

Epiphany – Beyond the Stable

Outline 2

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72:10-15

Matthew 2:1-12

Preparation

If possible, ask members of the congregation in advance to bring any small unwanted gifts, or other items that can be used by homeless shelters and foodbanks such as packet and tinned food, to be handed over during the service.

Opening Activity

You will need a flipchart and paper, and suitable pens. As people arrive have a team of volunteers to ask each person one thing they think they are skilled or gifted at doing. Then write that gift or skill, with no names, onto the flipchart. This will be used later.

Opening Prayer

Jesus is here today,

and like the Wise Men, we are here to worship him.

Jesus is here today,

and like the Wise Men we are here to receive from him.

Jesus is here today,

and like the Wise Men we offer ourselves to him.

Responsive Psalm (Based on Psalm 72:10-15)

Bring gifts to the new King from all places,

Bless the new King all day long.

All bow down and worship him,

Bless the new King all day long.

He will save all those in need,

Bless the new King all day long.

He will take pity on the weak,

Bless the new King all day long.

He will rescue those who are oppressed,

Bless the new King all day long.

He values everyone, we are all precious,

Bless the new King all day long.

Bring gifts to the new King from all places,

Bless the new King all day long.

Talk (Based on Matthew 2:1-12)

If appropriate, ask for three volunteers. Give one a clock to hold up on the word 'time', another a map to hold up on the word 'place', and the third a wrapped box to hold up on the word 'gifts'.

1. The right time

God chose the right time to send the gift of his son Jesus to the world. And when it happened, at the right time, the Wise Men read ancient prophecies and studied maps. At the right time they decided to set off on the long journey to Bethlehem...not that they were completely sure where they would end up! They were aiming for the right place, and had the right gifts with them. At the right time each night the star

would shine in the sky to show them which direction to go in. They followed the star, and trusted that they would get to the new king at the right time. God's timing is always right – they knew that they had to do things at the right time.

2. The right place

Each day, as the Wise Men rested, with the right gifts beside them, they knew it was the right time and the star was leading them to the right place. When they got nearer they had to ask the way to the right place, which upset King Herod and all the other important people in Jerusalem. But by following the star they knew they were heading for the right place. And finally...as the star stopped in the sky over the little town called Bethlehem, they had found the right place at just the right time – the time God had planned for it all to happen.

3. The right gifts

And so they arrived at the right time in the right place with the right gifts. We don't know why the Wise Men thought they were the right gifts, but we know what they meant. The gold was to for as King, the incense was for someone who would give themselves, and the myrrh was a reminder of sacrifice. Jesus would give himself, he would be sacrificed as he was put to death, and through all that he was a king. They were the right gifts, at the right time, in the right place.

We are here now and today. You could have been doing other things right now, but instead you're at the right place at the right time. God is the God of time and this is all part of his plan. The only question is what gifts can you bring? Can you use your personal skills and gifts to help others? As you worship Jesus as the Wise Men did, at the right time in the right place, can you offer the right gifts to use as you serve Jesus?

Gifts to use

If completed, bring forward the flipchart that has gifts and skills written on it. If that wasn't done, spend a few moments asking people in the congregation (of all ages) to tell you what their skills and gifts are, and write them down.

Ask everyone to be quiet, and to thank God for the skills and gifts they have. Then invite everyone to hold their hands out in an offering gesture, and invite them to think about what it means to offer those skills and gifts to God. How can those gifts help share Jesus with others?

Invite the congregation to bring forward any items such as unwanted gifts and food items (if warned ahead of time). Then pray, asking God to bless those gifts and those who receive them, as they represent a little of Jesus' love for them.

Prayer

The Wise Men gave up their comfort to travel to Jesus,
may we give our all for him.

The Wise Men gave up their time to meet Jesus,
may we give our all for him.

The Wise Men gave up their status to worship Jesus,
may we give our all for him.

The Wise Men gave their best as their offering to Jesus,
may we give our all for him.

Alternative Prayer

The Wise Men travelled for many days to find the new King.

They help us see that Jesus came to save all people.

The Wise Men gave gifts to Jesus, and used their own gifts on their journey.

They help us see that we all have gifts to offer.

The Wise Men went on their way, to travel through their lives.

They help us see that we can use our gifts on our own journeys.

Blessing

May we offer our best gifts to Jesus, today,

And we offer to use our best gifts to help others, every day. And the blessing....

Ending

Every family receives a fridge magnet as a gift, and hold it in their hands. This is to remind us all of God being with us on our journey, and helping us to give and use our gifts. Once every family has the magnet in their hands ask them to repeat the simple prayer that is on the magnet:

Loving God, help me be a gift for others today

Source: Revd Canon Dr Sandra Millar Head of Life Events Church of England Evangelism and Discipleship Team

<https://churchsupporthub.org/download/service-outline-for-post-christmas-services/>