

Gold: A King is Born Today
Gifts of Christmas
Matt 2 + Micah 5
12/03/23

Introduction

Matthew 2 + Micah 5:1-5. Pray.

Gifts. This past week I had the unfortunate realization that a distinct weakness of mine was not as secret as I had previously thought. I've worked hard to try and cover this up, to sort of get by, and hide it and do what I could to make sure other people didn't realize this unfortunate truth about me – but apparently this character flaw is much more public than I realized.

And that is – *I am a horrendously terrible gift giver.*

I mean so bad that this coming Friday we have our staff Christmas party and we're doing a secret santa, and someone on our team, I won't name names actually told me "I hope you didn't draw my name." And to be honest...I don't blame them. I'm so bad at it.

And so I feel a lot of pressure for this Friday. I want to do a good job. I want to get something that is really going to make the person feel valued and known and loved.

Because here's what we all know to be true – gifts say something about both the person giving the gift and the person receiving the gift.

For example, Lindsay for the past 5 years has given me the same gift for Christmas. Onyx Coffee Roaster, my favorite roaster based out of Arkansas, does a coffee advent calendar. A Chemex Pour Over worth of 24 of the world's best coffees. I love it. That gift says something about Lindsay – she's very generous to me. It is not cheap. And it says something about me – I am occasionally very bougie.

And so I want to do a good job and get a good gift because it says something about me – how much I have thought about this person, value them, their friendship, their place on our team.

But also because it says something about them – what they value, who they are, what they're interested in.

Gifts say something about the one who's giving and the one who's receiving.

And that's some of the heart behind our advent series for this year.

We're aiming to examine this familiar story of the birth of Jesus together through the lens of the **gifts** the wise men, or magi, bring to Jesus after his birth.

- Last week, Dan showed us what these gifts say about the wise men. That rather than having a posture of **indifference** like the Jewish leaders, or **opposition** like King Herod. They traveled all this way ready to worship the newborn king.

Over the next 3 weeks we're going to explore together what the gifts say about the one receiving them – what do these gifts say, or declare, about this child. This is something theologians have asked and wrestled with for years.

That there is beautiful imagery in the specific gifts the Magi bring.

When they lay before Jesus gold, frankincense, and myrrh – those gifts are pointing to, prophesying, bigger realities about who this child is, what he will do, and the story being written over all of humanity and the world.

We sang about this reality last week and this week in the beautiful song **Joy Has Dawned – Shepherds bow before the Lamb, gazing at the glory. Gifts of men from distant lands, prophesy the story.**

Or consider the words of Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon, just a century after the life of Jesus, when he writes, **“Having been led by the star into the house of Jacob to Emmanuel, the magi showed, by these gifts which they offered, who it was that was worshiped.**

The gifts of the Magi declare eternal truths about the Messiah. And so we’re spending the next three weeks talking about these gifts. What does each gift point to and declare about this boy named Jesus.

Gold and Kings

We’ll start today with **gold**.

Gold was one of the most scarce and valuable resources in the ancient world. In fact because of just how scarce it was, it was reserved and possessed, typically only by kings, or monarchs. Kings were not the only ones in the ancient world who had wealth, riches, or prosperity. But they tended to be the only ones who had gold. And if someone else had gold and they weren’t a king, let’s just say they tended to not have it very long.

Gold was for kings. To have gold, spend gold, use gold, to be given gold...was a sign you were a king.

There’s a famous story in 1 Kings 10 where the queen of Sheba comes to visit King Solomon, son of David and Jesus’ great, great, great on and on grandfather. And he gives her a tour of his palace, and the city. And she’s so blown away her response is basically – “You’re the man. Obviously you’re in charge of everything. You’re the king.” And then gives him tons and tons of gold.

Gold is for kings.

And so that’s what’s happening here in Matthew 2. The magi have come, they’ve followed the star, found the Messiah, they fall down and worship Him and give him gold.

Gold tells us this child born in the manger is the king.

That’s part of what we celebrate at Christmas. That a king has come to rule and to reign. This little human, born in a manger surrounded by filthy, disgusting animals, visited by shepherds, hunted by monarchs, is the king of the world.

Micah + The Coming King

What does that mean?

Well that’s what I want to explore for the rest of our time together.

What does it mean that the king has come and why is that good news of hope and joy for us this advent season?

