

Heart of Christmas 3 - Myrrh
Pastor Joe Oakley – GFC – 12-24-24

We are in a sermon series entitled The Heart of Christmas. We're basing this series on the Christmas story and the gifts that the wise men gave to Jesus. We find this in Matthew 2:1-11

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

... and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

When they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. When they opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The wise men gave Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh. We can give Jesus the same three things.

As we've already seen – gold represents giving God our wealth,
 Frankincense represents giving God our worship,
 And myrrh represents giving God our whole lives.

My sermon is entitled The Gift of Myrrh – Giving God our Whole Lives.

Jesus left heaven to be born on earth for several reasons. Matthew 1:18-23 says: This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel: - which means, "God with us."

This passage shows us the two main reasons Jesus came to earth:

Jesus came to save us from sin

Jesus came to be God with us.

But there's another reason that some people are not as familiar with.

2 Corinthians 5:15 tells us:

He died for everyone so that those who receive His new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

Not only did Jesus die to save us from our sins, but He also died to save us from ourselves! Because left to ourselves we will only make a mess of our lives.

We think we know what is best for us, but God truly knows what is best for us. That requires us not to trust in ourselves – our good works or our wisdom or our desire to go our own way and do our own thing and thing asking God to bless it. Instead, we must trust in Jesus – in His work on the cross, in His wisdom, going His way and doing His will because that is where the blessing is!

God wants the same thing from all of us – everything!
He doesn't just want part of you – He wants all of you!

God wants to be in the same place in all our lives – first place. That means giving everything we are to God...our hopes, dreams, marriage, children, finances, careers, houses, health, past, present, future, success, failures, disappointments, joys, our everything. The Message paraphrase of Romans 12:1 says:

Take your everyday, ordinary life -- your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life -- and place it before God as an offering.

But how do we do that? How do we give God our whole lives? How do we go from: trying to control our own lives to giving control of our lives to God?
thinking only of ourselves to of thinking of others?
wanting our own way to delighting in God's ways?
living for God on Sunday to living for God every day?
giving God part of our life to giving God all of our life?

The answer is found in the gift of Myrrh. Myrrh is a sticky substance that comes from the stem of a low, thorny, ragged tree that grows in Arabia and Africa. In ancient times, myrrh was used in embalming dead people. In fact, after Jesus was crucified, Nicodemus brought myrrh to embalm His body. So Myrrh was associated with death.

So when we give the gift of myrrh to the Lord... it's about dying. Not physical death but death to our self... to our selfish ways. Giving God our whole lives means dying to our selfish desires. It means denying our self and taking up our cross. In Luke 9:23 Jesus said:

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

Dying to self means we must:

Choose God's will over our will...that is a death to self.

We must choose God's way over our way...that is a death to self.

We must choose God's plan over our plan...that is a death to self.

To die to self means to say no to yourself and yes to God.

No to your will and yes to God's. That is a sacrifice pleasing to God.

Kids – I'll give you some examples of dying to self. Dying to self is when:

You choose to love someone you don't even like.

You forgive when you'd rather get even or hold a grudge.

You don't call someone a name when they call you one.

You don't do wrong even though everybody else is "doing it."

You treat your brother or sister right when they treat you wrong.

You obey your parents when they tell you to do something you don't want to do.

This is what it means to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus!

None of those things are natural to us – that's why we must die to self.

What will it cost us to give God our whole lives? EVERYTHING!

Philippians 3:8 says:

Everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.

This verse makes it really simple. If we want to know Christ it will cost us everything.

Does that mean we give everything away or literally lose it all? Sometimes it might mean that, but usually it means letting go in our hearts. We must be willing to let go of everything in order to know Him. Nothing can mean more to us than God.

In our messages on gold and frankincense, we saw that worshippers are givers!

You cannot worship without giving. That's because the essence of worship is giving.

Worship is giving ourselves totally to God in abandonment and intimacy.

Radial worship gives everything to God. It holds nothing back. Romans 12:1 says:

I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

What does this mean?

In view of God's mercy, since God has been merciful to us – since He has been kind and compassionate even though we don't deserve it – since He has sent His Son Jesus to die for us...

