

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea... came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.”

Among the books in my library is a seven volume, authorized edition of O. Henry's collection of short stories, published in the early 1900's. Amid the hundreds of stories that William Sydney Porter penned, perhaps the best known and well-loved in this vast collection, is 'The Gift of the Magi.' The story is about a young couple, Jim, and Della, who are short of money but desperately want to buy each other Christmas gifts. Unbeknownst to Jim, Della sells her most valuable possession, her beautiful hair, in order to buy a platinum fob chain for Jim's watch; while unbeknownst to Della, Jim sells his own most valuable possession, his watch, to buy jeweled combs for Della's hair.

An excerpt from the last paragraph of the story reads, “The magi, as you know, were wise men... who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents.... And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest.... They are the Magi.”

This is no doubt a wonderful fictional story of love and unselfish giving at Christmas time, but the inspired account of the Magi and their gifts is recorded for us in Matthew 2:11; **“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”**

The Gold Presents Jesus as Potentate (His Deity)

In some countries, no one can approach a king without a gift. The wise men brought gold. First, it is a fitting gift. Gold is very appropriate for a king. Then, it is a foretelling gift as it tells us in advance that Jesus will rule and reign. Also, it was a foreordained gift. **God had before designed that Jesus's** family have monetary means to defray the cost of the journey into Egypt and back. God is the One Who meets our every need. He is King of Kings—Lord of Lords.

The Frankincense Presents Jesus as Priest (His Sinless Life)

A study of the word 'frankincense,' reveals that it was a priestly gift. It was used in the worship at the temple where sacrifices were offered up to God. The frankincense was a gummy substance from trees. It released a sweet-smelling odor. **Christ's** substitutionary death was an acceptable and sweet-smelling sacrifice to God. The Book of Hebrews tells us that His priesthood is permanent and powerful and procures for us entrance into the presence of God.

The Myrrh Presents Jesus as our Propitiation (His Death, Burial, and Resurrection)

'Myrrh' was a substance used to embalm dead bodies. It reminds us that Jesus came into the world to die for sinners. He came to 'propitiate' or 'satisfy' the holy demands of a just and righteous God. This was inclusive, important, and also indicative of **God's** love. Now, we **don't** have gold, frankincense, or myrrh to give to the King. Therefore, we have to give that which we do possess. We can give Him our love, our worship, and our service.

This Christmas we can follow the unselfish examples of Jim and Della, and we can pattern our giving after the Magi of old. And of course, the Supreme lesson on giving is from God Himself. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

Christmas is about giving. Marines have always given their time, their resources, and their talents, to God, Country, and Corps. Continue the tradition of giving in 2022 with the Marine Corps League. **'Wise men'** (drill instructors) have said; **“You can give your heart to Jesus** (hope that you have), but your a __ belongs to the Marine Corps!”

MERRY CHRISTMAS MARINES! Semper Fi

Chaplain Ron