

Welcome

Hymn TIS 124 - Great God, we sing that mighty hand

Great God, we sing that mighty hand
by which supported still we stand;
the opening year your mercy shows,
and mercy crowns it at its close.

By day, by night, at home, abroad,
still we are guarded by our God;
by his incessant bounty fed,
by his unerring counsel led.

With grateful hearts the past we own;
the future, all to us unknown,
we to your guardian care commit,
and peaceful leave before your feet.

In scenes exalted or depressed,
you are our joy and you our rest;
your goodness all our hopes shall raise,
adored through all our changing days.

Greeting

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Sentence of the Day

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Matthew 2:11

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

Lord, have mercy on us, and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit

Prayer of the Day

Eternal God, who by a star led Magi to the worship of your son Jesus; guide the nations of the earth by your light, that the whole world might see your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

The Ministry of the Word

Jeremiah 23:3-8 (NIV)

³ “I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴ I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD.

⁵ “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

⁶ In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.

This is the name by which he will be called:

The LORD Our Righteous Savior.

⁷ “So then, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when people will no longer say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ ⁸ but they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ Then they will live in their own land.” Jeremiah 23:3-8

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalms 72:1-12 (NIV)

¹ Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness.

² May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.

³ May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness.

⁴ May he defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; may he crush the oppressor.

⁵ May he endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations.

⁶ May he be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth.

⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.

⁸ May he rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

⁹ May the desert tribes bow before him and his enemies lick the dust.

¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts.

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

¹² **For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.**

Acts 17:5-9

⁵ But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶ But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here," ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." ⁸ When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. ⁹ Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Matthew 2:1-12 (NIV)

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "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."

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. Matthew 2:1-12

This is the gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Sermon - Epiphany - Christmas Presents

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the holy
Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died
and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead,
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there
he will come to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the
forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom. **Blessed be God forever.**

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

The Lord's Prayer

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,
**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be
done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we
forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from
evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Exhortation

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we who would come to the holy communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ must consider how St Paul exhorts us to examine ourselves before presuming to eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

For the benefit is great, if with a penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy sacrament. We then spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood; we dwell in Christ and he in us; we are one with Christ and Christ with us.

Yet also the danger is great if we receive the bread and cup unworthily. Judge yourselves therefore, that you be not judged of the Lord. Repent truly of your sins, having a steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour. Amend your lives and love your neighbour.

Above all, give hearty thanks to God for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, truly God and truly human, who humbled himself to death on the cross for us sinners, that he might make us children of God, and raise us to eternal life.

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to strengthen and comfort you. But first, let us make a humble confession of our sins to almighty God.

Confession

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all people, we acknowledge with shame the sins we have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against your divine majesty, provoking most justly your wrath and indignation against us.

We earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for all our misdoings. Have mercy on us, most merciful Father. For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please you in newness of life, to the honour and glory of your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy has promised forgiveness of sins to all who with hearty repentance and true faith turn to him: have mercy on you; pardon and deliver you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness; and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hear the words of assurance for those who truly turn to Christ: If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the perfect offering for our sins. 1 John 2:1-2

Hymn TIS 314 As With gladness men of old

**As With gladness men of old, Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light, Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we, Evermore be led to Thee.**

**As with joyful steps they sped, To that lowly manger-bed;
There to bend the knee before, Him whom heaven and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet, Ever seek the mercy-seat.**

**As they offered gifts most rare, At that manger rude and bare;
So may we with holy joy, Pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring, Christ to Thee, our heavenly King.**

**Holy Jesus! every day, Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past, Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide, Where no clouds Thy glory hide.**

**In the heavenly country bright, Need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown, Thou its sun which goes not down:
There for ever may we sing, Alleluias to our King.**

The Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, Lord, Mighty Creator and Eternal God. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Glory to you, O Lord most high.**

Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

All glory to you, our heavenly Father, for in your tender mercy you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death on the cross for our redemption: who made there, by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and instituted, and in his holy gospel commanded us to continue, a perpetual memory of his precious death until his coming again.

Hear us, merciful Father, we humbly pray, and grant that we who receive these gifts of your creation, this bread and this wine, according to your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood; who on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given you thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' Likewise after supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, 'Drink from this, all of you; for this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' Amen.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

After Communion

Almighty and everliving God, we heartily thank you that you graciously feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, and thus assure us of your

favour and goodness towards us and that we are true members of the mystical body of your Son, the blessed company of all faithful people, and are also heirs, through hope, of your eternal kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and passion of your dear Son. And we humbly beseech you, heavenly Father, so to assist us with your grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as you have prepared for us to walk in, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, world without end.

Hymn TIS 322 The north wind is tossing the leaves

**The north wind is tossing the leaves
The red dust is over the town
The sparrows are under the eaves
And the grass in the paddock is brown
As we lift up our voices and sing
To the Christ-child the heavenly King**

**The tree-ferns in green gullies sway
The cool stream flows silently by
The joy-bells are greeting the day
And the chimes are adrift in the sky
As we lift up our voices and sing
To the Christ-child the heavenly King**

Notices

Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Sermon - 4 January 2026 - Epiphany Matthew 2:1-12 - Christmas Presents

Did you get exciting presents for Christmas this year? Did you get presents that reflected the person who gave them to you, or had they put a lot of thought into what was most appropriate for you? Today we read about gifts that wise men brought to Jesus, and I went to consider how appropriate they were for who Jesus was and who he would come to be.

Back on Christmas Day we heard how the shepherds: poor, disreputable, low status shepherds were the first to visit Jesus. The angels had told them to expect a saviour, the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." The shepherds were told to expect a saviour, the Messiah, the Lord.

