

Billy McDermott - A State of Grace

January 11, 2012

Words: 1948

Study: Epiphany of the Lord – Year B

Opening Prayer(s): [Act of Contrition](#) / [Sacrament of Reconciliation](#)

Theme: Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh / **Full Mass Readings (01/08/12):** [Isaiah 60:1-6](#) / [Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13](#) / [Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6](#) / [Matthew 2:1-12](#)

Passage: Isaiah 60:1-6

(NAB (1) Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. (2) See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. (3) Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. (4) Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses. (5) Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. (6) Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

Passage: Matthew 2:1-12

(NAB (1) When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, (2) saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." (3) When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (4) Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. (5) They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: (6) *And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.*" (7) Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. (8) He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." (9) After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. (10) They were overjoyed at seeing the star, (11) and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (12) And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

Expanded view:

- 1) Holy Innocents (12/30) [1 John 1:5-2:2 / Psalm 124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8 / Matthew 2:13-18](#)
- 2) Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:9-15, 20). How sin began. Light is arriving.

Explanation (St Charles Borromeo):

- Those who are from Midian, Ephah, and Sheba are all descendants of Abraham (Genesis 25:1-4). God's chosen people who were scattered long ago now come to participate in their ancient inheritance promised by God's covenant with Abraham. One day all nations will become God's children (Romans 4:17; 8:16-17).
- Four different Herods are mentioned in the New Testament. The first is Herod the Great, referred to in this passage and the next; the second is his son, Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist beheaded (Matthew 14:1-12) and who abused our Lord during His Passion (Luke 23:7-11); the third, Herod Agrippa I, a nephew of Herod the Great, who executed the apostle James the Greater (Acts 12:1-3), imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:4-7), and died suddenly and mysteriously (Acts 12:20-23). The fourth, Herod Agrippa II, was Herod Agrippa I's son -- it was before him that Paul answered Jewish accusations when he was a prisoner in Caesarea (Acts 23:23). Herod the Great, who appears here, was the son of non-Jewish (Arab) parents. He was a consummate politician and among other things he rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem on a lavish scale. Herod the Great had a persecution complex; everywhere he saw rivals to his throne. He was notorious for his cruelty: he killed over half of his 10 wives, some of his children, and many people of standing.
- In the time of Jesus, both Herod's monarchy and the occupying Romans recognized the Sanhedrin as the representative body of the Jewish people. The Sanhedrin was, therefore, the nation's supreme council which ruled on day-to-day affairs, both religious and civil. Following Exodus 24:1-9 and Numbers 11:16, the Sanhedrin was composed of 70 members presided over by the high priest. The members were elected from three groupings:
 - The chief priests, that is, the leaders of the principal priestly families; it was these families who appointed the high priest (the chief priests also included anybody who had formerly held the high priesthood).
 - The elders, or leaders of the most important families.
 - The scribes, who were teachers of the Law or experts in legal and religious matters – the majority of these scribes were Pharisees.

In this passage, only the 1st and 3rd groups are mentioned. This is understandable since the elders would have no authority in the matter of the birth of the Messiah.

- The prophets and the psalmists foretold that the kings of the earth would pay homage to God at the time of the Messiah (Isaiah 49:23). They would offer him their treasures (Isaiah 60:5-6) and adore Him (Psalm 72:10-15). Through the action of these wise men, these prophecies begin to be fulfilled; although there is no indication that these wise men were kings or emissaries of kings. The gifts offered were those most valued in the East and have symbolic meanings:

Points:

- light v dark (John 1:5)
- Micah 5:1

- Herod thought as a human. If given a choice between darkness or light, he would choose dark. Sin did not allow him to see light.
- Epiphany = manifestation. Christ manifests in us.
- Christ's brightness shines out, reaching the Magi who are the first-fruits of the pagan (Gentile) peoples. – *Pope Benedict XVI, 1/6/09*
- Jesus bar-Joseph. Christ = Messiah.

