

## Telling Gifts

*After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 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, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

*-Matthew 2:9-12*

One of the most nerve-racking things about Christmas can be gift giving. Trying to find the right item for the right person can become outright tedious. Hoping you don't purchase something someone already has and crossing your fingers the recipient of your gift hasn't spent more on you becomes frustrating. That's why we fall back on the phrase "it's the thought that counts."

However, the gifts brought by the wise men were fit only for a King. The gifts they brought were not haphazard or carelessly thought out. "It's the thought that counts" did not apply here. Gold was given to nobility and kings. It was also a measure of currency. Some have speculated this gift of gold came at the perfect time and was orchestrated by God; it would help finance the urgent emergency evacuation to Egypt that Mary and Joseph were about to undertake. Frankincense was an expensive incense used in religious rituals often times symbolizing the presence of holiness. Myrrh was a common perfume which was used to sprinkle on the bodies of the dead in preparation for burial. The gifts brought by the wise men were extremely telling: gold to signify Christ's nobility, frankincense to signify Christ's deity, and myrrh to signify Christ's coming sacrifice.

Even the festivities of Christmas loom under the shadow of the cross. The good news of Christmas is the reminder that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners and that salvation has come at a high cost.