Today we hear of others at the other end of the human scale. We read about Magi, wise men from the east. But we also read of someone else at that end of the human scale. Do you remember what that was? It was king Herod. He had heard that a king of the Jews was born, and he was worried for his own rule.

He expected Jesus to be a political king and was worried that he might lose his own authority. He intended to do something about it and ordered all boys under the age of 2 in Bethlehem to be killed. This certainly wasn't out of character for what we know of Herod, as we know he had at least three of his own sons murdered so they would not threaten his rule, as well as several other family members.

Killing all boys under two also gives us a suggestion of how old Jesus was when the magi came. They also came to a house rather than the inn where Jesus was born, which also suggests that some time had passed, and they and the shepherds were unlikely to have crossed paths.

Getting back to the magi, in our psalm this morning we read 10 May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts. 11 May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him. The Psalm, Psalm 72 like many old testament prophecies that I have mentioned in previous sermons, likely had a more immediate fulfillment, in this case in King Solomon, king David's son and his successor as king and other builder of the first temple in Jerusalem. We know that foreign monarchs, like the queen of Sheba, presented tribute to Solomon, but the Psalm also pointed forward to a greater fulfillment in the eternal king of the Jews, the king of all Kings, Jesus Christ, the baby in the manger.

The magi expected to find one born to be a king, the king of the Jews. We aren't told why they expected this, except that it was somehow associated with a star that they saw rise. A lot of ink has been spilled over what this star was, from a comet, the conjunction of particular planets, or even a supernova. In short, we do not know, and because we don't know, it doesn't matter. If it was important, we would know, but all we do know is that the magi felt they had good reason, no doubt based on ancient

prophecies and the astronomy, our even astrology, so they travelled across the known world to find him.

If the magi had access to Jewish scriptures, our old testament, it would not be surprising that they were expecting a king. In addition to Psalm 72 which I mentioned earlier, our reading from Jeremiah this morning said "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.

Perhaps the most well known thing about the magi was the gifts that they gave Jesus; the gifts of gold frankincense and myrrh. These were very expensive, extravagant gifts worthy of a king, and may well also have been significant for what they represented.

The magi gave Jesus Myrrh. Myrrh was used for preparing bodies for burial as we know that after Jesus was crucified, Nicodemus brought about 40 kg of myrrh and aloes to prepare Jesus's body for burial. But myrrh also had other uses: Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh on the cross, presumably as a form of narcotic to dull the pain of his crucifixion. It was also used as a perfume, a cosmetic beauty treatment and in an anointing oil for consecrating the tent of meeting, altars and sacramental implements, which I think was the most significant here. The primary point seems to be that myrrh consecrated, or prepared something to be worthy of being in the presence of God, and so by bringing the baby Jesus myrrh, it symbolised Jesus's mission, to die for the sins of the world to prepare all who put their faith in him to be with God in eternal life.

Another gift was Gold. This precious metal gold doesn't rust or degrade and so is worthy as a tribute for a king or for God. Many of the furnishings and fittings in the tabernacle and the temple were gold, as it is one of the few materials worthy of God. This gift represented that Jesus would make us worthy of standing in the presence of God.

Frankincense was used extensively in the temple, for incense. The temple had an incense altar, and Moses was given a very specific recipe for temple incense that included equal amounts of the fragrant spices and frankincense. There were strict penalties if this incense was used for personal enjoyment or anything apart from its sacred purpose in the temple. The burning incense would produce an aroma pleasing to God, so giving frankincense to Jesus suggests that Jesus was not only making us worthy and consecrating us to be in the presence of God, that he would make us pleasing to God like the pleasing aroma of the smoke from frankincense incense.

By bringing Jesus myrrh, gold and frankincense, the magi express that Jesus would consecrate us to God, as done using myrrh, make us worthy of being in the presence

of God, as if we were gold, and ultimately, make us pleasing to God with the aroma of burning frankincense.

Worshipping God, is anything that expresses God's inestimable worth. So, in effect, by presenting their valuable gifts, the magi were expressing how worthy the apparently humble baby Jesus would be. The extravagant value of the gifts expressed the utmost worthiness of Jesus, at least as precious as gold, frankincense and myrrh. Yet the gifts were not only valuable, but symbolic, representing Jesus's mission of preparing, consecrating all who trust in him to eternal life and, despite our sin, making us pleasing to him.

Then, of course the gift giving wasn't enough, the Wiseman had to worship God. Worship is simply another way of demonstrating the worthiness of God. To emphasise this, the magi worship Jesus with words of song and no doubt by telling anyone who would listen the wonderful news they had.

Today we have seen two responses to the baby Jesus.

Herod was threatened by the news of Jesus. He thought the coming of another king of the Jews would prevent him from doing what he wanted to do. He wanted to rule without opposition, and thought another king would prevent that. I've heard that excuse why many people don't want to believe in Jesus. They think that if Jesus is who we believe he is then he will prevent them from doing what they want. There people think that Christianity is all about rules designed to stop people enjoying themselves.

On the other hand, the magi were looking forward to the king of the Jews promised in the old testament. They expected a shepherd over them who would tend them, and they would no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing as the LORD declared in our Jeremiah reading.

They also expected this king of the Jews would act in the way predicted in our psalm this morning, and worshipped him. They expected him to bring prosperity to the people, and the fruit of righteousness. He would defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy. He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations, and be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth. the righteous will flourish and prosperity abound till the moon is no more. They, like all kings, would bow down to him and all nations serve him, worshipping him.

How do you respond to Jesus the king? Do you feel threatened like king Herod, worried that following Jesus would prevent the enjoyment that you think sin brings you, or are you like the magi, expecting the blessings that Jesus promised, and responding with the worship that he deserves?

What sort of presents did you expect of Jesus this year, and how did you respond?