To see this, I want to hone in on that quote from the wise men in **Matt 2:6** – **““And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.””**

The magi here are quoting from the Old Testament book of Micah. Specifically Micah 5:2. This was written about 700 or so years before the birth of Jesus.

Now, one of the things you have to understand about the book of Matthew is that he is writing from a Jewish mindset to a predominantly Jewish audience.

And one of his primary goals is to help his Jewish audience see how all of the Old Testament is pointing to Jesus.

- And not just in the quick prophecies.
- But how even Jesus' birth is embodying the entire story of the Old Testament.

So when he notes the magi quoting a line like Micah 5 he wants the readers' minds to connect not just to that specific verse, but to go back to the story surrounding Micah 5.

What is that story? Here's the 30,000 ft flyover:

- About 700 years before the birth of Jesus, the people of Israel are under oppression from a foreign nation named Assyria.
- And they're there, very clearly, as punishment because of their rebellion against God.
- God has called them to be holy/set apart for him and yet wicked king after wicked king keeps leading them towards idols, towards false gods.
- And so they're facing judgment and punishment for their sin.
- They're beat down and beat up and oppressed by Assyria.

And it's into that story that Micah, the prophet, comes and declares this from God to God's people, **Micah 5:1...**

1 Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. 2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. 3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. 4 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. 5 And he shall be their peace.

In the midst of their oppression and suffering and torment at the hands of their enemy God says – I will raise up a shepherd-king from Bethlehem to deliver you, and you will dwell secure in peace/shalom/rightness and flourishing forever.

If you keep reading the story of Israel that does happen in part. God raises up Hezekiah, a good and godly king, and empowers him to lead Israel to freedom from their enemy.

But now, here we are 700 years later. Matthew is using this quote from the magi to declare – this is happening once again.

Do you remember Israel – when you were in slavery? In captivity? Oppressed by your enemy?

Do you remember what God did to raise up a shepherd-king from Bethlehem to deliver you and bring you into His flourishing presence forever?

Guess what – that was just a foreshadowing. There’s a dual-fulfillment. Yes it pointed in one sense to Hezekiah. But Micah 5 also points even farther forward. To here and now. To a virgin named Mary. To a manger. To a boy named Jesus.

To this moment. Here and now. A new king has been born. A new shepherd-king from Bethlehem has come to deliver God’s people from their enemy and bring them into his flourishing presence forever.

King Jesus

So Matthew is using this quote from the magi and the gift of gold, to show his Jewish audience – everything Micah says about this king is true in Jesus.

What are those things? Well let’s see them together.

1. The King will defeat the Enemy

3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.

From the very beginning of time, the enemy of God and His people, who the Scriptures call “the devil” has been waging war via his kingdom of darkness against the kingdom of God, the kingdom of light. We don’t live in a neutral world. We live in a world at war. Cosmic, global, historical spiritual war.

In the words of author CS Lewis – **“There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second is claimed by God, and counterclaimed by Satan.”**

From the very beginning of time – Satan, sin, and death have been pressing on God’s people. Waging war on us through temptation, suffering, hurt, loss. And we feel the sting of it, do we not?

- We feel the sting of the sin of others. When we’re hurt, betrayed, confused.
- We feel the sting of our own sin. When we do damage to both ourselves and those we love, and our relationship to God.

Just like the Israelites in 700 BC we too are in need of deliverance. We too need a king to come and deliver us. We need a king to come and set us free. We need a king to come and rescue us from Satan, sin, and death.

And that’s the good news of Advent. We do have a shepherd-king from Bethlehem. He is Jesus.

So here’s what that means – Despite all the songs about silent night and “we wish you a merry christmas.”. Despite all the coziness of blankets, candles, and lights – make no mistake about it – advent is not cute and quaint. Advent is not a cozy bed time story.

Advent is a declaration of war against the enemy of the people of God.

When Jesus is born in the little sleepy town of Bethlehem, it’s a full-on declaration of war.

- It’s like Gandalf arriving at the Battle of Helm’s Deep.
- It’s like the final battle in Avengers: Endgame, where the portals open up and out walk all the people who disappeared in the snap.

The shepherd King has come to deliver God's people.

I love how author **Sarah Carter** puts it, writing during December 2020, the Covid Christmas, marked by a year of pain, hurt, darkness, sadness, and sin and conflict.

