

Second Sunday in Advent

Jesus Is Our Treasure

Prayer: Lord, help us to show our gratitude for who you are and what you do for us through our generous giving. Amen.



In the Christmas story, we are told that the magi followed the brilliant star in the sky to find Jesus. These noblemen were seeking the “King of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2). The star led them to Bethlehem and “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 and of incense and of myrrh” (Matthew 2:11).

When the magi entered the house and saw the baby Jesus, they immediately “bowed down and worshiped him.” Before they gave their gifts, they first showed their reverence. In essence, they gave themselves. Their hearts were filled with joy to be in the presence of the King. After they had shown Jesus their adoration, they gave their gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh.

The magi willingly gave their gifts because they had first given their hearts to Jesus. In much the same way that the magi gave, the apostle Paul refers to the giving of the people in the Macedonian churches. In his letter to the church in Corinth, he asks the church to give to the needy church in Jerusalem. As an encouragement for their giving, he refers to the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. “Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not as we expected but they gave themselves first to the Lord . . .” (2 Corinthians 8:2-5).

Both the magi and the people in the Macedonian churches gave themselves before they gave their gifts. It is self-giving before it is money-giving. Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Through Word and Sacrament, Jesus reveals himself to us as our treasure, and for that our hearts are eager to respond in generous giving.

Second Saturday in Advent

What Have I Given for Him?

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for the most indescribable gift, the gift of your Son, Jesus. Help us to serve him with love and obedience. In your name we pray. Amen.

Christmas is the gift-giving season. Even though the stores are super-stocked, it is often difficult to find just the right gift for every person on our lists. God had no such problems. He knew exactly what each person needed. In fact, he knows our needs better than we know them, and he knew them before we were ever born. The timing of his most indescribable gift was perfect. “When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Galatians 4:4). Now, that’s a gift that can’t be topped! And it’s the gift that truly keeps on giving! Jesus has given us full rights as children of God!

How do we respond to what God has given us? Shouldn’t we be asking, “What have I given to him?” Certainly, we don’t go to the malls to shop for Jesus, but we do know that we please him by our love and obedience. The best gift that we can possibly give him is our hearts and to show him our love by faithfully and obediently doing what he asks of us such as:

- ✝ **“Follow Me” (Matthew 4:19)**
- ✝ **“Become the salt and light of the earth” (Matthew 5:13-14)**
- ✝ **“Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44)**
- ✝ **“Do not store up treasures on earth” (6:19)**
- ✝ **“Give freely” (Matthew 10:8)**
- ✝ **“Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 19:19)**
- ✝ **“Go and bear fruit” (John 15:16)**
- ✝ **“Feed My sheep” (John 21:17)**

Our Heavenly Father is pleased when we seek to please him by doing his will. In fact, we do his will by merely allowing him to work in us. As the apostle Paul wrote, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). Through us, God can do extraordinary things.

In this Advent season, remember that, even though we don’t gift-wrap gifts for Jesus, we can give him the gifts of our love and obedience.

Third Thursday in Advent

Telling Others about Jesus

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to go out and tell those around us of your love. Help us to be your witnesses. In your name we pray. Amen.

At the birth of a child, most parents make numerous telephone calls to relatives and friends to tell them about the wonderful news. In addition to telephone calls, announcement cards are often sent. When Jesus was born, there were no telephones or mail service. However, God had a better method of announcing the birth of his Son. He used his angels. “And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger’” (Luke 2:8-14).

God, in his sovereignty, did not choose the rulers of the time nor the wealthy to be among those who were the first to hear of Jesus’ birth. Interestingly, he chose a group of people who, in many ways, were considered outcasts. Upon hearing the good news of the Christ child, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see Jesus in the manger.

After seeing Jesus, the shepherds went out and “spread the word concerning what had been told to them about this child” (Luke 2:17). God used these people to be his ambassadors. The people who heard the shepherds talk about Jesus were “amazed at what the shepherds said to them” (verse 18).

Like the shepherds, we are called to be faithful witnesses of Jesus and his love. Once we begin to comprehend his love for us, we will be compelled to share that love with others. In telling others, we reflect our gratitude for his love, grace, and mercy. God hears and sees our gratitude through the way we live our lives.

Third Friday in Advent

Light in the World

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for being our light in a dark world. Grant us your strength to be a beacon of light to others. In your name we pray. Amen.

Regardless of how you decorate your Christmas tree, the one essential is that it have lights—the more, the better! As you drive around your city during this Christmas time, you see homes with various reminders of the season, and the common ingredient is lights - the more, the better! As stewards who celebrate the birth of the Christ child, we understand that these lights are but dim symbols of the one True Light, the Light of the World, who has come into our world and into our hearts. Jesus told us, “I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes me should stay in darkness” (John 12:46).

Our celebration at Christmas is much more than the gatherings of families and friends and the exchange of gifts, although that is part of it. Our earthly celebrations have eternal roots. “For [we] were once darkness, but now [we] are light in the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8). Before we were claimed by our Savior, we were darkness. His appearance has changed all that, and we are now “light in the Lord.”

Because of who we are ... Christ’s redeemed called to be stewards of all his gifts ... the apostle Paul continues the statement of identity above by writing, “Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8-10).

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

May the lights of this Christmas season continue to remind us of our high calling.

