

THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

Part 3 - Myrrh

Matthew 2:1-12 – The wise men bring three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Frankincense: the divinity of Jesus.

Gold: the royalty of Jesus.

Showing that Jesus was the 'true and better' – Jesus was better than the best of the best who had come before.

Matthew's Gospel is pointing these things out so that we might know that Jesus came with purpose, Jesus wasn't an accident.

Myrrh

Myrrh, as it was used in the Ancient Near East, was a gum-like resin, and also sometimes made into a perfume, and used as an antiseptic. History shows that it was used also as a painkiller, which may account for why it is offered to Jesus during the crucifixion in Mark 15.

In the Bible, myrrh shows up in some of the special incense that is used in the Temple, along with frankincense. The only other time it shows up again in the Gospel accounts is at the other end of Jesus' life.

John 19:38-42

So why did the Holy Spirit, who inspired these gospel accounts to be written, want to connect these two events?

The Mystery of God as Human

There's a profound mystery in the Bible truth that Jesus was fully God and fully human.

It wasn't like Jesus was a good human who ended up adopted as God's son.

It wasn't that Jesus had two distinct beings/persons living in the one body.

It wasn't just that He was fully God, and 'appeared to be a man'.

It wasn't that He was God for some activities and human for others...

In Jesus, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, yet He was fully human at the very same time.

Why Did God Need to Become Human?

God didn't create humanity in the image of anything else, He made each one of us – you and me – in His image.

1 John 4:8: God is love.

Jesus, in the infinite wisdom of the divine, knew that simply telling and requiring people to do things the right way wasn't going to work.

Jesus came and lived according to God's instructions – perfectly, never breaking one thing that God had intended.

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

God made a way for the brokenness of our lives – the secret and hidden and obvious and hard and messy things of our lives – to be dealt with, to be paid for, to be resolved and reconciled. It was through Jesus.

Foreshadowing

John 19:16-18

Christmas initiates the chain of events that leads us to Easter, and Easter is the moment when the door is opened to all that was promised to us as humanity.

Luke 2:10

Full Circle

Myrrh is mentioned in Matthew 2 and John 19. Luke mentions spices more generically at the events of the first Easter, and we know that myrrh would have been one of them.

Luke 24:1-9

These things about life and death and eternity – that’s a bit much to think about at Christmas, isn’t it?

But for the past 2,000 years, the celebration of His birth has been marked by the reminder of His death, because we believe too in the mystery of the resurrection, and that makes the promises of God, the promises of the Angels, the promises to Mary, to all the other people we meet on the way through – the death resurrection and victory of Jesus makes all of these things make sense.

Do you have a story like that? Because you can.

Christmas is the time when we get to be honest about how we feel about things, because it was the moment in history when God humbled Himself to our level – He made it possible for us to see and know and understand Him a little more.

Response

Today you have the chance today to receive Jesus’s offer of forgiveness and healing – of salvation.

A simple prayer:

“Jesus, I choose now to make you the king of my life, my Lord. I choose now to separate my life from all the other things that took the place of god and king in my life. I ask you to forgive me of my sin and brokenness, and I receive your new life that you have for me. Thank you for washing me clean, and making me new. Amen!”

Discussion Questions and Reflections

1. Have you ever noticed before the way the Bible authors connect Jesus' birth and death? What do you personally think that means to the Christmas story in the Gospels?
2. God becoming a human being, and a baby human at that, is a difficult concept to really grapple with. How have you thought through this before? What does it mean to you personally?
3. God needing to become human is also a big challenge to us. What does the idea of free choice and freely being able to love other people (or not) look like for you?
4. Does that idea of free choice make the choice of Jesus to die for each one of us more significant to you?
5. God began with the end in mind – Jesus was marked at His birth for the life and death and resurrection that would open the way for all to come back to God. How does God's planning change the way you think about Jesus' life?
6. It is a revelation of God's love through the acts of Jesus. Has God's love touched your heart? What does that mean to you? How has that changed you?
7. Where we are before we meet Jesus, what He's done in our lives, and now how life is, can be as profoundly different as night and day. Do you have a story like that?
8. If you want to have a story like that, pray through the prayer above, reach out to someone who is a follower of Jesus, or let us know at Riverlife – send us an email at church@riverlifechurch.org.au and we can make contact and walk through this amazing journey with you.
9. If you already have a story like that, spend some time reflecting on that journey, and how God can use your story this Christmas to touch someone else's story. Ask Him who those people are, and be bold in your love to have a conversation with them about Jesus.