She writes – **“The Incarnation is the invasion of God Himself into the Kingdom of Darkness, and the sweet baby Jesus sleeping in a manger is the Mighty God disguised in weakness, inaugurating His great ambush against Satan and his hideous cohort... A far cry from the typically American approach to the holiday season, but an image worth calling to mind given the times. How would Christmas look different if Christians celebrated it as it truly is: much more like D-Day than like a birthday party? At the Incarnation, God came among us - not to make us feel better or to inspire pretty songs, but to destroy the darkness that oppresses us. Christmas is a Divine coupe d'état, overthrowing the ruling powers of this fallen world; God wants His world back, and He Himself is coming to get it.”**

So here's why that's good news for you this advent season...Think about it this way for your life...

- The suffering you have experienced over 2023.
- The pain of loss that comes to the forefront in the holiday season.
- The sting of sins and addictions and brokenness left undealt with.
- The heartache of illness.
- The torment of relational conflict.

Advent is a declaration against all of that darkness - The King is here! And He has come to defeat satan, sin, and death. He has come to set His people free. To deliver us – from the power of sin, from the pain of sin, from the punishment of sin.

But not only has He come to deliver us, He has also come to bring us to Himself and make all things new.

2. The King will shepherd His people in strength.

Look back at **Micah 5:4-5 – 4 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.**

So not only will the Shepherd-King Jesus defeat our enemies – Satan, sin, and death that wage war on our souls. He will also gather His people to Himself.

That's what a shepherd does:

- A shepherd gathers his sheep to himself.
- A shepherd walks among His sheep.
- A shepherd cares for his sheep – giving them food and water, guiding them, looking after them.

This is what psalm 23 tells us about our shepherd king, right?

- He gives us what we need so we do not want.
- He restores our souls.
- He leads us in paths of righteousness.
- He guides us in the valley of the shadow of death.
- He anoints our head with oil.
- AND the promise that we will dwell in His house, be with Him forever.

Advent is a declaration of war against the kingdom of darkness – you will be defeated.

It's also a declaration of hope when we're in darkness – you have a good shepherd.

A baby in a manger, and yet the king who still holds His people together.

3. The King will make all things right and whole.

Micah says in v5 – **5 And he shall be their peace.**

This word translated peace here is the Hebrew word **shalom**.

As Hebrew scholars have long understood it, to be living in shalom means that everything is right, **everything is as it should be**. There is flourishing... flourishing with God, flourishing with others, flourishing with creation, and flourishing with ourselves.

Shalom is how it was in the garden. Shalom is what was broken by sin. Shalom is what is being constantly disrupted by the enemy. Shalom was what God's people longed for for centuries. Shalom is what God has promised.

This is God's design for His people. Everything as it should be as the Kingdom of God rules and reigns over all. Wholeness and rightness between us and God, each other, creation, and ourselves.

And Micah says – this is what the Shepherd-King, not just brings, but is. He delivers His people from the enemy, and then HE HIMSELF is their peace.

Jesus doesn't just come to bring shalom, he is in himself the embodiment of shalom. The embodiment of flourishing and rightness and wholeness.

As He stands among His people, as He shepherds His flock, draws them to Himself – they experience shalom. Life now and forever as it was meant to be.

Summary and Application

This is what the gift of gold points us to.

- The magi come to see the child, they worship Him and give Him gold.
- Why do they give Him gold?
- Because He is the promised king!
- Which means what?
 - It means this child is the king who will defeat the enemy – satan, sin, and death.
 - It means this child is the king who will shepherd and gather his people.
 - It means this child is the king who will make all things new.

Personal. I don't know how you're walking into advent this year, but I'm walking in with a bit of a limp. I feel the weight of life.

- I see the pain of suffering in my life over the past year. The ways I've lived in the reality of a broken world. Relational pain. Emotional pain. The sting of loss. I've walked that this year.
- I see the pain of sin in my life over the past year. This has been a year of conviction for me. I've shared some of that publicly here – grumbling, impatience – areas of my life that I want to be more free from and yet still feel so much pull on my heart.

And so I don't need cute and cozy advent. I like cute and cozy. Big fan of lights and candles and carols.

But what I need, and what you need, is a shepherd-king from Bethlehem who has come to deliver His people from satan, sin, and death...gather us to himself...call us His own...and make us and all creation new again.

That's our hope. That's the promise. That's what Micah points forward to, what the Magi confirm, and what Advent declares – Christ has come. The King is here.

So we worship Him. We celebrate Him. We turn our hearts to Him.

Pray.