

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Myrrh for a Baby?

*Matthew 2.1-12*

Epiphany is rather bittersweet. We read of the Wise Men coming all that way, with gifts for a baby that indicate profound specialness - a King, our God, our Saviour!

Yet, the threat of King Herod looms. When the Wise Men eventually find the baby, the immense joy of encountering the living God is cut short by the warning of the Angel, and the Holy Family flees the persecution of the jealous king.

These highs and lows are typical of Jesus' life. His miracles and mercies are interspersed with the deaths of his cousin John and his friend Lazarus; his rejection from his own hometown; his own friends and followers abandoning him at his arrest and the tragic injustice of the cross.

Not only Herod but the cross itself casts a shadow over the whole of the Epiphany story through the gift of myrrh alongside the gold and frankincense.

For myrrh is the oil used to prepare bodies for burial, and so it announces Jesus as Saviour of us all through the death he will die – not exactly the mood you want for a baby shower!

There isn't a moment of Jesus' ministry that isn't threaded through with sorrow. It all sounds rather depressing, but if anything, I find it incredibly hopeful.

Jesus, God-with-us, endures the same pain and loss and grief we do: the warring, the atrocities, the betrayal, the abuse, the abandonment, the injustice, the toil, the work of just getting through each day - yet no darkness, however desperate, can overcome his ultimate victory.

Jesus's story doesn't end with the horror of the cross. Instead, it continues with the incredible resurrection and his triumphant return to his Father in heaven, carrying with him a redeemed humanity; part of the Godhead forever, the way open for us.

Like with Jesus, our joys are inseparable from our pain. The deeper our love, the deeper our grief, the louder the joy, the sharper our sorrow at the end.

But just as our hardships are Jesus' hardships, so are his triumphs our triumphs and what he lives now is ours to come. Whatever any 'would-be-Herods' may try to do, the victory is already won, and it is won for all of us.

May we find indomitable joy in the birth of Christ this new year and take hope from the knowledge that nothing in this life – not pain, grief, power, greed, or even death itself – will have the final word over our life to come in Christ.

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