

EPIPHANY 2015 (Isaiah 60:1-6, Matthew 2:1-12)

Last year started by asking this: anyone seen this film? **SLIDE 1** (FROZEN) (ASK) Made link to story of Wise Men.

Got me thinking – one of things I've noticed in last couple of months is this (**SLIDE 2**) Anyone done one of these? (ASK) (No renditions now!)

What's link? – well, we'll be thinking about Wise Men as usual, but different twist. Like Frozen Singalong – same story, but you get to join in.

So with Wise Men – same story, but we'll be thinking about how those gifts apply to us as well. In a way, you get to join in!

What were gifts? (ASK) – **SLIDE 3**

And what did they mean? (ASK) GOLD (king), INCENSE (offering to God – prayer), MYRRH (burial – cross) – **SLIDE 4**

Strange gifts for a baby. Baby with a special identity and a special destiny.

Same person that we worship – 'Jesus is same yesterday, today and forever.'
What gifts will we bring him in 2015?

Same ideas – start with **GOLD**. Lots of ways we can show Jesus is king in our lives – ASK. Gold still a good one. What we spend our money on tells us what or who we worship. CS Lewis – 'bank statement is a theological document, it tells us what and who we worship.'

Hard at Christmas. Lots of gifts. Also lots of sales. Who's done a bit of this since Christmas (**SLIDE 5**) – so have we!

Do you know how much we spent at shops/online in 2014? (**SLIDE 6**) £342bn – £5,700 for every person, or £110pw – highest ever (despite difficult econ)

First challenge for us: will we honour Jesus with our gold this year?

Give out coin – eat later – challenge – as you do it, think of one way you can honour Jesus with your gold, your money this year.

HYMN: Take my life – note verse 4

MYRRH – reminds us that Jesus had a special destiny. ‘Born to die’ – not just that, his life changed course of history too. But his death at heart of his mission. No way we could be friends with God otherwise.

Whole history of humanity up to then made it obvious that *imperfect humans cannot approach a perfect God*. Even little blemishes show up (like stain on a pure white T-shirt). Cannot ignore it – unjust (God is perfectly just). How deal with it?

Came down and took punishment himself. Why so important that Jesus not just a good man. Then God would be unjust in punishing an innocent victim. But God himself – takes it on himself. And because punishment already happened at cross, we can know God – imperfect humans can approach a perfect God.

Good news! But never forget what lies at heart of it. We are Easter people every day because we always carry this truth around with us. Paul – ‘first importance’ 1 Cor 15 QUOTE. We must never stray far from cross and resurrection.

It’s a model for our lives – sacrificial love and resurrection power.

MYRRH reminds us to keep cross at centre of our lives. Will we do that this year?

Hand out ‘Main thing’ cards – SLIDE 7 – Stephen Covey then J John

VIDEO – reminder to remember where stable leads....

Put card up somewhere to remind you this year

Last gift – **FRANKINCENSE**. Reminds us that Jesus was an offering to God.

Incense used in temple for sacrifices. Double meaning:

- Reminds us of his sacrifice
- Also connected to prayer. When prayers were offered, incense was burned.

I want us to think about our incense – our prayers (**SLIDE 8**). Nothing more important than prayer, but also hardest thing. Who finds it easy to pray?

We all find it tough – but good at start of year to look at ourselves and think – how are we going to grow in prayer this year?

Lots of ideas: (**SLIDE 9**)

- Better time
- Better place
- People
- Ideas

Hand out pipe-cleaner – will use in prayers – but also take away – perhaps each week make it into a shape to help you pray (or keep that shape until you get an answer and then make a new shape)

PRAYERS – ALISE

LORD'S PRAYER (**SLIDES**)

Remind to use pipecleaner – weekly or for particular request

3 gifts to go away with (**SLIDE**)

NOTICES AND BANNES