Gold ([Sarah Bowling](#))

- So that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:7)
- My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield than choice silver. (Proverbs 8:19)
- The Golden Rule - "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. (Matthew 7:12)
- People are important - I will make mortals more rare than pure gold, (Isaiah 13:12)
- (10) The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The statutes of the LORD are true, all of them just; (11) More desirable than gold, than a hoard of purest gold, (Psalm 19:10-11)
- The law of your mouth is more precious to me than heaps of silver and gold. (Psalm 119:72)
- Gold has ongoing value. It never catches a disease, never gets old, and never dies. You don't bury it.
- Jesus is like that for us. He is always valuable. Jesus never catches a cold, never gets weak, and never gets sick. He rose from the dead, so you can't bury Him.
- He is more precious to us than Gold!

Frankincense ([Sarah Bowling](#))

- Very strong odor.
- Incense
- Like a resin from a tree. When not dried out, it can be sticky. Smokes, doesn't catch fire. It simmers, to ash.
- Burnt to offset the smell of animals in sacrificial offerings, making it a savory sweet smell.
- (14) But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ and manifests through us the odor of the knowledge of him in every place. (15) For we are the aroma of Christ for God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing - (2 Corinthians 2:14-15)
- Diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge. Very few read the Bible. They only smell His fragrance. If we lose it, we never share the fragrance of Jesus.
- When we speak, we want them to something that is sweet and aromatic.
- Anointing, sacrifice, offering all deal with death. It was a foreshadowing

Myrrh ([Sarah Bowling](#))

- More of a perfume. Frankincense is so strong it shook you.
- Father is Gold. Frankincense is Jesus. Myrrh is Holy Spirit.
- Sweet aroma to it.

- Anointing oil (Exodus 30:23). Purification for women (Esther 2:12). Embalming.
- They gave him wine drugged with myrrh, but he did not take it. (Mark 15:23)
 - Jesus knew what was on the other side of the Cross. Us!
 - Didn't want His sense dulled. Much like alcohol today. He did not want His vision or thinking obscured.
 - He was looking into our eyes! He didn't want to lose vision of us.
- Wall of separation would be torn down. God would now have fellowship without impediment.
- Myrrh is a sweet smell. At His birth the gifts given would point to His death and resurrection. It would be a sweet smell.
- Keep Jesus in the sweetness of your prayer life.
- Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)
- When we pray, He is praying. What a sweet thing. Jesus is praying for you!
- Dry some Myrrh, bundle it, and wear it to prevent disease. A preservative, not a cure, like a disinfectant. It keeps us clean.
- Comes from a tree. White flowers, plum kind of fruit.
- Jesus = sweet / Myrrh = sweet.

All Three Gifts: ([Sarah Bowling](#))

- They were Kingly gifts. All were gifts you would bring a King (2 Kings 20:13). Did they expect a Baby?
- Three gifts were very special properties of who Jesus is and what we are to Him.
- Wise men still seek Him.
- There is no situation so grim that Jesus cannot turn around.
- Jesus is peace. Peace has grace in it.
- Wise men brought very strategic gifts. God is very efficient. Life is about process.
- The Jews and Romans did not kill Jesus. It was the plan of the Father from the foundation of the world.
- The Father has a plan for Jesus to die. Jesus willingly submitted to that plan. Through the power of the Holy Spirit offered Himself as a sacrifice for us.
- For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. (1 Corinthians 4:20)
- God can move any situation, and circumstance. Eyes and ears should be off the words of men. Eyes always should be on the Power's of God's Kingdom.

Imagine:

- Cleansing power of removing sin. Think of a clean house.

Other Scripture: John 19:39; Mark 16:1; Genesis 43:11; Genesis 37:25; Psalm 45:9; Proverbs 7:17; Luke 7:37-38, 44-48, 50; Song of Songs 1:13, 3:6, 4:6, 14, 5:1, 5, 13; Sirach 24:15; Revelation 8:3; Revelation 18:13. ([Suzetta Tucker](#)) ([Wayne Blank](#)).

Closing Prayer:

- Please God, I need the Son, Your Son, and lots of Him!
- I am sorry for the wrong things I have done in my life. Please come into my heart. Be my Lord and Savior! ([Sinner's Prayer](#))