Because of that – we should offer ourselves – These are the same words used when bringing and presenting an animal or other sacrifice before an altar. It implies that the action was a free and voluntary offering.

Because of God’s mercy, we should present ourselves to God a living sacrifice. Most sacrifices die. We are dead to sin – but alive to Christ. We are living sacrifices - we devote our lives to the service of God. This is our spiritual act of worship – our free will offering – We are to offer our entire selves, all that we have and are, to God. No other offering is greater than dying to self..

This is a sacrifice because we all want to be able to do things in our own strength and wisdom and keep all the glory for ourselves. But God is looking for people who are more interested in glorifying Him than themselves. God is looking for a people whose entire trust is in Him and Him alone.

Kids, how many of you have ever played the game Simon Says? It’s a game where someone give you instruction, but you only obey when they say Simon Says to do it. If Simon says to clap – you clap. But if the leader just says clap – you don’t clap.

Simon Says is a test of your willingness to listen to instruction or to decide to ignore it all together. It is a test because we all have been given a will of our own. This will consists of our own desires and convictions.

Every day we make many decisions. And we should not go through life making decisions based on what we want or what we think is right. We must go through life making decisions based on what God says. If God says, “Do this,” we do it. If God says, “Don’t do that,” we don’t do it.

God loves us and knows what is best for Him so we should trust what He says. And we find what He says in the Bible. So we must base our lives and our choices on what God says in the Bible. Sometimes that means we must give God the gift of myrrh by dying to what we want and then doing what He wants.

Self-centered people have a hard time worshipping. Why? Because in worship your focus must get off of yourself and onto God. True worship always involves giving and sacrifice. Worship is not about us; it’s all about God. Worship does not focus on us; it focuses on God. In worship we give before we receive. Worship is costly. Worship requires a death to self. Worship requires a sacrifice. Worship means we must put God first.

Worship is more than singing songs or lifting your hands – you can do those things and not worship. True worship flows out of a heart that is dead to self and alive to God.

Romans 12:1 shows us what it takes to break that barrier of selfishness: it takes sacrifice. You cannot truly worship without giving, without sacrifice. You see – the word sacrifice literally means to give up something – for someone else.

This is the heart of Christmas – giving our hearts and our lives to God. What can motivate us to die to self and live for God? The motivation is found in what Jesus said in Matthew 10:39

Whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Most of us are trying to find our lives. We're searching for happiness, fulfillment, and pleasure.

- We try to find it in things like getting married or getting divorced.
- Having a child or waiting for the children we have to move out.
- In buying a new house or in selling the one we have.
- In getting more money or in investing our money.
- In drugs, alcohol, sports, careers, affairs.

We'll do whatever we think it takes to find our life. But we've got it all backwards. Jesus said that finding our life means losing it.

That's the good news: when we do it God's way we find life. We find joy and peace in Him and He gives us a better life than we could ever have imagined. But before we can fully experience God's life and power, we must die to ourselves and give our whole lives to God.

That's what Christmas is about. That is the gift we can all give to God. Christ's gift to us was to die for us – our gift to Him is to die to ourselves and live for Him!

Don't miss the purpose of Christmas. Jesus is the reason for the season, but in some circles you hear more about Santa Claus or something else.

But Christmas is not about what's under the tree.
It's about the man called Jesus who hung on the tree.

It's not about having a vacation. It's about having salvation.

It's not about Jingle Bells – it's about the angels' Noels.

It's not about Father Christmas – it's about Father God.

Christmas is not about Jack Frost – it's about Jesus saving the lost!

It's not about Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer – it's about Jesus and His red-stained cross.

It's not about the Grinch who Stole Christmas – it's about the Christ who gave Christmas.

It's not about Frosty the Snowman – it's about Jesus making you a new man.

Don't miss the greatest gift you can ever receive.
In history's greatest miracle, God became a human being.

That's why we celebrate Christmas: Jesus came to earth to die for our sins and give us His gift of eternal life and relationship with God. And as a result of receiving Jesus – you receive peace, joy and love!

If you are here without the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior, please do yourself a favor and seek out the truth about Jesus.

The greatest gift you can give God is you! Your heart and your life.
You do that by receiving Jesus as your savior, your Lord and your life.
Romans 10:9 says:

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Are you ready to do that today? Let's pray.