

WHAT SHALL WE BRING HIM?

Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Day

December 25, 2014

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A father was interrupted by his daughter, Nancy, one evening while he was reading the newspaper. “Daddy,” she said, “We have a play for you.

Obediently the father followed her into the living room. Right away he knew it was a Christmas play for at the foot of the piano bench was a lighted flashlight, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a shoe box.

Rex, age 6, came in wearing his father’s bathrobe and carrying a mop handle. He sat on the piano bench looking intently at the flashlight in the shoe box. Nancy draped a sheet over her head and stood behind Rex. “I’m Mary and this is Joseph,” she said.

Enter cousin Trudy with pillowcases over her arms saying, “I’m an angel.” Then came daughter Anne. Her father knew she was a Wiseman because she moved as if she was riding on a camel. On the pillow she carried three items—undoubtedly gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Anne bowed to the flashlight, to Mary and Joseph, to Trudy the Angel, and to her father. Then she announced, “I’m all three Wisemen. I bring the baby Jesus three precious gifts: gold, circumstance and mud.”

The father, of course, did everything he could to suppress a roaring laugh which would have ruined the play for these children. Yet after he thought about it for awhile it began to make sense to him. It made sense that whenever we come to Jesus; whenever we meet him face to face that we should always bring him our gold, our circumstances, and our mud.

This is also the message for each one of us this Christmas. As we take the time to worship and focus on Jesus, our Savior born in Bethlehem, what more appropriate things can any of us bring but these three?

We should first of all bring him our gold. We should come to Jesus and offer him our whole life—everything we have and everything we are. Christmas is about receiving God’s gifts in Jesus of life, forgiveness and peace. Then in turn it is about giving ourselves in love and service to others. There is no more appropriate gift to bring to the Christ child than to offer him our whole life, everything we have and everything we are.

The author Tolstoy told the story of a shopkeeper who told his friends that he had a vision that the Lord Jesus was going to come to his house and be his guest. In response he got very busy getting his shop ready.

It was Christmas Eve and he had strewn his place with branches of fir. The table was set, and the kettle on the stove was shiny and ready. Over the rafters he had strung some holly. Then he said,

“Now I’ll wait for my Lord to appear. I’ll listen closely so I can hear his steps on my humble doorway.”

His friends all went home and with his family gone, he was all alone. Yet he knew that the Lord’s coming would make this the happiest Christmas of all. He listened intently for every sound; occasionally he watched through the window to see if Jesus was coming.

Finally the sound of footsteps brought him to the window yet all he saw was a beggar trudging through the snow. His clothes were shabby and shoes were worn. The shopkeeper felt sorry and opened the door and said, *“I have some shoes for you; some clothes to make you warm.”* The man was very happy and he went on his way with joy in his heart.

It was getting late and still Jesus had not come. *“Why is he so late?”* the man wondered. There was a knock at the door yet again it was only a stranger. This time it was an old woman, bent and wearing a shawl. All she wanted was a place to rest—yet his place, the shopkeeper told her, was reserved for a very special guest.

“Don’t send me away,” she said. *“Let me rest for awhile on this Christmas Eve.”* So he brewed her a cup of coffee and she sat at the table to sip it.

Again he waited. Jesus will surely come soon. Suddenly out of the stillness came a shout, *“Please help me and tell me where I am.”* It was a little child; she was lost from her family on Christmas Eve. Again the storekeeper was disappointed, yet he called her in and dried her tears; then he led her back to her home.

As he returned and entered his darkened doorway he knew that the Lord was not coming to his house that night. So he went to his room and prayed, *“Dear Lord, why did you delay? What kept you from coming to call on me? I wanted so much to see your face.”* But then a voice spoke to him, *“I have kept my word; three times my shadow crossed your door.”*

“You see,” said the voice, *“I was the beggar shabby, bruised and cold. I was the woman you gave food and drink. I was the child on the homeless street.”* Jesus came clothed in the bodies of these strangers--*“the least of these my brothers and sisters”* as Jesus called them. Sharing himself—his time, food, shelter—was doing it unto Jesus.

My friends, that is what Christmas is all about. It is receiving Jesus by faith; it is receiving his gifts of life and salvation. Then in turn it is giving of ourselves to Jesus’ service by sharing with others. There is really no more appropriate gift to bring the Christ child this Christmas than our gold.

Secondly, we as his followers should bring to Jesus our circumstance(s). Everyone of us have a particular circumstance that our lives are in. Perhaps you are worried about your health or the health of a loved one. Perhaps you are concerned about a rebellious child, or about financial problems, or about your marriage that has drifted a part.

Whatever circumstance your life is in Jesus beckons you to bring it to him. He says to each one, *“I understand.”* This is the true message of Christmas. Jesus was born as a human being just like you and me, therefore whatever we face in life he has faced it.

Whether it be suffering, or loneliness, or betrayal, or temptation, or death—Jesus has faced it too. He understands what you are going through and he beckons you to bring him your circumstance. As we do he gives us his love, peace and strength for whatever we face.

Bernie was in the hospital; he had inoperable cancer and was dying. *“I was lying there,” he said, feeling distressed and wondering if God was real at all. So I prayed to God and when I opened my eyes Jesus was standing in the corner of my room. Great numbers of people came to him and they would reach in their clothes, take out their hearts and give them to the Lord; and he would smile.”*

“First the grownups came,” said Bernie, “and then the children. After I watched for awhile I got out of my bed, walked over to where Jesus was standing and took out my heart and handed it to him. He put his hand on my shoulder and said just one word, ‘Peace.’ From that moment on,” said Bernie, “I was at peace with my dying.”

Bernie had experienced the true gift of Christmas. He came to Jesus with his circumstance, gave it to him, and was now at peace. He knew that Jesus was his loving Savior and Lord; he knew that even death could not separate him from Jesus' love; he knew he would have eternal life.

The third thing we need to bring to the Christ-child this Christmas is our mud. Now mud, of course, is made out of clean water with lots of dirt added. This in many ways, of course, is the story of our lives. There are many today who have muddied up their lives with their sins, failures and mistakes. For some it is like their lives are stuck in the mud and cannot get out.

It is of utmost importance, therefore, that we bring Jesus the mud of our sinful lives. Only Jesus can wash away our sins and make us clean. The message of Jesus' cross and resurrection is that our sins are now forgiven. The mud is taken away and we are made whiter than snow.

I saw a Dennis the Menace comic strip many years ago where Dennis was trying his hardest to remember his line for the Sunday School Christmas program. His line was the familiar words of the angels to the shepherds: *“I bring you glad tidings.”* Not being familiar with these words Dennis asked his parents and they explained that “glad tidings” means “good” or “awesome news.”

When it came time for him to say his line in the program Dennis hesitated. He stumbled, “I bring you gl....,” forgetting the exact words to say. All of a sudden his face lit up and he literally shouted out the line in his own words, *“Wow! Have I got some awesome news for you!”*

This Christmas, my friends, we can also proclaim these words, *“Wow! Have we got some awesome words for you!”* The awesome news that Jesus is born; the awesome news that he is our loving Savior and friend.

The awesome news that we can bring to him today and everyday our gold, our circumstance, and our mud. A blessed Christmas to each one of you this day!