give to someone who has everything?"

1) The Gifts of the Wise Men

The teacher at a daycare was reading the story of Jesus' birth to her children. She stopped to see if they understood and asked, "What do we call the three wise men?"

"The three maggots," replied a bright five years old.

"And what gift did the Magi bring baby Jesus?" she asked, inserting the correct term for the wise men.

"Gold, Frankenstein, and Smurfs!" the same 5-year old replied.

The truth is we don't know a great deal more about the Magi than this child did. It is easier to list what we don't know than what we do.

-) We don't know where they were from, other than that they came "from the east."
-) We don't know how they knew that Jesus had been born. They said they saw "his star," but what that means has mystified people for centuries.
-) We don't know how many magi were there. Tradition has said there were three, because of the three gifts. There may have been more; there may have been less. We don't know.
-) We don't know their names. Someone in Armenia wrote a version of the New Testament around the year 600 A.D., which said their names were Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, and that tradition has been handed down since then. But truly, we don't know.
-) We don't know when they arrived. Since Herod ordered all the boys under two years of age to be killed, we can conclude that they came sometime during the first two years of Jesus' life. It's unlikely they came the same night as the shepherds.

The main thing we know about them are the gifts they brought: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Some Bible scholars say these are symbolic:

- gold denotes royalty and power. It honours Jesus, who is the King.
- frankincense was used in the temple to perfume the room called the "Holy of Holies," the place where God comes. It honours Jesus, who is God.
- myrrh was used to prepare bodies for burial. It honours Jesus, who died for us.

That may well be right. Then again, these items were used in other ways as well. Gold was used for jewellery and for money. Frankincense was also included with burnt offerings. Myrrh was used as a perfume and even as a deodorant.

I believe God speaks to us through the Bible. Sometimes, however, people hear things that aren't

there. This may be one of those times... I just don't know.

Perhaps it doesn't matter anyway. I didn't come here today to talk about ancient customs. I came here today to talk about us, about you and me.

2) What can we give Jesus?

Those magi started a practice which has become a very modern custom: giving Christmas gifts. Isn't it ironic, though, that the One who was the reason for it all, is often left out in the modern day rush of shopping and wrapping and putting things under the tree?

What gifts can you and I give to Jesus, in honour of his birth?

I have two brothers, both have good jobs making good money. In material things at least, they have everything they need. If they want something, they go and buy it. What do you get for someone who already has everything? It's not easy! Maybe some of you face the same situation.

In a similar vein, the Bible says that everything in the world was made through Jesus, and it all belongs to him:

Colossians 1:16, New Living Translation:
Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see — kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him.

So what gift can you possibly give to the One who already has everything? To answer that, we need to look at other things beside material gifts.

a) Give Jesus something from the heart

What we give to Jesus is nowhere as important as *how* we give it, our attitude in giving. King David and the people of Israel wanted to show their love for God, so they gave materials to build a temple. Listen to this verse, as to *how* they gave:

1 Chronicles 29:17, Today's English Version:
"I know that you test everyone's heart and are pleased with people of integrity. In honesty and sincerity I have willingly given all this to you, and I

have seen how your people who are gathered here have been happy to bring offerings to you."

Whatever you do to honour Jesus this Christmas make sure it is from the heart. May it be from an honest desire to love and worship your Lord.

b) Give Jesus something of value

Some of the highest praise that Jesus ever gave was to a poor woman who put a penny in the offering at the Temple:

Mark 12:43-44, Today's English Version:

"I tell you that this poor widow put more in the offering box than all the others. For the others put in what they had to spare of their riches; but she, poor as she is, put in all she had—she gave all she had to live on."

This was not a gift that she was obliged to give; it was not her tithe, nor an offering for her sin. It was a love gift for God.

In our society two of the most valuable things we have are our money and our time. Perhaps this Christmas you can make an extra donation to your church or some Christian ministry. Or maybe you can give your time in serving as a volunteer, or helping with repairs, or in some other way in the church or in your community. Give Jesus something of value.

c) Give Jesus your love

How do you love Jesus? By obeying his commands. And by loving others. In Matthew 25, people are judged on the basis of how they loved other people:

Matthew 25:40, New Living Translation:

"I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!"

The principle is that there is some of God in everyone we meet, as difficult as we may find that to believe. The practical application of this is that we show love for Jesus by loving others. So your gift to Jesus can focus on your relationships with others. Here are some ideas:

- mend a quarrel
- forgive someone who has hurt you
- listen to others
- sit with someone who is lonely

- take a long lost friend to dinner
- tell someone you love them
- bake cookies for someone anonymously
- give someone a second chance
- find a way to lift a burden
- give parents a night off by looking after their children... for no charge.

d) Give Jesus yourself

Romans 12:1, Good News Bible:

So then, my brothers and sisters, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer.

When it says "sacrifice," it doesn't mean we are to kill ourselves. It means we are to give ourselves.

If you are a parent, one of the greatest gifts you can give to your children is to spend some time with them, and give them your undivided attention. You can do the same thing with Jesus.

You can devote time each day to prayer and reading the Bible. You can work on that area of life that causes you to sin. You can start each day with a prayer like this:

"Jesus, you are my Lord, and I am your servant. I give this day to you. Give me wisdom and courage, so that I will do what you want me to do. Help me today to worship you, not just with words, but in all that I do. Amen."